



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 14 May 2024

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 1.00 pm, read prayers and acknowledged country.

ALCOA — TOXIC RED DUST

Petition

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [1.02 pm]: I present a petition containing 715 signatures couched in the following terms —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned are aware of the serious health issues, environmental impacts and economic loss from the windblown toxic red dust emanating from the Alcoa refinery and mudlakes at Pinjarra.

We therefore asked the Legislative Council to support a full and independent inquiry to review:

- current practices at the Pinjarra refinery that allow for the spread of toxic red dust and its deleterious effects on the town and residents of Pinjarra,
- the monitoring or lack thereof by the Department of Energy, Water and Environmental Regulation with regard to existing regulations and controls over Alcoa's activities, and
- to reassess the allowable emissions from the refinery in line with current USEPA and European Union International scientific standards.

Your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See paper 3140.]

PAPERS TABLED

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

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — VOLUNTEERS — PTSD PRESUMPTION

Notice of Motion

Hon Martin Aldridge gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

That this house —

- (a) notes the impact that trauma has on our frontline fire and emergency service workers and volunteers;
- (b) notes that the state government has extended PTSD presumptive protections to ambulance and fire and emergency service workers;
- (c) notes that the state government has committed to acting similarly with respect to police officers; and
- (d) calls upon the state government to ensure that Western Australia's 30 000 fire and emergency service volunteers, including ambulance volunteers, have comparable protections to those in paid employment undertaking the same functions.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Motion

Resumed from 9 May on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) —

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.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [1.05 pm]: I rise to speak on this Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure—Consolidated Account Estimates 2024–2025. I rise to not bring the government down today, although I would like to bring the government down today. We will not withhold supply, but I can say that the government is doing an excellent job at bringing itself down by its failure to address the needs and concerns of the Western Australian community.

This 2024–25 budget, the first budget by the Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, and the new Premier, Hon Roger Cook, reinforces to the people of Western Australia that this government, after seven years, is tired and completely out of ideas. Less than one year out from the next election, Labor has given us bandaied solutions for all the massive

challenges that face Western Australians, papering over the cracks of years of disinvestment in the things that matter to Western Australians. Seriously—how can it be in a state as rich as Western Australia that we have a housing system that is on life support? How can it be that mums and children are forced to sleep in tents and cars due to a housing crisis that continues to get worse and worse under this government? How can it be in a state as rich as Western Australia—the richest state in Australia—that we are suffering from an unprecedented law and order crisis? This is the boom that only the Labor Party is feeling. This is the boom that no-one else is feeling. This is the boom in which this Treasurer has been the beneficiary of an unprecedented growth in revenues. There has been 100 per cent growth in revenue over the seven years of the Labor government, and yet the government fails to deliver the most basic needs of Western Australians: a health system that works, having a roof over your head and feeling safe in your home.

We have seen that Western Australians have gone through an unprecedented period of inflation; cost-of-living pressures have impacted on Western Australians. We saw the consumer price index peak in late 2023 at eight per cent, year-on-year. It continues to be stubbornly high at 3.6 per cent per annum, year on year. That was in March 2024. Those numbers were provided by the Western Australian Treasury Corporation. Most concerning, we see those basic services, such as insurance, have been tracking at 8.4 per cent and education costs at 5.1 per cent.

These are real impacts on Western Australians. The federal government is about to present its budget. We know that many of the pressures felt by Western Australians are a direct result of policies of the Albanese government, which have led to the highest interest rates in Australia's recent history, and are impacting mortgage holders in our mortgage belts who are trying to make ends meet.

This government had an opportunity with the incredible wealth of riches that has poured into the Western Australian coffers under Treasurer Hon Rita Saffioti and former Labor Treasurers. The incredible wealth that has poured in represented an incredible opportunity to reset the basic parameters of the Western Australian economy and reset the basic challenges that Western Australians face. Instead, we see more of the same with a few sugar hits, a few one-off measures, that will provide relief for only one year. They do not provide a guarantee for long-term cost-of-living relief for Western Australians. This is a pattern with this government; it does that instead of dealing with underlying structural issues affecting our state.

Our health system remains in crisis, despite the rhetoric of the budget papers. I refer to budget paper No 3 and some of the commentary about ambulance ramping. We know that it is not really as good and rosy as it is explained by this government. This government has overseen record ambulance ramping, and it continues to oversee high rates of ambulance ramping. The latest statistics from St John WA show that ambulance ramping continues to be stubbornly high—five times worse year on year than when this government came to power in 2017. Back when the Labor Party was in opposition, it said that 10 000 hours of ambulance ramping every year was a crisis. Now, with 50 000 hours, or thereabouts, of ambulance ramping, this government, by its own definition, can only say that it is catastrophic. At the eleventh hour before the next election, the government has introduced some alleged measures, as outlined on page 93 of budget paper No 3. It states that it is —

Building on the Government's historic reforms to address the underlying causes of ambulance ramping and improve patient flow and access to emergency care, a further \$155 million will be invested in new and continuing ED reform initiatives.

It has taken the government seven years to get the opposition's message that ambulance ramping is out of control! By its own definition, Labor said it was a crisis at 10 000 hours, yet it has let ambulance ramping continue on at rates that continue to be stubbornly high. It has the audacity to claim that the number of hours of ambulance ramping is coming down when it states in budget paper No 3 that —

This brings the Government's total investment in ED initiatives to \$827 million since the 2021–22 Budget, which is continuing to deliver improvements in ambulance ramping performance with a 28% reduction in ramping hours ...

Seriously, it has taken a point in time when it was so bad and then said that there has been a 28 per cent improvement, which is still incredibly bad. The government's ambulance ramping performance is a lot worse than it was in 2017—much worse—yet it has the audacity to write it up as though there has been some improvement. It just shows that 12 months out from the next election this government is trying to cover its tracks on its failure in ambulance ramping in Western Australia.

Children continue to wait on a waitlist to see a paediatrician; indeed, 10 000 children are presently on that waitlist. Recently I saw the statistics, and that number continues to escalate. These are the most basic needs in Western Australia. The Minister for Health has taken her eye off the ball on these matters. The shadow Minister for Health has been relentless in her pursuit of the Minister for Health and the government's poor performance in the health system.

I do not know whether the government's absolute neglect in housing is worse. For seven years, this government has neglected housing. My colleague Hon Steve Martin has identified through questions asked in Parliament that the number of people on the social housing waitlist continues to expand because of the tragedy of disinvestment

over many years in this very important area. I have to ask whether the government's machinery-of-government reforms delivered. There can really be only one answer, and that is no. There are fewer social homes available to needy Western Australians than when this government came to power in 2017, and that is despite the ongoing growth in population. Only recently has that number increased by a small margin. At the last minute, the Minister for Housing, Hon John Carey—who I believe is well-intentioned—has tried his very best to grab every lever, as he has outlined, but the bottom line is that decisions are not made by the Minister for Housing; rather, they are made by the Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, and the Premier, Hon Roger Cook. As senior members of cabinet, they have made the strategic decision to disinvest in the area of housing and invest in those projects that they see as a priority, which are not the priority of Western Australians. That is what has happened. The number of social housing properties available for Western Australians has declined rapidly and has only recently begun to increase. We saw the Housing Authority hand over hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of assets to that profit-making venture called DevelopmentWA without any proper transparency in the transfer. Of course, although the headline figure is that billions of dollars are being spent on housing, a lot of that is money is being used to repurchase land that was originally gifted by the Housing Authority. There has been a degree of fakery in some of the accounting in this area. The one indisputable fact is that 36 000 people are on the social housing waitlist and people in Western Australia are struggling to find an affordable home to rent. It is much worse for people who live in communities in the regions where rents are now well over \$1 000 a week just for a three-bedroom home. It is much worse. This is *deja vu*, folks. When I worked in Treasury in 2007, the exact same thing happened under the Carpenter Labor government. A crisis in regional housing was building simply because not enough was being done to ensure lot supply to bring on new developments in a timely way.

As has been mentioned in this place before, there has been a record inflow of immigrants to Western Australia, with people coming from other states and internationally. Indeed, in the last financial year, Western Australia had 86 000 new residents. I believe that figure, if we go year on year, is actually 90 000 people new to Western Australia needing a home. This is a massive challenge. We know that we are a big and growing state and that we need the workforce in Western Australia, but the government's job is to deliver on the housing needs of Western Australians and ensure that Western Australia remains one of the most affordable jurisdictions in Australia. Sadly, given the massive increase in the cost of housing, in particular the cost of rentals, in the last 12 months, the difference in prices compared with the rest of Australia is dissipating very quickly and we are becoming an expensive jurisdiction for people to have a roof over their heads.

According to the government's report entitled *Housing industry forecasting group: Forecasting dwelling commencements in Western Australia*, rental prices went up 15 per cent last financial year, unit prices went up 22 per cent and lot supply is at record low levels. This report was published in November 2023, so it is the most recent report. Page 8 states —

The decline of the supply/demand ratio to below one suggests that if sales continue at a similar rate there will be a deficit of lots recently completed or currently under construction to keep up with demand.

I believe that the supply and demand ratio has gone down to 0.9. The report continues —

The lowest the supply and demand ratio has reached is 0.8 in 2013, —

That was when we were under incredible pressure. The government delivered on that and we saw a massive influx of lots come onto the market in subsequent years —

however, at this time there were a higher number of lots under construction for the next six to 12 months, —

Even the housing industry forecasting group recognised the challenges that the Barnett government faced in 2013, but it also identified the fact that a high number of lots were being developed. The report continues —

with 2,757 lots, compared to only 1,726 lots under construction currently.

This was a mistake, as we have seen a record increase in population. We do not have enough lots under construction. It can mean only one thing; that is, the cost of housing will go up. If we were cynical, we would say that maybe the government likes that because the higher sale price of those homes will mean that more stamp duty revenues will flow into the coffers of the Western Australian government. It is the boom that nobody feels except the WA Labor government as revenues continue to rise.

We know that the lack of housing is a crisis because we hear story after story of young people who cannot find a home to rent at an affordable rate or mums and children having to sleep in tents or cars because they have no alternative. We do not hear the thousands of stories of people couch surfing or sharing accommodation with their family in difficult circumstances such as overcrowding. These are the stories that we do not hear very often in this place, yet we know that those stories exist. If members are talking to people in their electorates and their communities, they will know that that situation is very real.

The housing market is definitely in trouble. It will have challenges. Page 15 of budget paper No 3 states —

Dwelling investment resumed growing in 2023, —

It resumed growing from record low levels —

expanding by 4.5% following a decline of 2.7% ...

The report refers to the large number of dwellings under construction, stating —

... (23,153 dwellings under construction at December 2023) ...

So many dwellings are under construction because of the stimulus that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those projects have gone on and on and have not been delivered in the time frame that people wanted. Of course, that resulted in an additional cost to home owners—those very important people we want to encourage in Western Australia. These new home owners have had to wait for months, if not years, for their homes to be completed.

I will speak about that because this crisis has been exacerbated by the Western Australian government. Much has been shared about the injection of funds into training and trades, and we welcome that, but the problem is that this government also acted irresponsibly when it rolled out its asset investment program. It had so much money that it crowded out the market. People in the industry have said to us over and over that it is very difficult to get the scaffolders, people who do grano work, plumbers and electricians who work on those projects because many of them have already been soaked up in higher paying jobs, working in areas that are directly funded by the state government. I would have thought that the number one priority for the state government would be the delivery of housing. The government can build as many trains as it likes in Western Australia, but if people do not have a home, those trains are not much good to the people of Western Australia. At the end of the day, Western Australians want affordable homes. We are yet to see this crisis fully unfold.

We have massive challenges in the community. As I said in my introduction, law and order is a massive problem in Western Australia. Sadly, we know that Western Australia is the family and domestic violence capital of Australia. It is the violent crime capital of Australia. We know that it is much worse in the regions. The rate of family violence in my region of the Kimberley is reported to be in the order of 23 times the rate in the rest of Western Australia. When we compare it with the other Australian states, it is approximately double the rate. It is higher than the rate in Queensland. The latest data from the Western Australia Police Force website shows that there were 22 violent crimes or assaults against persons per 1 000 people compared with Queensland's 15 per 1 000 people. Yet day after day, we see in the news the problems in Queensland.

This government has a serious issue on its hands. Despite that, we see police leaving the force in droves. The minister has failed to increase the force by the numbers that he initially claimed he could achieve. He has failed to fully deploy the number of police that the community desires. This light touch on crime in relation to the way we treat those who commit crimes is very disappointing and frustrating for the people of Western Australia. This government needs to invest more in our justice system and in the diversion system. It needs to do more to address the massive challenges we face with family and domestic violence issues. This budget needs to address more and not address the penchant of the Treasurer; Minister for Transport, who has set herself a deadline for the March 2025 election to be seen in a hard hat and fluoro jacket with a pair of scissors snipping big red ribbons so that she can go down as the second Alannah MacTiernan of this state.

This government has failed to address the priorities that Western Australians want. Those priorities, as I said at the beginning, are a health system that works, a roof over their head and to be safe in their own home. Under this government we have seen assaults rise by 42 per cent since 2017. That is a terrible indictment on the government. It has failed to make the appropriate level of investment in the services that matter to the Western Australian people. That is despite these record revenues. I will go into some detail about that. We have heard in this place many times about the fantastic budget management of the McGowan and Cook governments. I will demolish that notion, because that is not the narrative that the people of Western Australia should understand. The fact is that the only reason that this government has been the beneficiary of incredible revenues was the incredible private sector investment boom that occurred in the days of the Barnett government in the previous decade when there were record levels of private sector investment and a record expansion of the approvals system that was streamlined to make sure that we got results. We saw a massive expansion in the iron ore capacity in Western Australia. The then opposition criticised that government from the point of not knowing. It then became the accidental beneficiary of the incredible work put in by the previous governments. I say previous governments because those investments began under the tutelage of Hon Eric Ripper for whom I have always had a great deal of respect. There was massive capital investment in the mining sector that led to that massive expansion.

This government has been the beneficiary of huge windfall gains in the budget. I will go through some of them so that people get an understanding of the scale of the windfall gains that the government has been the beneficiary of and has so poorly directed to the things that matter to Western Australians. I go back four years to the 2018–19 financial year when the world was falling in, according to the Western Australian Labor Party, which did not understand that the investments were being made to create the future boom. Comparing the 2018–19 forward estimates with the estimates four years from then to the day the actual figure came in, we can see that the McGowan and Cook governments were the beneficiary of a \$3.39 billion windfall. In 2019–20, it was a \$5.5 billion windfall; in 2020–21, it was a \$12.08 billion windfall; in 2021–22, it was a \$9.44 billion windfall; and in 2022–23, it was

a \$13.35 billion windfall. If we compare the fourth year of the historic budget papers with the actual out-turn, we can see that these are the numbers and the differences that this government has been the beneficiary of due to the incredible investment that was made in the decade before. In 2023–24, that figure is now over \$16 billion. That is \$59 billion worth of windfall gains. The less economically literate among the WA Labor Party will go on and on about the debt monster that occurred under the Barnett government. Despite the promises of the McGowan and Cook governments to put the windfall gains into debt reduction, we are now facing a new record projected debt of \$40.9 billion. The opportunity to reduce debt was there. The government was the beneficiary of \$59 billion in windfall gains over those forward estimates. Despite that, the government's response to debt reduction has been very insipid such that today the Western Australian government still pays close to \$1 billion a year in interest on its borrowings.

Western Australia could be like Norway. This state is blessed with riches from its natural resources. We could be investing that money into a future fund like Norway that enables it to invest in important services because it built up its wealth fund very carefully. Norway understands that its current wealth will not necessarily continue into the future. I will talk about that shortly. There is absolutely no guarantee that this wealth of riches will continue to flow through to Western Australia. We hope that it does. Certainly, there is a very good chance that we will continue to do very well because of the massive amount of work that was done to fix the GST under the former federal coalition government. Where has all this money gone, despite these massive revenue increases from approximately \$25 billion a year to almost \$50 billion, depending on how the revenue is calculated in the budget papers? There was a massive increase in revenue—a doubling. Despite that, we still have services that are not properly aligned to the needs of Western Australians. Where has it gone? We know that this government has been fixated on the development of Metronet. It would not be so bad if the government's fixation was on making sure that the project was on budget, on time and delivered the outcomes to Western Australians that were expected when this government touted itself to the people of Western Australia in 2017 and presented this vision of Metronet across Western Australia's metropolitan region. At the time, all sorts of numbers were thrown around. Some were in the order of \$2.5 billion, but it might have been \$3.5 billion depending on how it was measured and which stages were included, because there have been some changes to the definition of the project over time. The fact is that this project is now budgeted to cost the people of Western Australia around about \$12 billion. That gives members an idea of where some of that \$50-odd billion windfall has gone. It has gone into a project that continues to be late and to increase in cost. We see that in budget paper No 3. We see the litany of cost increases on page 194. We see that this continues to be the story of Metronet. It is a recurring theme. We see the same story in every budget that comes out. We see it under the heading "Cost Increase — METRONET Projects" on page 194 under Public Transport Authority, which states —

The METRONET program has been allocated net additional spending of \$707.4 million to meet unavoidable cost increases for labour, equipment and materials and to deliver additional Beckenham Station and William Street Level Crossing removal works as part of the Victoria Park–Canning Level Crossing Removal project.

The government's inability to control the contracting works on the Metronet budget has been a major weakness of the Western Australian Labor government. It stands out as a major challenge.

We are seeing cost increases in the Metronet railcar acquisition and replacement program. A further \$98.4 million will be invested over 2023–24 to 2027–28 to meet the additional costs of manufacturing the 246 new C-series railcars. We are seeing cost increases in the rail infrastructure program. It is stated on page 194 of budget paper No 3 —

To meet unavoidable cost increases associated with upgrades to rail bridge works in the Perth Metropolitan area, an additional \$31.1 million has been allocated over 2023–24 to 2025–26 to complete construction.

There are also cost increases in the *Australind* railcar replacement program. It is not just to do with Metronet; it is also impacting on the *Australind* railcar replacement program. Why is this happening? It is because this government is trying to cram everything in for the deadline of 8 March 2025 just so the minister can stand there with a hard hat and a fluoro jacket in order to say what an amazing minister she is. We have heard the minister, in her own words, claiming after one budget to be the greatest Treasurer ever, or something to that effect. I mean, the hubris of that. I was shocked when I read that. I thought, "How could a minister possibly have the hubris to come out and say they are the best Treasurer ever?" She has had one budget and cost overrun after cost overrun. She cannot manage her own transport projects and she is blowing her portfolio.

I know the tensions in the Labor Party. I know that there will be tensions in the Labor Party in relation to this matter because there will be good-minded people in the Western Australian Labor Party, part of this government, who will be thinking, "Actually, we agree with Hon Neil Thomson in relation to the issues of priority."

Hon Sue Ellery: No, there aren't any.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Are you saying to me you do not agree with the priorities of the people of Western Australia in terms of safety in their homes, housing and a health system that works?

Hon Sue Ellery: No, we don't agree with you.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Those are the priorities that should be addressed with laser focus by the Treasurer.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Neil Thomson.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Those are the priorities that should be addressed with laser focus by the minister, but she is so locked in to wanting to get that glamour shot with the high-vis jacket and the hard hat in time to cut the ribbon for the 8 March election. Everything is being thrown at that, to the detriment of the construction sector. Everything is being thrown at it, to the detriment of sound contract management. Everything is being thrown at it, to the point where Western Australia now has one of the highest-cost construction sectors in Australia. It is because this government has poured other people's money into the projects that matter for the government but not for the people of Western Australia.

We can see that in the nature of our asset investment program. In 2023–24 Metronet sucked up \$3.1 billion; our Main Roads program was \$2.3 billion; Western Australian utilities, \$2.4 billion; ports, \$799 million; and the health system got \$765 million. We can see the priorities just by looking at the run sheet. Education got \$626 million. This is in a state where some of the schools are bursting at the seams, the infrastructure is out of date, and teachers are fearful for their own safety in classrooms. This is a state where we put Metronet, freeways and utilities well ahead of the services that currently concern the people of Western Australia. Most worryingly, community safety—including justice and police—gets \$339 million.

Those rankings do not change for members opposite; they may not have gone through those rankings, or maybe they have. Maybe they lobbied very hard through their various roles on behalf of their cabinet colleagues, who might have wanted more spending on those things that really matter to Western Australians. Maybe they did, but because the Minister for Transport also holds the purse strings of Western Australia, we are not going to get any change on those priorities. The Minister for Transport has her own ambitions in relation to her future political career, I am sure. I am sure that that is not even a controversial statement, but I am surprised that I was not interjected on about it. I am sure, from the silence of members opposite, that they understand that that is probably the truth of this matter.

For this year, 2024–25, these asset investment program matters are outlined on page 162. We see that Metronet had \$3.05 billion allocated for this year. On the back of \$3.1 billion, there is \$3.05 billion—head and shoulders above everything else. I asked at the beginning of my speech: what is a priority right now for Western Australians? It is a priority for Western Australians to make sure that their sick kids can see a paediatrician without having to wait for two years. We have to invest in our freeways and highways, and particularly in our regional roads. I think there needs to be investment there. We saw the incredible destruction wrought by the weather event in January 2023, when we had floods in the north. There was a very important need to rebuild that bridge so that we could get cars and trucks flowing across the Kimberley again.

That investment was \$2.07 billion for this financial year; WA utilities, \$4.52 billion. We are seeing that increase. I am going to go into a bit more detail, because these are massive increases in investment into WA utilities and much of it is in relation to the state's decarbonisation efforts. I am not confident that this government will be able to decarbonise our economy. If it does anything like the job it has done in delivering Metronet, I can say that Western Australia is in for a world of pain and trouble, because it will be late, there will be cost overruns and it will be unreliable.

That is the issue for the people of Western Australia who are considering their vote in 2005—who can they trust to manage —

Hon Martin Pritchard: It is 2025.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I should say, 2025; thanks for the correction, member.

Who will they trust with their votes to manage the economy of Western Australia? Spending on ports through the asset investment program is \$844 million; for health, it is \$607 million. That is outlined in the budget papers under the asset investment program for the health system. That is all that could be come up with in this massive asset investment program of more than \$12 billion. We also see that community safety, yet again, is \$343 million. There has no doubt been a lot of detail provided by the government. I often say that the government is the beneficiary of advice on these matters from Treasury, the public sector and the thousands of very smart people in the public service, but we know that the government does not take all that advice. It is the government and cabinet that makes decisions in relation to priorities for the people of Western Australia. We can see from these headline numbers that the government is not prioritising the things that matter to the people of Western Australia.

We also know that the clinical advice on the women's and babies' hospital is that the best service would be provided by aligning it with the Perth Children's Hospital, but the government has not taken that advice. We know that clinicians see that as best clinical practice, but the government has ignored that advice. It continues to focus on its process in order to get itself a headline and to think about the things that it thinks are important for the people of Western Australia.

We know that this government has claimed to have a program of decarbonisation costing \$5.4 billion in the forward estimates. That is in the budget papers. The fact is that that number is going to increase significantly and that will impact on everybody because that will mean less funding into the services that matter to the people of Western Australia. It will also impact on what important cost-of-living relief can be provided, as will be required going forward. It will also impact on the future of our indebtedness in Western Australia because we are missing a once-in-a-generation golden opportunity to reduce debt seriously and provide investment opportunities for our future generations.

The massive mountain of investment we have seen in asset investment programs has crowded out the construction sector. We have seen the focus on the \$2.8 billion investment into a large battery, yet, despite that, we have no guarantee of energy security going forward. This is impacting on industry confidence. I was recently at an industry briefing in which concerns were raised about the availability of domestic gas going forward, yet we do not see this government really focusing on making sure that the basics are met, and the basic reliability of our energy system and our gas supply is maintained for our industries that require gas to do the value-adding that is an ongoing requirement in Western Australia.

Most troubling was the recent closure of the Alcoa refinery in Kwinana. There has been much debate about what the main factors that led to the closure were and whether it was the infrastructure of that plant or whether it was to do with the fact that this government has taken so long to approve the new access to new high-grade resources going forward. The government continues to leave that company in a state of limbo, not knowing about its future access to those high-grade ores. That company has had to ration its natural gas at times because of the challenges with our natural gas supply.

We could argue that, of course, we have to invest in decarbonisation. That is a commitment of the Liberals and Nationals federally in relation to the net zero target of 2050. That commitment was made under the previous coalition government and the Western Australian Liberal Party is committed to it. That is our commitment, but it has to be done in a way that provides practical outcomes and does not come at a cost to our economy. We cannot achieve that goal at all costs because Western Australia relies on our natural resources. In fact, Western Australia has had a net increase in carbon emissions over the period from 2005. Western Australia continues to grow emissions and that is the challenge. We cannot kill the goose that lays the golden egg in Western Australia. The goose that lays the golden egg is our resources sector. I know that our resources sector is working very hard towards carbon offsets. I have very little confidence in the Western Australian government being able to deliver cost-effective outcomes in this matter.

The Productivity Commission recently raised concerns about the lack of transparency around the carbon sequestration costing that goes on in Australia. Big spending projects are being mooted by the Albanese government and the Cook Labor government to mitigate carbon emissions in Western Australia, yet Western Australia does not have a transparent and independent assessment of these matters. We need a transparent and independent assessment of the cost per tonne mitigated, because that will shine a spotlight on those big spending measures that are likely to inhabit future budget papers if the Cook government is returned in 2025.

I can assure members that if a Mettam government inhabits the Treasury bench in 2025, we will provide the respectful transparency that the people of Western Australia want in relation to the expenditure of their money on climate mitigation and carbon abatement. Most importantly, we are not going to underinvest in climate resilience. We see that this government has not invested very much in that, and we saw the terrible consequences of that issue recently as we continue to see the closure of the rail line across the Nullarbor. What was the response of this Treasurer? "It's not my problem. It's someone else's problem. I have nothing to do with it. Therefore, I'm not going to do it." I am paraphrasing comments by the Treasurer. She was not even getting involved in the discussion about the solutions that could be put in place to ensure that our supply networks are more reliable in the face of more intensive weather events going forward.

Recently, I met with some constituents in another part of the state; it was not in my region, but I met with them in my role as shadow Minister for Environment. They were worried about coastal hazard mapping and the challenges with coastal erosion. This is where we should be keeping our people safe. We should be investing some of that money into protecting people from the inevitable—which will happen. The science is in. The sea level is rising. We should provide more investment into protection from coastal hazards into the future. These are the things at which future windfall gains should be directed, not at those projects that are simply about the vanity of the Western Australian government.

Where has the money gone? We are seeing some commitment to cost of living and that is always to be commended. We saw the cost-of-living package outlined in this budget paper No 3. We saw \$492 million will go to energy bill relief, with all Western Australian households and small businesses with annual electricity consumption of less than 30 megawatts hours receiving a \$400 credit. Of course, that is welcomed and supported by the Western Australian opposition. But we do not see a sustainable attack on those costs; yet again, it implies that there will be growth in families' expenditure the day the money slows down because this government is unable to make sure that those benefits are of a long-term nature.

An amount of \$103 million has been put towards the student assistance program. We have seen some money put towards—not as part of this budget, but previously—the off-the-plan rebate scheme for apartments. One would ask whether it was properly directed at the real need. We have seen funding towards those people who have Airbnbs and the additional \$5 000 for people who bring their empty houses onto the market. We know all these things are not going to make hardly any difference to housing supply because the basics are not being addressed.

Where has the money gone? A lot of it has gone into bureaucracy. We have seen an incredible growth in bureaucracy under this government. This government promised in 2017 that it would provide clarity and efficiency in the public sector. Its machinery-of-government reforms were going to provide better services for people on the ground and it was going to cap the so-called waste in the public sector that it claimed was happening under the Barnett government. What we have seen is quite the opposite. Based on the latest data that I have been able to find in the Public Sector Commission's state of the sector report, by 2022–23 there had been 16 per cent growth in the Western Australian public servant headcount. This was not a time when services had gone backyards. Questions have to be asked: Where are these people being directed? Where is the leadership from the government to make sure that the almost 120 000 public servants are directing their efforts at the services that matter to Western Australians? There has been a 16 per cent increase in the headcount, and that was over a year ago. I am sure that the next report will show continued growth in the number of public servants. This was at a time when the rate of population growth was 10 per cent. There has been a net increase of six per cent growth over the population rate, so it cannot be put down to population growth. The government cannot say that it had to increase the headcount because the population increased, although that would be understandable.

This government claimed that the machinery-of-government reforms to create mega agencies would deliver more focused service delivery and be more efficient, but we have had less efficiency. There have to be additional allocations for the wages policy, yet there has been a net loss in people's wages relative to the consumer price index. It is not as though public servants are getting extra pay in real terms. No, they are not. In fact, for many years, the public service was going backwards because of the wages policy that was implemented by this government. It shows that there is a lack of leadership from this government in ensuring that those services are properly focused on the outcomes that matter to Western Australians.

The Public Sector Commissioner's report on general government salaries growth from 2012–13 to 2022–23 shows that, in 2022–23, that growth was 10.1 per cent. Public servants had not had a 10.1 per cent pay rise. There has been enormous growth in the public service—well beyond population growth and salary growth. In fact, \$3.3 billion was allocated for the wages policy in 2022–23, \$2.1 billion was allocated in 2023–24 and a further \$2.8 billion was allocated in the midyear review. I was shocked by that \$2.8 billion in the midyear review. It clearly demonstrates that the government was keen to put it through in the midyear review. Page 157 of budget paper No 3 outlines that some minor adjustments in superannuation changes have been made in the budget.

A host of negotiations for expiring industrial agreements still remain to be finalised. I do not think anyone in this place would begrudge a fair and reasonable outcome for our public servants, particularly our police, who have to put up with a record level of assaults and all sorts of bureaucracy over their operations, and our hospital staff delivering frontline services, who have to put up with the sorts of behaviours that none of us would want to put up with. As I said, at the time of the preparation of some of this material, negotiations for the agreements for 83 000 public servants were yet to be finalised. I assume, and I hope, that the provisions for that will be sufficient. Page 57 of budget paper No 3 outlines the expiring key industrial agreements. There is a very long list of agreements that are under negotiation, including the agreements for Public Transport Authority transit officers and schoolteachers and administrators. I hope that the 28 000 schoolteachers and administrators will be the beneficiaries of a reasonable pay outcome. According to the Public Sector Commissioner's state of the sector report, there has not been a 16 per cent growth in the number of schoolteachers and administrators. We have not had growth in that area, but we have had growth in the public sector, and I assume it has been in bureaucratic positions, which seems to cause our state to get bogged down in more and more red tape. The industrial agreements for our TAFE lecturers, our VenuesWest staff and our 33 000 public servants and government officers are still under negotiation. Of course, there is also the upcoming agreement for our registered nurses. We do not begrudge any of those people a fair pay rise after years of below-CPI pay growth. We need to attract good staff to Western Australia to do these jobs, but this government has not been able to manage the bureaucracy well, and I will talk more about that shortly in relation to approvals.

The problem is that we have seen a 16 per cent growth in the headcount. Despite the promises of this government to reduce the senior executive service by 20 per cent, some of the answers that have been given to questions indicate that, if SES positions are tightly defined, the number of positions has gone down. According to the state of the sector report, at the last count, the number of people on a class 1 and above salary earning \$187 183 per annum under the Government Officers Salaries, Allowances and Conditions Award has increased under this government. This data is over 12 months old. Most shockingly, as of 2022–23, as outlined in the latest state of the sector report, that cohort had increased by 39 per cent under this government. This government has lost control. This government has not kept its eye on the detail of how it manages outcomes for the people of Western Australia. Government members are great at headlines and making announcements in their fluoro jackets and hard hats. However, the government is unable to manage professionally, to make sure that leadership is properly on point, to make sure that the culture

within the public sector is right and to make sure that people are delivering on behalf of Western Australians. The government has let this get out of control. This is the most impactful cost measure built into the Western Australian budget. It is the most threatening aspect of our budget going forward if we have a downturn in revenue. Despite the 100 per cent increase in revenue, wages and salaries now take up a greater proportion of the total cost than was the case when this government came to power in 2017.

What will be the financial impacts? These are difficult points to have a discussion about. At the end of the day, the government needs to be accountable for the challenges and structural weaknesses that it is building into the Western Australian budget. It has to be accountable because these structural weaknesses will pose future challenges if we have any kind of downturn in the future. Net debt peaked at about \$37 billion in 2018–19. There was a lot of fanfare and a lot of blame about that debt peak. It has reduced since that time to approximately \$28 billion, despite massive windfalls. As I said before, those were the numbers in the forward estimates that were being touted by members opposite. They said that debt was projected to be \$40 billion. Despite that, there has been close to a 100 per cent increase, or, to be more precise, a 97 per cent increase, in revenue from approximately \$25 billion to almost \$50 billion a year. There has been a massive increase. Despite that, debt is now projected to be \$49.9 billion in the forward estimates, when the opportunity was there to reduce debt further with the windfall gains that came into the government's coffers.

This government, with great fanfare, put out a formula for the GST and the iron ore price and what it would pay, which would be directed to that debt reduction account. There was great fanfare about it. But what we have seen is that has just become a pasture account. We put the money in and we take it out again. It is not genuine debt reduction. There is no strategy. The government is just putting money into the account and then spending it out the back end. That is not debt reduction. As I said, we in Western Australia could be in a very powerful position going forward if we built the structural efficiencies that we need. That is the hard work, and that is my major criticism of this government, apart from not delivering for the people of Western Australia. My major criticism is that we should definitely have those kids out of care within two years, or fewer, and people should be able to save their homes. From an economic perspective, a major criticism is the fact that we are also building structural weaknesses into the Western Australian budget whereby we will not be in a position to cover those outgoings if we have a downturn in our revenue streams going forward.

Take Metronet as a great example. The operating subsidy of Metronet was under \$800 million a year, yet, under this government, that has now increased and is in the order of \$1.4 billion. The numbers I have for 2022–23 were a bit lower than that, but it is likely that will be its operating subsidy. We never hear from this government about that number. We do not get the transparency. We do not get the modelling. We do not have a prediction in relation to the subsidy, but the operating subsidy for that project could be up to \$2 billion a year. That is one Fiona Stanley Hospital every year, which will be a significant cost to Western Australia. It would be all very well if the government had dealt with the other efficiencies and we were not increasing debt. That would be all very well, but we are not doing that, and that is the challenge for Western Australia, and it will no doubt be a challenge for a government after 2025.

The global outlook is a part of our challenge going forward. We have been very lucky—one could say, very blessed—depending on one's perspective of the global outlook. We have seen the numbers on revenue keep chipping up every year. The predicted iron ore price is sitting at \$US66 a tonne, but suddenly we could find that it is more like \$US100 or \$US120, depending on which year we are looking at on the graph. But this government underestimates that number every year. This government has never faced an iron ore price of \$US37.3 a tonne, yet it is not impossible that at some point a future government of Western Australia could face an iron ore price of \$US37.3 a tonne. In fact, the government had the benefit of an iron ore price of \$US235 a tonne in late 2021, and we have seen those numbers sit around \$US104 a tonne. Of course, we now see that going forward there has been a tweak in the assumptions and that number has been increased to \$US71 a tonne. That is the number that has been put forward, and it is a significant increase in projected revenue, despite the projected increases in net debt.

There is the issue of global uncertainty, which is outlined in the Treasury documents on page 24. We know that there will be an election in the United States—people might have taken note of that. It looks like there will be a Trump government, which should be good for Western Australia, I am sure, because it will create a bit more stability here. I am sure that will be the situation going forward. I am sure that when we are here in November, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will be congratulating the new President of the United States, our close ally. Therefore, I say to the members opposite: be very careful what you say about that. The advanced economies in Australia and the US are strong, and this is impacting the world economy. We cannot say that so much for China, our major trading partner, where there continues to be challenges. The iron ore price has been surprisingly resilient despite concerns about what it will be going forward. This is outlined in budget paper No 3, page 26. It states —

China's economy grew by 5.2% in 2023, surpassing the official forecast of around 5% ... Household consumption emerged as the key driver of growth in 2023, supported by the recovery of services demand after pandemic restrictions were lifted in early 2023.

It continues —

The Chinese Government is once again targeting growth of around 5% ... focusing on 'new productive forces' such as the electric vehicle ... supply chain, renewable energy, and advanced technology ...

This is all outlined for those who care to read it. It is very important because what happens in China very much impacts Western Australia. China is a very important trading partner for Western Australia.

It continues —

The economy also continues to face significant challenges, including a prolonged downturn in the property sector and subdued consumer and business sentiment, prompting Chinese authorities to adopt a more accommodative monetary and fiscal policy stance.

One of the challenges is this global uncertainty. Anyone who watches the news from China sees the headlines about the property bubble and the investment being done there. There is a lot of concern about debt levels held by property companies and local authorities, notwithstanding the efforts of the Chinese government to improve the situation. We hope that China continues to prosper because if China prospers, we prosper. It is very important because China is our biggest trading partner.

There are other concerns. We have seen some of the challenges in the Middle East recently and of course that impacts supply chains. If anyone has been following the news, they will see that the ships going through the Red Sea, up to the Suez Canal have been hampered by those third parties who have been firing missiles into the Red Sea. This is a major challenge, and this is on the back of the war in Ukraine. The World Economic Forum says that the outlook for growth at a global level is tepid. Although we hope that the Western Australian economy continues to be the beneficiary of strong revenue growth from iron ore, we do not know that it will. There was a huge opportunity over the last five years to put us in the position whereby we would be much more resilient to any negative challenges in the economy, but we have not done that because we have the biggest-spending Treasurer in the history of Western Australia. We have the biggest-spending and profligate Treasurer; Minister for Transport who cannot even manage her own transport budget. That is the challenge we have in Western Australia, and so our commodity forecasts are uncertain.

We have seen massive growth in taxation revenue. My estimate on the growth and total taxation take is in the order of 12 per cent this financial year. That is a massive increase. Why is that? It is because we have seen insurance stamp duty rise. We are seeing massive increases in insurance costs, as I mentioned earlier, which of course impacts people in my region who have relatively small businesses, such as hotels, but huge insurance bills, and are spending over \$1 million a year. The average punter who wants to insure their home—a lot of detail on this is outlined in the Productivity Commission report—can spend up to \$5 000. In Broome, which is where I am from, a person can spend \$12 000 a year to insure a fairly standard home. Who is the beneficiary of that? It is the state, because stamp duty flows in. Previously, I have talked about this being a misery tax. What do you do? The more misery people have, the more tax they get. It is a sad situation, but it is the reality. The more we have intense storms and climate impacts, the more insurance premiums go up, and the government is the beneficiary. It is a misery tax. We have seen that misery tax impact motor vehicles. During the pandemic, there was a massive escalation in the cost of second-hand motor vehicles. People tried to buy a second-hand motor vehicle so they could take their kids to school, go to work or the shops or whatever because they could not catch a train to Armadale. On top of that, for those living in the regions there was a huge escalation in the cost of fuel. What did we see? We saw a massive windfall gain.

It is surprising how things just slip into the midyear reviews. I love it when bad news is slipped into the midyear reviews. I always like to read the midyear reviews because they always contain the things that the government wants to hide. The 2022–23 midyear review revealed a more than \$600 million increase in windfall gains in stamp duty in relation to insurance and more than \$400 million in windfall gains in transfer duty in relation to motor vehicles. It continues to escalate.

Payroll tax continues to escalate and, of course, the beneficiary is the state with additional revenue of approximately \$2 billion with the GST fix. The state will continue to be the beneficiary going forward. Importantly, in talking about the variability in the budget, for those who are interested, this is fascinating because we need to look at our strategic alignment and positioning going forward. Let us look at revenue sensitivity factors and what happens when there is a one cent increase in the Australian dollar to the US dollar. The midyear review predicted minus \$174 million in revenue. The latest budget figure puts it back at \$127 million. The previous budget was \$127 million as well so it has not changed, but it will have a significant impact. The US dollar to Australian dollar exchange rate is very important. I will talk a bit about that, because I notice there has been a little bit of what I call assumption creep slipping into the budget papers. I am not accusing Treasury of anything because I am sure that its staff carefully sat down and worked out what the assumption should be going forward. But I am asking a question because I know that a lot of assumption creep in small assumptions can make a very big difference to the outcome. We know that there is pressure because of the projected \$40.9 billion net debt going forward. We know that the two major assumptions that will impact the budget outcome are the Australian dollar relative to the US dollar and the price of iron ore. Those two major assumptions will have an impact on the final outcome.

What has happened? Despite the fact that the government is projecting a \$40.9 billion debt, we have seen significant change in those assumptions going forward. In the last budget, the figure for the Australian dollar versus the US dollar

in US dollars was 69.5¢, 71.4¢ and 72.3¢. The assumptions are lower in this budget. A lower Australian dollar is good for the Western Australian government. I hope it will be right because it is forecast to be 65.9¢ in 2024–2025; 67¢ in 2025–2026; 68.2¢ in 2026–27; and 69.4¢ in 2027–28. In the year ending 2026–27, there is a 4¢ difference. I am not Treasury, but I am the shadow Treasurer, and I use the internet. I thought I would look at the National Australia Bank spot price. I have a question for Treasury, which it might be able to provide an answer to during the estimates hearings. It has hundreds of staff beavering away working out what the projection to the US dollar will be. If we look at the National Australia Bank spot price going forward, we see that there is a projection that the Australian dollar will increase against the US dollar. In fact, it is expected to peak in September 2025 at 78¢, which is quite a big difference. Here we have assumptions of a reduction in the Australian dollar versus the US dollar by 4¢s from previous budget estimates. These sorts of changes are not done very often in such big ways—there has to be a reason for it. Maybe it has received advice from the Reserve Bank of Australia—I do not know. If we look at the impact, it is out by 10¢, and that is \$1.2 billion in revenue every year, which is a lot of revenue. I am sure Treasury advisers are watching, so I pose this question: what was the rationale for quietly tweaking the Australian dollar versus the US dollar exchange rate? It is the biggest sensitivity factor in the budget. This is a narrative for people who are listening. If the government loads up wages and salaries and big spending capital projects for which the price keeps going up and it tweaks the assumptions to change the numbers to look better going forward in relation to revenue streams—and, on top of that, it has a budget deficit of \$40.6 billion—it potentially has a problem. People should listen to the opposition because the opposition is raising this point in good faith to alert the people of Western Australia. The Treasurer is so hubristic, because after delivering her first budget, she said that she is the greatest Treasurer ever.

Hon Darren West: She did not.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: It was words to that effect.

Hon Darren West: The Premier said it.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The Premier is a lot less smart than I thought he was if that is what he said about the first-time rookie Treasurer, who cannot keep her transport projects on time and their budgets under control. Those in government should listen and learn.

We have the situation with the iron ore price. It is the same sort of assumption creep that was pushed into the budget papers. Maybe it is justified. If I were claiming to be Nostradamus, I certainly would not want to be the Department of Treasury, because it has got that wrong. For those who know about Nostradamus' real accuracy, maybe Treasury is on par with Nostradamus on that prediction. Nostradamus got it wrong a lot of the time; I think he was guessing. The problem is that Treasury and the Treasurer have, year after year, hugely underestimated the assumptions made about future revenue flow. I suppose they thought that they cannot get it that wrong for so many years—66¢ has been the go-to figure because everyone was traumatised by that 37.5¢ in the final years of the former government. Therefore, it has risen to 71¢. What is that worth?

Hon Samantha Rowe: Is it 71¢?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Sorry, it is not cents. For the sake of *Hansard*, I should say dollars. It is \$US71. They were dollars—if you could make that correction. It has gone from \$US66 to \$US71 a tonne. Maybe for those who have a bit of a sense of humour over on the other side, I was probably talking about kilograms, because I did not say the unit. I correct that. It is \$US71 a tonne. There is a little bit of humour for today.

If the iron ore price is \$US71, what is that worth? The iron ore price is worth —

Point of Order

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I find it exceptionally difficult to listen to my colleague while members opposite are furiously working on material for their preselection speeches. I understand a lot of them have something to worry about, but it is getting in the way of orderly procedures.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Brian Walker): Members! I note a certain rise in voices in the chamber. While I could hear perfectly, I do appreciate what the member said. I suggest that voices be kept down.

Debate Resumed

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Thank you. It is always good when members can listen in silence. Listen and learn, as I said.

This change in assumption is worth \$465 million a year to the Western Australian budget papers. As I said, we had assumption changes based on the Australian dollar versus the US dollar and we have had assumption changes based on the iron ore price. Depending on how we add them up, it is worth at least \$1 billion a year over four years. That puts the \$40.6 billion of debt into perspective. If the government had not changed the assumptions, it would have had \$44.9 billion in debt. That would have been the headline number. However, because the government changed those assumptions, it got at least another billion dollars a year in revenue into the forward estimates. That means there is less headroom for a downturn. That is what that means; there is less headroom. This government

has had plenty of headroom with bonus figures that kept coming through. We can see that this government is, we could argue, building structural weakness with underlying costs because it cannot keep its budget under control for the major asset investment projects. It has great aspirations to be a white knight and a world leader on decarbonisation, instead of listening to the private sector that wants as little headroom as possible to make sure that that debt figure, which is embarrassing for this government given what it has been the beneficiary of, will not be a major concern going forward.

I will talk briefly about payroll tax. Payroll tax has increased by 13.6 per cent since 2022–23. This is outlined on pages 73 and 74 of budget paper No 3. We saw growth in 2022–23 and we saw a 17 per cent increase in payroll tax in 2021–22. We can say this reflects a strong economy, and that is great, but it also reflects a cost to Western Australian businesses. It is a significant cost. Transfer duties are increasing as well. Page 74 of budget paper No 3 says —

Total transfer duty is estimated to grow by 15.3 per cent (or \$376 million) ...

That is another lazy \$376 million, mostly from the property sector. It will mostly come from people who want to put a roof over their heads in Western Australia. We saw the increase in the threshold for the first home owner grant. It is a \$20 000 increase on the bottom threshold, with complete exemption. I think that works out to be just under five per cent. The cut-off point for no benefit—it is a graduated scale—used to be \$530 000 and will be raised to \$600 000. There was a larger increase and that will create a small saving for first home buyers of properties that are, say, \$580 000. For the average first home buyer, it would be difficult to find a house under \$600 000. There are some properties available but not many. This is a challenge. The last time I looked at the REIWA site, the median price of a home was \$650 000. I saw a report somewhere recently that it might be over \$700 000.

The last paragraph of budget paper No 3, page 74 —

Over the remaining forecast period, total transfer duty is forecast to remain broadly stable, with the impact of modest increases in median house prices largely offset by a slightly lower number of transfers ...

What planet is the government on? That is not possible. I have shared the statistics on the number of lots being constructed. We have seen the data in budget paper No 3 on the number of house completions, which has ticked up a little from their record lows but are still at long-term historical lows. We see the population increase in Western Australia and we hear reports from the industry that it is possible that we could see a further 20 per cent increase in the median house price in Western Australia over the next 12 months. That comes from the media; however, here it says it is broadly stable. It is almost impossible for that to happen. Yes, there may be a reduction in transactions. That is possible because as prices go up sometimes it makes it unaffordable, but I think the story is very clear: the government has had massive increases in tax revenue from stamp duty because people have to pay more as they buy a home in Western Australia. That is the simple fact; that is undeniable. My comments may be speculative about the direction of the market going forward. There will be some speculation on that, but I suggest that the probability of an increase in the median house price in the next 12 months is much higher than 50 per cent, or a fifty–fifty bet. It certainly will not go down. I would suggest that it will go up.

We have seen these massive increases in the revenue. Over that period of time, there have been those two increases of 15 per cent, which was outlined in budget paper No 3. We saw that there have been historical increases as well. This is a massive issue. Western Australians will not be well served by the failure of the government to ensure that our approvals process works, notwithstanding the raft of legislative amendments that have come through this place very piecemeal at times. It is about leadership. Where is the leadership on making sure that we have the expansion of our suburbs, ensuring that we have those headworks delivered on time and that our services and organisations that are making billions of dollars of profit like the Water Corporation are delivering the headworks to the Western Australian community to make sure that people can connect? We do not have a culture of saying no. I know that my colleague Hon Steve Martin will no doubt speak about that and the time it takes for people to connect up to Western Power, for example, and some of those factors that significantly impact the availability of housing going forward.

We have seen a massive growth in revenue in relation to the GST. How could I not speak about that? Those figures from 2015–16 were historic lows. Those amounts that were received by the state were significantly well down but have now been rectified. That is something that provides some comfort to those people who will be thinking about the reliability of our revenue streams going forward.

In the closing part of my speech, I hope members on the other side do not get too excited, because I will go a little bit longer yet on this government's failure to deliver with the hostile environment that our businesses face in relation to the approvals process in Western Australia. There has been some discussion about money being put into Streamline WA. On page 109 of the budget paper No 3, it states —

Approvals Reform

Western Australia's regulatory and approvals system is a critical enabler of attracting investment and jobs to the State.

I wholeheartedly agree with that quote from the budget papers. It continues —

Building on the investment at the 2023–24 Mid-year Review, the Government will spend \$36.4 million over the forward estimates to streamline approvals. This consists of \$10.6 million to continue developing Environment Online ...

I make a first comment on that. This government has been promising to deliver Environment Online for years but has not delivered and has put in another \$10 million. I welcome that investment, but we have not seen a culture of saying no changing the state. We have seen that investment is actually being suppressed, as I said, by the rushed investment on some of the capital spending—the asset investment program—in those non-productive investments and not even in services that matter, but we are not seeing anything like the peak in investment in relation to the private sector investment. There are some charts of that in the budget papers as well. I have a very similar chart that outlines the investment of mining capital expenditure in Western Australia over the last two decades. We saw that investment in Western Australia in mining capital expenditure peak at almost \$50 billion per annum. If members look at the budget papers, there is a very similar chart with a similar profile that outlines total private sector investment, which I think peaks somewhere in the order of \$80 billion to \$90 billion per annum under the Barnett government. If members look at the mining sector in the year ending 2011, we have investment in mining capital expenditure go from almost \$30 billion through to almost \$50 billion, and for four years in a row, it was over \$45 billion per annum. That was in 2012 to 2015—massive investment and expansion of productive capacity in Western Australia. Under this government, in 2024, the peak is just on \$30 billion. It was a steady increase from a low of under \$20 billion a year in the year ending 2019.

To be fair, a lot of those investment decisions are made by the private sector with respect to their consideration of international markets, opportunity and profitability. But I think it is an unarguable fact that this government has created a hostile environment for investment in Western Australia because of the delays we are seeing in the investment process. Worse still, we are seeing the Albanese government creating an even more hostile environment. We do not know the details because we do not know what Nature Positive will be about because it has been done in top secret and nobody gets to see it. We get the odd leak when someone says, “This is crazy—40 kilometres an hour in the Pilbara.” Suddenly, they went off that idea once that came out and saw the light of day. Apparently, that was a serious consideration put on the table. We hear from business, off the record, obviously, that if the Nature Positive reforms as were being proposed by the federal government were to be introduced, it would basically destroy our future prosperity and investment in Western Australia.

We have seen this government at least put on the cloak of respectability around that and try to say that it will somehow influence the federal government. We saw the \$200 000 a year spend on the new embassy building, we might call it, in Canberra, which has not even yet got a person in it apart from someone who is there in an administrative role. I have no confidence whatsoever that this government can influence Canberra. We saw that with the live sheep trade. It has no capacity to influence Canberra at all. The DNA of the Labor Party is anti-business. The DNA of the Labor Party, despite the attempt of this government to dress itself up as the party of the centre and a party of business in order to capture that centrist vote in Western Australia, is disinvestment. We have seen that because those private sector numbers are much lower under this government than they were under the previous government. The longer that they are lower, the more they will impact the revenue opportunities in Western Australia.

We saw this government undertake the Vogel–McFerran review, which has 39 recommendations. We are still waiting to see those recommendations be implemented. I would be very happy to be corrected by members opposite, but as far as I can tell, the only recommendation to be fully implemented is the one where they got a new office on St Georges Terrace. We know this government is sitting on a lot of approvals. I have been speaking to members of the industry today. Obviously, they do not want to be named, but the fact is that a referral for a part 5 approval that the Environmental Protection Authority had to decide whether it would be considered under part 4, took six months. Of course, we have these stop-the-clock provisions. Some of the investment of \$36 million went into a project that is well overdue in relation to Environment Online. I have no confidence that that will actually result in a better outcome. I would like to see more transparency in relation to the 39 recommendations of the Vogel–McFerran review. It would be great if we could go online and see a traffic light report on those 39 recommendations and see where they are at. Some of them require legislative change.

Maybe this is one of these recommendations; I can give members two. The government has the office, but recommendation 23 states, in part —

- a) Urgently accelerate implementation of Environment Online with additional funding and senior level project management oversight ...

There was \$10 million. It has had seven years and the government is still trying these bandaid measures at the last minute to try to address the issues around environmental approvals. It has had seven years, and only now is getting the message because the industry is saying, “These things are impacting on our investment streams. In fact, we’ve got competition in Africa. We can see where there are other alternatives where we could invest in lower-cost jurisdictions, and we just don’t know whether it’s worth investing in Western Australia.”

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia has stated that red tape is slowing investment. The message it has consistently heard is that WA businesses are facing increasing complexity, with onerous requirements. The application of rules of both federal and state regulators are increasingly unpredictable and subject to interpretation. There is laborious and frustrating engagement with WA's EPA, which many attribute to cultural challenges, including risk aversion, inadequate resourcing and lengthy delays in bringing on new assets, extend projects or replace lines. An analysis of a number of WA's EPA's reports and statements over a 10-year period has also shown a marked decline in environmental approvals being made since 2013, with deteriorating performance. This is despite WA businesses paying the highest fees for environmental approvals anywhere in the country. A typical project will incur fees in the order of \$500 000 to \$750 000. We are the highest-cost jurisdiction for fees and we have a system that is bogging down projects for our future prosperity that should guarantee to Western Australians that future governments will be able to invest in the things that matter to them.

I refer now to a Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia report titled *Green web: How environmental approvals could trap Australian investment*. I refer also to a 26 October 2023 CCIWA article titled "\$318b worth of projects stifled by environmental approvals". I now quote from the CCI report —

"We normally expect a replacement mine to come online in 4-5 years, however, we could see this double to 8-10 years. We will see significant export tonnes drop out of production and export due to the delay in approvals."

That is a damning indictment on this government in relation to managing the most basic thing that will provide a guarantee of future prosperity in this state. It is a damning indictment on the Minister for Environment for not managing that system in relation to this matter. It is a damning indictment on the Premier, Hon Roger Cook, because Western Australia is a resources state. That 97 per cent increase in revenue is a direct result of the investment that was made under the previous Liberal-National government and the massive expansion of the resources sector. This government has been the beneficiary of higher ore prices, but it has squandered its opportunity in such a way that we will have structural weaknesses going forward into the future.

In summary, this is a tired Labor government. It has been in this job for seven years. It came in with great fanfare and ambition; it was going to drive efficiency, but we have seen this government not drive efficiency but, in fact, do quite the opposite. This government has tried to paper over the cracks of neglect and lack of investment in the services that really matter to the people of Western Australia. The government has papered over the cracks in this budget, which is less than 300 days out from the next election; I think it is probably about 298 days, or something in that vicinity, and I am keeping count. I will check that again later. But this is a government that has less than 300 days until the next election and it is papering over the cracks with a few sugar hits that are much needed—because people need them—hoping that people will ignore the fact that there has been a lack of investment in the services that matter to them.

The government has not delivered on the things that matter, because it has not been over the detail and has not been able to manage the complexity of the public service, which needed to be managed closely in order to deliver those outcomes. These band-aids will not help Western Australia beyond 2025. We still face uncertainties. In fact, the Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, will leave Western Australia with record debt at a level we have never seen before. It is projected to be \$40.9 billion and, as I said, that is notwithstanding some of the changes that have been made to the assumptions in the budget papers going forward. This new Treasurer and new Premier had an opportunity—this Premier who has never been elected as Premier by the people of Western Australia. Notwithstanding that, they still had an opportunity to focus on the things that matter, like the health system, the housing crisis, the law and order crisis and genuine, sustainable cost-of-living measures. Importantly, it had an opportunity to restore certainty into the business sector in relation to approvals processes.

I wait with bated breath to see the recommendations of the Vogel-McFerran review fully implemented before the government winds its business up and goes into caretaker mode, but I doubt it will be able to deliver those 39 recommendations in the time frame required. The government failed to deliver the transparency required on the extensive measures it is now becoming addicted to in relation to decarbonisation. There have been billions of dollars in investment, but only really one measure that needs to be presented in a transparent way, and that is the cost of carbon mitigation in dollars per tonne. If the government could provide that in a transparent way, the people of Western Australia could have some reassurance that the government is actually providing a truly efficient approach to reducing carbon emissions in Western Australia in a way that would provide maximum effect for taxpayers' dollars.

I cannot trust the government in relation to transparency, because it has not met the gold standard of transparency that it promised when it came to power. It has not been able to focus on the delivery of the machinery-of-government reforms, to see more efficient service delivery in the public sector. In fact, it has let the public sector and bureaucracy grow, to the detriment of Western Australians. Thank you.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [2.59 pm]: This is the sixteenth budget I rise to scrutinise, and I am pleased to contribute following on from the very comprehensive analysis provided by the shadow Treasurer,

Hon Neil Thomson, moments ago. As we contemplate this budget from the Cook Labor government, there is one investment opportunity that becomes glaringly clear. Some taxpayer money ought to be spent on training and educating the Cook Labor government on the principles of responsible government. This is because responsible government lies not merely in the exercise of power and fiscal responsibility, but in the profound act of listening, and this government has plainly stopped doing that.

Let us take a few moments to look at the government's track record in the period reported on in these budget papers. I begin with the staggeringly expensive and horribly divisive referendum that was held on 14 October last year, which was championed by Premier Roger Cook. It is now a well-known fact that the proposed constitutional amendment to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice was rejected. Despite over 63.5 per cent of Western Australians voting no, for an extended period of time following the referendum's defeat the then McGowan Labor government, followed by the Cook Labor government, refused to be transparent about its plans. In fact, I note that there remains on the notice paper a motion that reads as follows —

That the Legislative Council supports the proposal to recognise the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution and establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

This motion continues to remain on the notice paper with the WA Labor government and its members refusing to withdraw it in spite of the fact that a petition signed by some 10 266 Western Australians said, "Say No to race-dividing 'Voice' in WA Constitution". That petition closed on 6 November 2023, and I had the honour of tabling it late last year. I should at this time recognise the principal petitioner, Dr Sherry Sufi. The 10 266 signatories said —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

1. Are relieved that the shambolic rollout of the WA Labor Government's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage laws has been halted by the introduction of a repeal Bill;
2. Remain concerned that the Premier refuses to provide to Parliament the advice he and his predecessor have received on the implications to our State of the proposed referendum to create a Federal 'Voice';
3. Are particularly concerned that Health Minister Sanderson has stated she is "certainly" in favour of creating a 'Voice' to the WA Parliament and that the Premier has declined to give an unequivocal commitment to not do so;
4. Call on the Legislative Council to ensure that that any legislation seeking to change the Western Australian Constitution to enshrine a 'Voice' to WA Parliament is rejected.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

This follows a pattern of the WA Labor government not listening. In February 2023, I asked the then Premier, Mr McGowan, to release the advice he had received on the Voice. This was advice that the WA taxpayer had paid for and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet had been involved in, as has subsequently been revealed because of the work done by the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, but Mr McGowan's answers at the time ranged from evasive to dishonest. On 9 May last year, I tabled a massive petition calling for the release of that advice that Mr McGowan had been keeping secret. That petition, as members would be aware, was immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs for investigation. The following month, on 7 June, I lodged a joint preliminary submission to the parliamentary committee conducting that investigation into the petition. On 29 June last year, what could be said to be the most profound statement of the century came from Premier Cook. This was his response to approximately 7 500 Western Australian petitioners. I quote from the letter written by Mr Cook, dated 29 June 2023, to Mr Peter Foster, MLC, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It reads —

Dear Mr Foster

Thank you for your letter of 15 June 2023 relating to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs (Committee) consideration of Petition No. 088.

I note the content of the petition and advise that the Western Australian (WA) Government has no comment to provide.

Such is the breathtaking arrogance of the Premier of Western Australia, more than 7 000 Western Australians can call upon him to transparently provide to Western Australians the secret advice that the government was hiding, and his arrogant response is that he and his government have no comment. I listened with interest to the contribution just made by Hon Neil Thomson in his capacity as the shadow Treasurer, and one of the many points he made was that this government has absolutely not adhered to the gold standard of transparency that Western Australians were promised, and here we have a case in point. More than 7 000 Western Australians petitioned this Parliament. The petition went to Hon Peter Foster's committee. His hardworking committee sent a request to the Premier of Western Australia and the arrogant response back was, "I have no comment to make." This was all happening at the time when Western Australians were tearing their hair out over the Aboriginal cultural heritage laws. Members

will be well aware that it then took a record-breaking almost 30 000 signatures to compel the arrogant Cook Labor government to sit up and listen. But, of course, it did not immediately sit up and listen. First of all, Mr Cook needed to make sure that he vilified the people who would dare to question those decisions. With the greatest of respect, the Cook Labor government should open its ears to the people of WA.

I turn now to another demographic within Western Australia: the responsible and law-abiding licensed firearm owners who are sick to the back teeth of being treated like criminals by the Cook Labor government. I had the privilege last week of tabling a petition with signatures that exceeded the number that I just referred to; this one had 32 234 signatures.

It reads as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

1. Support law-abiding owners of firearms in Western Australia; 2. Call on the Government to prioritise its taxpayer funded resources towards those who possess and use unlicensed firearms;

I might pause there for a moment. I wonder how many signatures might have been on the petition if, in addition to the words “those who possess and use unlicensed firearms”, it had included the word “knives”. I continue —

3. Have significant concerns about multiple provisions in the Firearms Bill 2024; 4. Are dismayed that after all the talk and promises of consultation, the Bill is currently with a parliamentary committee whose restricted terms of reference prohibit it from conducting a full public inquiry; 5. Urge the Legislative Council to refer the Bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation for a full public inquiry into the policy of the Bill to assess its impact on the rights and liberties of law-abiding Western Australians and its efficacy at tackling those with a history of showing disregard for the laws of our State.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

These more than 30 000 Western Australians are simply pleading to be heard. It is evident that lawful firearm owners, advocacy groups and the general public are struggling to navigate the murky waters of these so-called reforms. Keep in mind that last year, Hon Colin de Grussa tabled a petition with more than 12 000 signatures asking the Cook Labor government simply to extend the consultation period on these reforms. If I recall correctly, the petition that Hon Colin de Grussa tabled sought to extend the consultation period from one month to three months. Rather than provide clarity and consultation, what did the super-arrogant Premier of Western Australia and his police minister do? They released maps to the media to print on the front pages of media so that bad actors would know where responsible firearm owners live. I could not make this stuff up. That is the sequence of events that have occurred in the period that the budget papers report on. These maps have even seen the Information Commissioner, Catherine Fletcher, and the Western Australia Police Force’s own freedom of information officer confirm that that posed serious safety issues. The WA Police Force’s freedom of information officer—keep in mind that this freedom of information officer is paid by the taxpayer of Western Australia; these positions are funded by the very budget that we have in front of us—said that maps identifying the locations and concentration of firearm owners provide bad faith actors with information on tempting targets, increasing the risk of home invasion, theft and, ultimately, firearm-related offences.

Not only does the Cook Labor government not listen to this particular demographic, but also, worse still, it does not apologise when it is found guilty of putting these people at further risk. Sadly, this government rolls arrogantly from one shambolic debacle to another. We have seen this time and again over the last seven years. Again, with the greatest of respect, I say that the Cook Labor government needs to open its ears to the voices of law-abiding firearm owners.

I move to another segment of Western Australians—those who patron faith-based schools. I have had countless constituents contact me. It is crucial to these constituents that faith-based schools retain the right to employ and enrol people who share their same values. These people understand the Latin principle *in loco parentis*. These people understand that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and they then, temporarily during the course of the day, entrust that education to teachers and school staff, who stand in the place of the parent—in *in loco parentis*. It is entirely fair and reasonable that a Western Australian parent would want that stand-in parent—the person standing in the place of the parent—to share and live out those same values. There is nothing unreasonable about that. It is entirely fair and reasonable. Of course, those who do not want that have a choice to not send their children to that particular faith-based school.

The principle of *in loco parentis* in the education sector is important because it grants educational institutions the authority to act in the best interests of their students, taking on some of the responsibilities and functions of the parents. It also allows the schools to maintain order and discipline and to provide for the welfare of students under their supervision in accordance with the values of the parents. It also establishes the legal responsibility of students and teachers to care for the physical, emotional and moral wellbeing of students, much like the parent would for their child. This, of course, includes providing education, enforcing rules and instilling moral values. Keep in mind that over 10 000 petitioners called on this government to respect this right of parents.

I quote from a petition entitled “Protecting rights of parents and role of faith-based schools”, which has 10 234 signatures and reads as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

1. Affirm that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and governments have an important role to facilitate that parental responsibility.
2. Support the right of parents to choose what school their child attends.
3. Recognise:
 - a. the important role that faith-based schools play in educating children consistent with the faith and values of their parents; and
 - b. that some faith-based schools have been established to serve a particular faith community.
4. Emphasise that in order for faith-based schools to properly and completely fulfil their role, it is essential they retain the right to:
 - a. fill all staffing positions, with staff whose faith and values are consistent with the stated faith and values of the school which have been expressly chosen by the parents of enrolled children; and
 - b. require families to be active members of that faith community as a condition of enrolment in the school.
5. Acknowledge that those who disagree with these essential components of faith-based education are free to send their children to a different school of their choice.
6. Remind Members of Parliament that Australia is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which at Article 18(4) protects ‘the liberty of parents ... to ensure the religious and moral education of their children’.
7. Are concerned that some of the content of the Law Reform Commission’s Review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 fails to properly recognise this right of parents and role of faith-based schools.
8. Call on the Western Australian Government to respect this right of parents and role of faith-based schools and ensure that any changes to legislation strengthen that right and role and refrain from any watering down of these essential protections.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Without bothering to even listen to concerned parents, Attorney General John Quigley simply announced support for 163 recommendations to change our anti-discrimination laws following a review of the Equal Opportunity Act undertaken by the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia. In other words, the Cook Labor government arrogantly insists on removing the rights of any Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, Anglican or faith-based school to hire teachers whose values align with that of the school, parents and students. With the greatest of respect, the Cook Labor government needs to open its ears to the voices of parents.

I turn now to another topic as we draw closer to November. A question that has lingered for far too long is: will the temporary state of emergency powers finally come to an end in 2024? Numerous petitions have reflected Western Australian concerns about this Cook Labor government’s overreach and repeated disregard for individual freedoms. One of those petitions had 9 407 signatures. It was titled “No More Emergency Powers Without Oversight”, and I had the privilege of tabling it. It reads as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

Note that the McGowan Government have shifted the responsibility for “emergency powers” for the next two years from the Minister for Emergency Services to the Police Commissioner; Are concerned that these shifted emergency powers include extraordinary measures such as “COVID-19 officers” breaking into and entering any place or vehicle without a warrant; Request that the Police Commissioner undertake that he will not use these new discretionary powers and instead insist that if a true State of Emergency occurs that the Premier and his Ministers take personal responsibility for making a lawful declaration; Call on the McGowan Government to give an unequivocal commitment that they will not seek to extend these new powers when they expire in 2024; Urge the Legislative Council to establish a select committee, not controlled by the Government, that will review the use of emergency powers since they were first invoked in 2020 and monitor their use over the next two years.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

These state of emergency declarations were initially touted as a temporary response to an unprecedented crisis. I stress the word “temporary”. But ultimately, it resulted in the erosion of basic democratic principles. As the petitioners have noted in their petition, in 2022 the new, shifty approach was to simply shift the emergency powers from the Minister

for Emergency Services to the Commissioner of Police. Members may recall that the Emergency Management Amendment (Temporary COVID-19 Provisions) Act 2022 gave the police commissioner the power to activate extraordinary powers at the stroke of his pen.

Very recently the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations had the opportunity to have before it the police commissioner and a number of other officers when considering the annual report of the Western Australia Police Force. It was worth noting at that time that the police commissioner acknowledged, stated and confirmed on the record that there has been no further discussion by him to government or government to him with respect to the extension of these extraordinary powers. Because there has been no discussion to date, it ought to be very easy for someone within government to simply confirm that come November 2024 there will not be any trickery from the Cook Labor government and that there will not be a bill rammed through both houses of Parliament at breakneck speed to try to extend those emergency powers over the election period and into the New Year. It should be simple for them to be able to say that. The police commissioner has confirmed, on the record, sworn testimony to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, that he has not invoked those powers during the time that they have been available to him. That is good. That is precisely what the petitioners were asking for.

Therefore, why is it that nobody within the Cook Labor government, one of its senior ministers or even preferably the Premier himself, will come out and confirm to the people of Western Australia an unequivocal commitment that they will not extend those powers when they expire in November 2024? Quite frankly, they should not even be in place at the moment anyway. There is clearly no need for them whatsoever. Whatever one's view was about that two years ago, that time has well and truly passed. I would invite perhaps the minister responsible for giving the response to this to clarify at a later stage precisely why it is that the Cook Labor government continues to insist that these extraordinary powers be retained. For too long the concerns of Western Australians with regard to the excessive use of emergency powers has fallen on deaf ears. With the greatest of respect, the Cook Labor government needs to listen to these voices and cease and desist with its obsession with emergency powers.

Big petitions command attention, but it is appropriate as we are considering the budget papers before us that we also think about the small voices—those voices at the beginning of life, those voices in primary school education, those voices in the later years of life. By way of context, it has been notable the occasions when the Cook Labor government and particularly the Attorney General have put up the shield on the separation of powers. It has been interesting to observe them put up that shield when it has been convenient. Keep in mind that in the infamous dispute that took place between Magistrate Crawford and President of the Children's Court, Judge Quail, we saw the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley, intervene. He has plainly intervened—in fact, so much so that that intervention now sees itself being litigated in the Federal Court of Australia. So, here is an example of when Mr Quigley was happy to intervene. I do not think we are saying anything particularly controversial to note that Mr Quigley and Mr Quail have had a long history together. But because Mr Quail and Magistrate Crawford were in dispute, Mr Quigley decided that he would inject himself into that particular dispute, and we now see that that is playing out in the Federal Court.

Where was Mr Quigley and the Cook Labor government with regard to the dispute that took place between District Court Judge Staude and the assessor for criminal injuries compensation Hafford? Members may recall that that very untidy, very unseemly event manifested itself in the then director general of the Department of Justice knocking on the door of the Chief Assessor of Criminal Injuries Compensation—not to Assessor Hafford, I might add—Charmaine Holyoak-Roberts, to ask some questions about the judgement that had been handed down by His Honour Judge Staude.

Where was Mr Quigley in that time? He was happy to inject himself and intervene when it came to Mr Quail's dispute with Magistrate Crawford, but where was he? He was completely missing in action when it came to this very untidy episode involving the criminal injuries compensation assessor and a District Court judge. Where was Mr Quigley? It seems we are putting up the shield of the separation of powers when it is convenient to do so. This is not the only time we have seen this pattern of behaviour by the WA Labor government, in particular the Attorney General. Members may well recall that the Attorney General was quite happy to intervene in proceedings before the Public Service Appeal Board. Why? It was because Mr Cook—who was not the Premier but the Deputy Premier at the time—in his capacity as the member for Kwinana, was being called into question because of, as I recall, leave applications and allegations of bullying within his electorate office. Mr Quigley intervened into those proceedings at the Public Service Appeal Board and the outcome of that was to ensure that Mr Cook would not need to appear before those proceedings and have to face the music.

It is interesting to see, when we assess the pattern of behaviour, when it is convenient for the WA Labor government and its first law officer to inject itself into proceedings. If it is in respect of the dispute of a longstanding friend, Mr Quail, and his dispute with Magistrate Crawford, then of course it is going to intervene. If Mr Cook is possibly going to have to face the music because of allegations of bullying and leave applications and the like before the Public Service Appeal Board, then of course the WA Labor government and Mr Quigley are going to intervene. However, if there is a dispute between District Court Judge Staude and criminal injuries compensation assessor Hafford, the WA Labor government and Mr Quigley says, "Let's not worry about that. That's not important enough."

It has only the reputation of a criminal injuries compensation assessor called into question—left there hanging. The best the government can do is get the director general to knock on the door of not even the people in question, but actually the chief assessor.

What would we say then when it comes to the State Coroner of Western Australia when the Attorney General and the WA Labor government have been completely missing in action, not just recently but for years? It brings me to the answer I received last month, which revealed that in the last calendar year, very distressingly, it continues to be the case that babies are born alive and left to die. Last year, we know, and it is on the parliamentary record, that the WA Minister for Health, Amber-Jade Sanderson, was caught out, falsely saying that there is no such thing, yet, year after year, an answer comes back on the parliamentary record to confirm that this practice continues. These are the most vulnerable of all Western Australians who are denied the truth of their existence. They are denied medical treatment. They are denied justice. It is to the shame of the Cook Labor government that Western Australia is now the only state where the coroner will no longer have the power to investigate the deaths of babies who survive an abortion but are left to die. It is easy to say that justice delayed is justice denied, but it is another thing to do something about it, especially for the most vulnerable among us. It is a chilling betrayal of their right to life and dignity. Every moment that passes without investigation or accountability is a stark reminder of how the wheels of justice can grind to a halt, leaving the innocent without recourse or redress. Their deaths represent a failure of the government's moral compass and a betrayal of its duty to protect the most defenceless members of society. When a coroner fails to investigate such cases, it perpetuates a culture of impunity and sends a message that these lives do not matter.

Not only does the WA Labor government do nothing to remediate this situation, it actively encourages it. It denies these babies the justice they are owed as Western Australians and perpetuates a cycle of indifference and callousness that has no place in a civilised society. Every life, no matter how fragile or vulnerable, should be treated with the dignity and respect it deserves. I have lost count of how many times I have raised the investigation and inquiries into those deaths, which were ultimately—albeit belatedly—reported to the State Coroner by WA Health more than five years ago. There have been questions asked in budget estimates and annual report hearings to confirm the progress of these things, yet the State Coroner has done nothing about it. Where is the Attorney General? Did he intervene in this situation? He is nowhere to be seen. He is completely silent—completely missing in action. That is in contrast to when he wants to intervene for his friend Mr Cook, who might have had to face the music before the Public Service Appeal Board because of allegations of bullying and allegations of misuse of leave forms. Then we saw rapid movement by the Attorney General, like when his longstanding friend Mr Quail was in dispute with Magistrate Crawford. Then we saw him rapidly move to intervene. If the reputation of criminal injuries compensation assessor Hafford is left in tatters, we saw no action from him. When some 28 Western Australian babies have died and their cases have been brought to the attention of the State Coroner and the State Coroner has done nothing about those cases and has failed to investigate them, we saw nothing from the Attorney General and the WA Labor government. There is something manifestly and systemically wrong with that, Deputy President.

Meanwhile, on a somewhat brighter note, after my repeated questioning in 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, and a unanimously passed resolution by this house in September 2019, I am pleased to note that during this period that budget papers report on, we finally saw the Cook Labor government prioritise the School Education Amendment Bill 2023. They say that slow progress is still progress but I cannot help but wonder how many victims of sexual abuse would have completed their schooling had the government listened and acted sooner. At least in this case something has ultimately been done. This is why perseverance matters. Sometimes these things take years and years. I can contrast that—members will be well aware of this—with what happened some seven years ago when Mr Quigley and the then leader, Mr McGowan, promised that they would expedite law reform on elder abuse. At some point in time there has to be a reckoning. How many times has it been brought to the government's attention that it made a promise to Western Australians to expedite law reform on elder abuse—“expedite” is not language invented by the opposition, but language captured and chosen intentionally and deliberately by Mr Quigley and his WA Labor counterparts—only for nothing to happen? This occurred more than seven years ago. It has certainly been raised far more than seven times. It would be interesting to do a count; it would probably be closer to 70 than seven, yet nothing whatsoever. Perhaps one of the honourable members opposite can point out where in the budget papers we suddenly see a recommitment to the expediting of law reform on elder abuse. It seems that the commitment made seven years ago to expedite that reform has not only not occurred but has now been abandoned completely.

Is it fair and reasonable to proffer to members and the people of Western Australia that, in fact, the Cook Labor government has decided that it no longer wants to proceed with reforms on elder abuse? What is the status of it? At one point in time, there was the Select Committee into Elder Abuse in Western Australia. As the chair of that committee, we were told, albeit at a belated stage in proceedings, that the government was still committed to law reform on elder abuse. My recollection is that the committee's report was tabled in 2018, with a government response in 2019. We are now in 2024. Has it been completely abandoned? Who in government will take responsibility for this? It is on the public record that the Attorney General, Mr Quigley, is retiring. Of those who will be left behind, who intends to take up this battle for elderly Western Australians? Who will fulfil the commitment that he gave more than seven years ago that these reforms would be expedited? We have seen nothing. Is it too much to say

that it is sick that the WA Labor government accelerates legislation about pets but does nothing about elderly Western Australians? I think it is sick. I do wonder whether, in the remaining months of 2024—the precious few sitting weeks that remain between now and the next election—we will see anything of this much promised legislation that was going to be expedited in 2017. Will we see it, look at it and contemplate it or will there just be yet again complete inaction, silence, contempt and disdain by the retiring Attorney General and the Premier of Western Australia?

As I said, big petitions command attention, but as I just mentioned, we should also consider the smaller voices, whether they are at the beginning of life, in primary school education or at the end of life. But what about the voices of a small number rather than the voice of a large number? What if the voices are from one family alone? As recently as last month, on 23 April, my attention was drawn to the reporting of reforms for victims of crime in one of the state newspapers. The story revealed that a family was most distressed because a twin sibling had been prevented from seeking compensation. This is not a new matter; indeed, it has been brought to the attention of the government over many years. What struck me after reading the article last month was that the Commissioner for Victims of Crime, for all intents and purposes, could have been understood by virtue of her comments only to be embracing the need for reform, giving an indication that she would bring this matter to the attention of the Attorney General. As I said, it is not that the Attorney General needs this matter brought to his attention; he has known about it for years. Nevertheless, for the sake of the family, was it not good to see in the newspaper last month, on 23 April, that there seems to be some momentum? We could see from the family's comments that they were encouraged, with law firm Slater and Gordon becoming involved. I know that some members opposite, particularly in the other place, have a longstanding relationship with Slater and Gordon. They would have probably been pleased to see that article, as I was. Yet, when on 7 May I asked the Attorney General whether he has had a meeting with the Commissioner for Victims of Crime, the response was —

The Commissioner for Victims of Crime and the Attorney General have not discussed this issue since publication of the article in *The West Australian* of 23 April 2024.

There has been no progress whatsoever on this matter. When the people of Western Australia read something in the paper and it has a comment from someone within government that gives them the impression that the government is serious about progressing something, I strongly urge them not to believe it because time and again they say one thing and do the exact opposite. Members have heard me discuss the seven-year delay on expediting elder abuse reforms; this one is not much better. This matter has not been delayed for quite as long as that, but the Attorney General of Western Australia has been sitting on a report since November 2019, which is five years. He could have progressed that report at any time to make the lives of victims of crime in Western Australia better, but he has chosen to do nothing. As I said, this government prefers to progress pet legislation rather than deal with human beings. We see the contempt of this government when it comes to advocacy from a large number of Western Australians. We cannot get much stronger advocacy than more than 63.5 per cent of Western Australians saying no to a particular proposal, yet we still have arrogant members, such as the Minister for Health, who say that they would like to see something like this happen anyway. There is arrogance displayed to a large number of voices, but there is still an arrogance, contempt and disdain when the voices are small in number.

That brings me to the voice of one. On 21 March, I asked the Leader of the House in her representative capacity—one of her various jobs is to represent the Premier of Western Australia in this chamber—the following question —

I refer to the response to my question without notice on 19 March 2024 that confirmed that the Premier has received a letter from Mr Craig Peacock, dated 23 January 2024, arising from the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission's report of 27 November 2023 correcting the errors and omissions contained in the Corruption and Crime Commission's report of 12 March 2019. Will the Premier be providing Mr Peacock a response?

The contemptuous, arrogant response that the Leader of the House regrettably had to read on behalf of the Premier, because the answer is signed by the Premier, was —

There is no update in relation to the correspondence the honourable member is referring to.

For those unfamiliar with this episode, the Corruption and Crime Commission of Western Australia is entrusted to do a number of things, one of which is to investigate the serious misconduct of public officers in the public sector. It tabled a report in March 2019, adversely affecting the reputation of this individual. It can happen, as you would expect, particularly if some wrong has occurred. The Corruption and Crime Commission and Mr McKechnie got it manifestly wrong in this instance.

The Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission is paid by the taxpayers of Western Australia from this budget presently before us, and his job is to oversee the Corruption and Crime Commission to make sure that it does not overstep. He drew to the attention of Mr McKechnie and the Corruption and Crime Commission the errors and omissions in the report. What was the response by Mr McKechnie and the Corruption and Crime Commission? Was it some form of humility to step back and correct the record? No, it was straight out of the playbook of Mr McGowan and Mr Cook, which was to arrogantly dismiss the concerns by the Parliamentary Inspector of

the Corruption and Crime Commission. Meanwhile, this person, when this report was tabled in 2019, continued to have their reputation adversely affected. This individual wrote to the Premier of Western Australia, Mr Cook, to plead his case. There was no response from the arrogant Premier of Western Australia.

I took it upon myself, having received multiple solicitations from the individual and other people, to try to get some clarification that the Premier will respond. I invested some of the precious few questions that are available to me in parliamentary question time to get to the bottom of the matter, yet the contemptuous response from the Premier was —

There is no update in relation to the correspondence the honourable member is referring to.

That was on 21 March 2024. The following month, on 23 April, Mr Cook found himself in an awkward position. He was in a radio interview with Nadia Mitsopoulos of ABC Radio Perth. Clearly, this journalist was utterly unimpressed by the Premier's responses to those parliamentary questions. It should not be this complicated. Will he provide a response to Mr Peacock—yes or no? To her credit, Mitsopoulos managed to extract this response from the Premier —

Obviously we will need to respond but in the context of strong legal advice.

He went on to say —

We all deserve a response from government and I will make sure that response is consistent with our legal advice.

Having had that interview drawn to my attention, on 8 May 2024 I asked the Leader of the House representing the Premier a series of questions, including —

(2) Was it the Premier's intention to give listeners the impression that Mr Peacock will receive a response after legal advice has been obtained?

(3) Has a request for legal advice been made?

(4) Was this done on a date before or after the radio interview?

(5) Has the Premier now received the advice?

The arrogant and contemptuous response from the member for Kwinana in his capacity as the Premier of Western Australia was not a statesman-like or humble response, but an arrogant and contemptuous one that simply said —

(1)–(5) There is no update in relation to the correspondence the member is referring to.

This is about a matter, as I said, that the Corruption and Crime Commission and Mr McKechnie got manifestly wrong. Do not believe me; believe the taxpayer-funded Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. He says there are errors and omissions. That is my first point.

My second point is to consider for a moment that this individual is known by other Western Australians, including myself, to have a precarious state of mental health. Would it be too much for a person who wrote to the Premier of Western Australian, who is in a precarious state of mental health, to get a decent, courteous response from the Premier, to say, "Dear Mr Peacock, I acknowledge receipt of your letter. I am currently obtaining legal advice and I intend to reply to you in six weeks' time", for example? Would that be too much to ask of the Premier of Western Australia? It does not matter whether the Premier is Labor or Liberal; it is just the decent thing to do, particularly when a person has had their reputation tarnished by the Corruption and Crime Commissioner and the Corruption and Crime Commission. It has been exposed because of the work done by the courageous Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. He fulfilled his duties and responsibilities without fear or favour.

The Premier of Western Australia, whoever it is—it would not matter whether it was Barnett, McGowan or Cook—ought to reply courteously to a person in this situation and acknowledge receipt of the letter. If they are taking further steps, say so. It should not require a member of Parliament to invest in multiple questions in question time to get a basic level of information, and even then have to rely on a hardworking journalist at the ABC to back them up. This is in the context of a government that would have Western Australians believe that it is adhering to a gold standard of transparency. Give me a break! It is anything but that. It cannot even get basic correspondence right.

Forget about the seven years of no progression of the expedited elder abuse reforms; forget about the issue that I raised about babies born alive and left to die—if the government does not think that those things are important, then so be it; but can we at least get basic administration right, or is that too much to ask of the Labor government? As Hon Neil Thomson the shadow Treasurer said, it seems that all they are interested in is hi-vis vests and media opportunities, and a complete fixation and obsession with regard to this thing called Metronet. It is as if it is the only thing that a state government is required to do. Why does it not answer the correspondence of Mr Peacock? That would be a great start. A simple thing like that is not asking too much. I am sure there is money in this budget for a pen that the Premier can use to write a response to Mr Peacock. I am very disappointed with the Cook Labor government and its attitude towards Western Australians.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Foster**.

FIREARMS BILL 2024*Second Reading*

Resumed from 21 March.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [3.59 pm]: I stand as lead speaker for the Liberal Party and indicate at the outset that the Liberal Party will not be opposing the Firearms Bill 2024. Having said that, we have a number of concerns with the legislation. I can say quite categorically and beyond the shadow of a doubt that this bill has consumed more of my time than any bill of which I have ever previously had carriage, as either an opposition member or a minister. It is a quite complex and comprehensive bill of 492 clauses, and it has created a lot of emotion in the community with, most notably, of course, legitimate gun owners—that is, licensed gun owners. They are the people—not all, but a number of them—who feel the most aggrieved by this piece of legislation.

Having said that, there is also a considerable amount of support for this legislation. There is overwhelming public support for gun legislation reform and for restricting the number of illicit or unlicensed guns within the community. I get that. With that in mind, it has been very difficult for me, in my position, to try to find common ground between those who feel the bill is draconian and the end of life as we know it, and those who feel that it does not go far enough and that we need to take all guns off the streets. We need to find a common place to rest between those two positions, and that has really been difficult.

In the hour I have to speak, I cannot possibly go through all the correspondence and concerns that I have had expressed to me, and that will, unfortunately, disappoint some people, but that is just the order of the day. I will, of course, be able to spend a lot more time on this during Committee of the Whole House. I have tried to embrace the generic themes that have come across my desk about this piece of legislation and will identify a few specific examples to try to capture those themes.

During the consultation, I found that there was considerable support for this legislation, and that is reflected in the polls. The polls show that mainstream Western Australians fundamentally want to see fewer guns—all illicit or illegal guns—on the streets; there is no doubt about that whatsoever. I have met with an extensive list of groups. The Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and Compass Agricultural Alliance are all supportive of the intent of the legislation, although they do have some concerns. There are concerns about the limits—I will get onto that a little later—and a few other things, but fundamentally they are supportive.

The Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance is not supportive of the legislation, and I understand why. It feels, for want of a better term, targeted. It feels that this legislation targets legitimate gun owners. Unless we as a community were at the point of completely outlawing guns and saying that they are illegal across the board, I can understand why the alliance feels the way it does. In WA we have members of recreational gun associations and clubs, and farmers and pest controllers who use guns quite legally. They are licensed gun owners, so as a member of the opposition and as a member of Parliament, I have to listen to their concerns as well.

Let us not forget, this legislation will be a complete rewrite of the Firearms Act 1973. It has been two years, I think, since the Labor government announced that there would be a complete rewrite of that act. Since that time, more than 20 Western Australians have lost their lives to firearm violence. Having said that—I will keep repeating this—it must always be remembered that the vast majority of licensed gun owners in Western Australia do the right thing. They are not criminals and they are not dangerous individuals; they are law-abiding citizens of Western Australia and they need to be respected.

Gun limits, licences and regulations and mental health checks will receive an enormous amount of scrutiny throughout the passage of this bill. The opposition will certainly contribute to that. Unlike the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, which the government pretty much rammed through this chamber in a matter of days—and wore the consequences—there has been a lot of consultation on this bill. I grant the government that. I think the consultation period was too short—only one month. It is an issue that has come to me quite comprehensively. People did not want just tokenistic consultation; they wanted a period of consultation during which they could express themselves in a much more heartfelt fashion. However, I grant the government that it saw the error of its ways with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, and has tried to consult. What I got from all the groups, including the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Agricultural Alliance, is that the government has made every attempt to try to meet their concerns.

I will now go through, in a very succinct fashion, the composition of the bill and identify particular areas of need. I cannot possibly cover all the areas in the time I have, but I will identify what the government hopes to achieve with the bill and then identify the specific areas of concern for the Liberal Party.

As everyone is well aware, the genesis of this bill was the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission's 2016 report *Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA): Project 105 final report*. The report essentially found that the 1973 act was completely outdated and needed a complete revamp, amendment, and replacement. Despite several amendments having been made to the act following the Port Arthur massacre, the National Firearms Agreement

saw all jurisdictions enact entirely new firearms legislation. This bill will establish a law that is fundamentally in line with the other jurisdictions. That is very important. We keep hearing from the government that it is bringing our laws in line with the National Firearms Agreement and other jurisdictions, but there are two very blatant omissions from that point.

One of the government's stated objectives is that there are 360 000 registered firearms but only 90 000 licence holders, and it wants the number of firearms reduced. The government is using language established by the NFA and the bill sets out principles and objectives from Western Australia Police Force. The bill seeks to minimise the risk of firearm misuse, primarily through health assessments, training processes and more rigorous storage requirements; to develop more efficient use of the property letter; to reduce the number of firearms in the community; to establish clearly defined licence types, including individual, business, primary producer, collector, club, range, trade and government entity; and to modernise the penalty system and introduce new offences that recognise new technology whilst strengthening the powers of WAPOL to ensure compliance with gun use. Those are the government's objectives, in its words, and that is the intent of the legislation.

The principles and objects of the bill are established under par 1, along with the relevant definitions, such as "firearm", "ammunition" et cetera. Under par 2, the various licences are outlined using specific terminology—those being, individual, competition shooting and hunting. There will be an overall maximum of 10 firearms, with a limit of five being available for hunting. Elite level shooters can apply for additional firearms. There will be no limit for prescribed paintball guns. I will deal with those limits much more comprehensively, because that is one area of concern across the board. That came through from the Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, and at the outset I want to make it quite clear that they were not supportive of the limits. They did not want limits in the legislation, but they were prepared to wear it. They were prepared to live with it and their support for the bill remains.

Hunting licences must have written authority from the owner of a property. There will not be limits on the number of properties for which they are approved, unlike the current system whereby one written authority provides access to shoot on any property. Changes to the property letter came as a direct request from the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board, which comprised a number of those areas from the agricultural sector. It said the property letter system was broken and we need to change that, and so that came at the express request of the agricultural sector. Some said, "No, that is terrible." This is the difficulty I have had throughout this entire process; I got these multiple different views, but, fundamentally, I can say, hand on heart, that the majority of people I spoke with said that the changes to the property letters were required and they can live with the changes.

The primary producer licence was included at the express request of the agricultural sector. This licence is intended to produce clarity for people engaged in primary production and will limit the number of firearms. This licence will also provide for the licensee to nominate other family members and employees as the other authorised persons. Again, that came at the express request of the agricultural sector. Having said that, I have received multiple questions on the primary producer licence.

I will provide a couple of questions here. Ideally, if the minister can answer some of these in his response, it would be helpful. In a very condensed fashion—I have tried to be as precise as I possibly can—it would be helpful if the minister can find out: How many primary producer licences can a family farm have? How will sharefarmers and lease farmers and farms with agistment of livestock be defined? Will both the owner and the operator have access to a primary producer licence? What happens if the owner lives on the property and sharefarms the livestock and crop to different parties? Can all three have a primary producer licence; and, if not, why not as they are all effectively involved in the use of the same —

Hon Stephen Dawson: I hope you are not thinking that I will be able to write down all those questions at the speed you are asking them.

Hon PETER COLLIER: No, I am sure that the minister's advisers will see *Hansard* and get this through. If not, why not, as they are all effectively involved in the use of the same land on a commercial basis? As I have said, that has nowhere near expressed all the concerns that I received about those primary producer licences, but that succinctly covers a lot of it.

The club licence will authorise the licensing of firearms for use by club members or visitors at a licensed range. That is up to five firearms. A range licence will provide a means to operate a shooting range. It must be compliant with meeting construction standards and suitability. Other licences are the business, collector, trade and government entity licences. Individuals can access a maximum of 10 licences for competition or five for hunting plus five for competition. Primary producers can access a maximum of 10 licences with a capacity to apply for more.

Authority procedures will deal with the requirement for the person to be deemed fit and proper to hold a licence. The commissioner will consider the person's suitability to hold the licence, such as conduct, behaviour, physical and mental health, opinions, character, domestic circumstances, honesty and criminal record. Applicants are to undergo a health assessment carried out by a registered health practitioner, examining physical and mental health. This assessment will provide advice to the commissioner for final decision. It also provides the avenue to suspend or

cancel a firearm authority. This is an area of considerable concern, particularly to the current firearm licence holders. As the minister will be aware, I have an amendment to this effect on the supplementary notice paper. The government probably will not support it. Having said that, sufficient disquiet was expressed to me that I felt duty-bound to put the amendment on the supplementary notice paper and to allow the house to the opportunity to debate that very real issue at the committee stage and, ideally, identify those issues and placate the concerns of the legitimate gun owners out there—pending, of course, whether this bill ultimately goes to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I am not holding my hopes up high there.

Parts 5 and 6 deal with the licensing and general offences of the bill. The bill will introduce a new graduated penalty structure for the possession and/or use of guns that are of significantly higher risk to the community. Part 7 deals with the safe security and storage of firearms. The bill provides explicit requirements for how a firearm must be stored and in what circumstances they can be removed from storage, plus requirements for dealing with the firearms in transit. The storage requirements have also caused considerable concern, and I would like to flesh that out a little more in committee. I am sure other members will have some concerns with the storage requirements, but the storage requirements in some instances are seen as overly onerous.

The reason I keep on saying this stuff is that I have talked to enough people to know that there are some legitimate and sincere concerns in this area. I have sat with dozens of legitimate gun owners over the past 12 months. Some of them, of course, as I have said, say that it is the end of the world; it is terrible, it is draconian, and we have to get rid of this legislation. Every single time, I tell them to bring me back specific areas and I will identify them and try to find an answer for them. I have tried to do that. The minister's office and the minister have been very forthcoming in this area. The briefings that I had were very, very valuable. The advisers and the minister's staff were very cooperative, and I will grant them that. I have tried to placate the wishes and the concerns of the legitimate gun owners. I have genuinely tried to do that. But no matter what I do in some instances, I am just not going to do that—simply not. The storage component is one such area. Some of these farmers and recreational gun owners will sit down and have a half an hour or three-quarters of an hour with me and go through it. What they say sounds quite reasonable. As I said, I am not going to put amendments on the notice paper just to be difficult. I have been in this place long enough to know that we should not do that, and we do not do that. We do it only if we feel there is a genuine grievance.

I will refer to the areas of significant interest, particularly to me. I have just gone through, as quickly as I can, the basis of the bill. I am sure everyone who is interested in this bill will know all that I just said and probably understand the concerns. They would have been hearing the same concerns that I received. I am sure that they would have received the hundreds of emails that I have received, plus others, so members will understand where I am coming from there. Having said that, I have tried to narrow down the concerns to the ones that I can specifically highlight and, ideally, do something about. As I have said, since the introduction of the National Firearms Agreement, every single jurisdiction, apart from WA, has enacted entirely new legislation, so we are playing catch-up. Regardless of what recreational shooters or gun club owners feel, they are not specifically being targeted here. This legislation is bringing us into line with the rest of the nation. Having said that, have we gone too far with this legislation? Let us look and see whether we have.

I mentioned the Law Reform Commission report and its recommendations have been adopted within this bill. However, several aspects do not align with that review, particularly with the limits. Limits is one big cloud for which we are really going to need some justification because they were not recommended and, as we will find out in a moment, we are “Nigel No Friends” in this space; no other state has them and I want to know why. I will go through that now.

The bill will impose limits on the number of firearms a licensed firearm owner can have. Individual firearm licence and primary producer licence holders, as I have said, will have a limit of 10 firearms, with a limit of five available for hunting. Elite shooters can apply for additional firearms. I will ask a couple of questions about that. However, it has caused considerable angst for some gun owners, particularly hunters from the country, as I have found. According to the government, the limits will reduce the number of guns in the community.

I am just shooting the breeze here—this whole thing of putting limits could have a perverse outcome. As we know, very few Western Australians actually have the limit of guns. At the moment, there are no limits. If the government is saying “You can have up to 10 guns” and someone has five or six, they will say “Well, I can have another four!”, or, if someone can have up to five guns but has one or two, they might say “Well, I can have another three!” Advertising the fact that someone can now have a certain number of guns could actually have the complete reverse effect. I am not saying for a moment that it will, I am just playing devil's advocate. It could quite feasibly have a perverse outcome.

Will this bill and these limits actually reduce the number of guns? As I said earlier, the overall intention of this bill is to reduce the number of guns. The 1973 act states that the licensee must show both a genuine reason and genuine concern to possess a particular type of firearm and that a firearm of another lesser class is inadequate or unsuitable for their needs. They must also have secure storage in compliance with schedule 4 of the Firearms Regulations 1974. Part 7 of this bill deals with the safe and secure storage of firearms and provides explicit requirements for how a firearm must be stored and in what circumstances it can be removed from storage. As well as this, it deals with

firearms in transit. It will strengthen the genuine need test, and the more stringent storage requirements should go a long way to limiting the proliferation of stolen and illegal guns in our community. Well, as I said, that is the intention of the storage and limits provisions: to reduce the number of guns. However, I know that the Liberal Party and, for a fact, the National Party are going to need some convincing that we need to put those limits on guns.

I have some serious doubts about that. I asked multiple questions to prepare for today, going back to 2022 when these laws were first touted. The lack of response that I have received to virtually 90 per cent of those questions is scary. If the government is so comfortable in its skin that it needed to have this piece of legislation based on the facts, I would wear it, but, quite frankly, I received a lack of detail right up until the last briefing—I am grateful for the information I received after that briefing. That I could not get it prior to that is scary stuff. It is very easy to go out there in an overtly political fashion to talk about these terrible guns. The minister loves standing there with the police behind him with their submachine guns and rifles et cetera and saying “Isn’t this terrible? We need to get rid of the guns”, but is that the reality of the situation? Does that really reflect it? I am not convinced it does. From the information I have been provided, there is nothing to indicate that that is the case.

I asked a question just last week on 8 May. I said —

- (1) Which jurisdictions in Australia have gun limits included in their firearms acts?
- (2) Which jurisdictions in Australia require those applying for a gun licence to meet mental health requirements?

It is a very simple question. The minister must know. We are getting the information to bring us in line with the rest of the nation, so surely the rest of the nation must have limits and mental health requirements or else, why are we doing this? We have been told ad nauseam that we are bringing this legislation in line with the rest of the nation. The response I got was insulting, I have got to say. Just to qualify this: this was last week. The bill had already gone through the Legislative Assembly, so the government and the Western Australia Police Force must know. I am sure WAPOL knows, and this just gets politicised in Dumas House. The answer states —

- (1)–(2) Western Australia is leading the nation in elevating public safety as its paramount consideration with respect to firearms possession and use in accordance with the National Firearms Agreement.

It did not even touch the question. I can tell members: no-one does. There are no limits and there are no mental health requirements in any other jurisdiction. If I am wrong, I would really appreciate a response from the minister. The minister should be wearing this as a badge of honour: “Yes, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia et cetera have all got limits, and we are just following suit of them!” But they do not. If the minister is using that as a qualifier for this legislation, he is sadly mistaken.

The information I have received from multiple sources is that we are going to be the only state with limits and mental health requirements. Why not just say that? To provide me an answer like that after the bill has gone through the Legislative Assembly, with all due respect, is an own goal.

That was just one question. As I have said, I have asked multiple questions. The questions I have asked are not too difficult to answer. On 15 June last year after this piece of legislation was flouted by the government, I started asking multiple questions about the number of firearms in the community. On 15 June 2023, I asked —

- (1) How many registered firearms were involved in an arrest in 2021 and 2022?
- (2) How many unregistered firearms were involved in an arrest in 2021 and 2022?

I asked that question because the premise of this legislation was to get rid of unregistered firearms. Police must know, otherwise how could they make that assertion? If the minister does not know how many unregistered firearms were involved in crime et cetera out there, how does he know they are actually involved in crime? The response I got was —

- (1)–(2) The Western Australia Police Force advise that due to the level of detail and data extraction required and the way the information is captured in the police system, a response is not able to be provided.

The minister cannot actually provide that information, and yet it is the premise of this bill: to get all these illegal guns off the street. He does not know how many there are on the street. I also put a question on notice. It stated —

- (1) For crimes committed in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 to date, how many involved the use of a registered gun(s)?
- (2) For crimes committed in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 to date, how many involved the use of an unregistered gun(s)?

The response stated —

- (1)–(2) The Western Australia Police Force does not distinguish between crimes involving registered and unregistered firearms. The Western Australia Police Force can provide a record of crimes incidents where the modus operandi is ‘firearm’.

It is just firearms. They still do not actually know which of these guns are registered and unregistered, and yet getting all these unregistered guns off the streets has been the poster child of this legislation. I am not having a crack at the police here; I am just saying that if that is the government's premise, be transparent, because this is the message I am getting from legitimate gun owners. How does the government know there are all these unregistered guns out there on the streets when the police do not even know? They do not distinguish between the two.

I could spend the next two hours on these questions, but the minister needs to understand that I am being selective with my responses. This next one is a pearl—how are we going, President?

The PRESIDENT: I was just about to call you to order, honourable member, because noting the time, it is question time.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2115.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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

I refer the minister to his response to question without notice 396, asked on Tuesday, 3 August 2021, and my question without notice 450, answered on Thursday, 9 May 2024.

Why was the response to the question about arrests made for family and domestic violence incidents possible for question without notice 396, but not possible for question 450, due to the fact that “the number of arrests resulting from the above incidents cannot be determined in a reliable and systematic manner”?

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.

The Western Australia Police Force advises that due to operational priorities, it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

Hon Peter Collier: They couldn't do it!

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Just to clarify —

Hon Peter Collier: I know.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The minister is providing a clarification.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Before people started guffawing, what I said was that a response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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

It could have done that last week, but thank you, minister.

- (1) How many FTE officers are currently allocated to family violence response teams?
- (2) How many FTE officers are currently employed within the family violence response teams?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

I have also been advised that the Western Australia Police Force advises that due to operational priorities, it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. A response will be provided to the honourable member tomorrow.

WILD DOG ACTION PLAN

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

I refer to the Western Australia wild dog action plan 2021–25.

- (1) What parties were consulted as part of the development of the plan?
- (2) Was a final version of the plan distributed to all relevant stakeholders and regional biosecurity groups?
- (3) Why is the *Western Australian wild dog action plan 2016–2021* still referenced on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website?
- (4) Please table a copy of the 2021–25 plan.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(4) In December 2020, Hon Alannah MacTiernan announced \$13.4 million in funding to deliver a continuation of the Western Australian 2016–21 wild dog action plan. The funding package, known as the 2021–25 wild dog action plan, was developed with significant input from stakeholders and consists of the 2016–21 action plan, a funding table outlining new activities funded to 2025, and the *Competitive research and development grants—Western Australia wild dog action plan 2021–25: Guidelines*. I table this document.

[See paper [3141](#).]

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: The funding table is as follows.

President, the rest of the answer is in tabular form. I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

1	Employ eight Licensed Pest Management Technicians by Recognised Biosecurity Groups	\$3,200,000
2	Repair, replace and maintain the State Barrier Fence	\$5,000,000
3	Employ project staff to 30 June 2025 to manage the Wild Dog Action Plan, including the Esperance extension component	\$3,523,000
4	Provide a Murdoch University Veterinary Graduate Program to sterilise dogs in Aboriginal communities	\$580,000
5	Establish a wild dog research and development fund and employ a research scientist to investigate alternative and humane management approaches	\$1,000,000
6	Engage with industry over four years	\$100,000
	Total	\$13,403,000

ROSSMOYNE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL — PRAYER ROOM

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

I refer to the operation of the prayer room at Rossmoyne Senior High School.

- (1) When was the prayer room introduced at the school, at whose request was it made available and what was the approval process?
- (2) Is the prayer room currently accessible to students?
- (3) At what times during the school day is the prayer room accessible or has the prayer room been accessible to students; for example, are students able to miss regular class time to attend?
- (4) What has been or is the sign-in and sign-out process for students, and if there has been a change to this procedure, please advise?
- (5) Have teachers or school administrators ever attended the prayer room while it was being used by students?
- (6) What adult supervision is being provided now?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

Information is not possible in the time required. I therefore ask the honourable member to place this question on notice.

As Leader of the House, I just indicate that how we could get some of the information that the member requires, such as part (5), “Have teachers or school administrators ever attended the prayer room while it was being used by students?” within four hours —

Hon Tjorn Sibma interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Within four hours, it is not possible.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: Seriously!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am being serious.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM — FUNDING

456. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the Empowering Communities program delivered through the Department of Communities.

- (1) What was the total funding allocation to the program in the following years —
 - (a) 2021–22;
 - (b) 2022–23; and
 - (c) 2023–24?

- (2) What is the total funding allocated to the program in —
- (a) 2024–25; and
 - (b) 2025–26?

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 Community Services.

The Department of Communities advises the following.

- (1)
 - (a) It was \$5 936 777.
 - (b) It was \$7 209 818.
 - (c) It was \$7 537 950.
- (2) (a)–(b) For the financial years 2024–25 and 2025–26, service agreements will be at the current funding levels, plus indexation calculated in accordance with the Western Australian government indexation policy for the non-government human services sector.

PERTH SEAWATER DESALINATION PLANT

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

I refer to the Perth seawater desalination plant—PSDP—located in Kwinana.

For each of the financial years 2017–18 to 2022–23 inclusive —

- (1) What percentage of power purchased by the PSDP for plant operation was purchased from renewable resources?
- (2) Were carbon offset credits from accredited third parties required to be purchased to meet any shortfall; and, if so, for each year, how many credits were purchased?
- (3) 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) Nil.
- (2)–(3) Not applicable.

CITY OF STIRLING — SOLID WASTE DEPOT — DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

458. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the minister representing the Minister for Planning:

I refer to an interim referral response to the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage regarding an application received by the City of Stirling seeking approval for an industry-noxious solid waste depot development at 501 Alexander Drive, Mirrabooka.

- (1) Does the state government note the concerns of the City of Stirling, citing insufficient information from the applicants and incompatibility of land use?
- (2) Does the state government intend to support this application, noting community feedback and opposition from the City of Stirling?

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 Planning.

- (1)–(2) The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is currently assessing a development application for a solid waste depot at lot 821 Victoria Road, Mirrabooka, adjacent to Alexander Drive. The decision-maker for this application is the Western Australian Planning Commission. The application will be subject to assessment and consideration of a range of matters, including public admissions.

PERTH HILLS GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION — COCA-COLA

459. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to an article published by the ABC regarding concerns around Coca-Cola's use of groundwater, particularly amid record low rainfall in Western Australia.

- (1) Is the minister aware of residents' concerns around Coca-Cola's use of groundwater?
- (2) What is the maximum amount of water that the company is legally allowed to extract annually?

- (3) Is the water extraction monitored by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation; and, if not, why not?

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) Yes.
- (2)–(3) The location of this activity in the Perth hills is in an area that is not proclaimed under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914. As such, the take of water in this location for this activity is not regulated by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation under legislative requirements and it is therefore not monitored. In these cases, the take of water and the management of that take can be monitored under development planning conditions imposed by the relevant local government authority.

PLANNING — DENMARK LAND REZONING — CONCERNS

460. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Planning:

I refer to the Denmark shire council proposed rezoning of lot 3 at 2446 South Coast Highway, at the entrance to the iconic William Bay National Park, from rural land to tourist use, and community and government agency concerns about fire danger.

- (1) How is the minister addressing the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' advice that lot 3 South Coast Highway, William Bay, should not be rezoned from rural to tourist use?
- (2) What were the key concerns raised by DFES in relation to the proposed rezoning?

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 Planning, and I note that the response was current as of Wednesday, 8 May.

- (1)–(2) Amendment 147 to the Shire of Denmark town planning scheme 3 is currently under consideration. Determination of scheme amendment proposals involves consideration of referral comments received from all agencies. A copy of the submission from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the council's response to this submission is publicly available on the Shire of Denmark website. I table a copy of DFES' submission from the minutes.

[See paper [3142](#).]

CANNABIS — DRIVER IMPAIRMENT

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

I refer the minister to the ministerial working group she and her colleagues established some months ago to examine possible changes to our driving laws in regard to the mere presence of THC.

- (1) Can the minister inform the house which bodies, organisations and/or departments are represented on the working group, and how many experts from which fields have been included in its make-up?
- (2) Is she able to tell us how many times the group has met to date, please?

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)–(2) The state government is continuing to progress the establishment of the medicinal cannabis and safe driving working group, with nominations being sought across government, the health sector and people with lived experience.

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

462. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

Noting that the word “sex” has an ordinary, commonly accepted meaning, but the word “gender” does not, can the Attorney General provide a definition for the word “gender” as it is used in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill so that parents, medical doctors and other concerned community members can comprehend what kinds of circumstances may trigger the need for the proposed change of gender contemplated by this bill?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

The terms “sex” and “gender” are undefined in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill. The Attorney General has already stated that the contemplated categories for the regulations will be male, female and non-binary, with consultation to be undertaken in relation to indeterminate and intersex.

*REVIEW OF THE FIREARMS ACT 1973 (WA): PROJECT 105 FINAL REPORT***463. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's *Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA): Project 105 final report*.

- (1) Can the minister please table the Western Australia Police Force submission dated 9 February 2016?
- (2) Can the minister please table any other written submission made by the WA Police Force to the Law Reform Commission's review?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. This answer has been provided by the Minister for Police.

It is requested that the honourable member place the question on notice.

FERAL PIGS — SOUTH WEST

464. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the answer provided to my question without notice 340 regarding the trial of HOGGONE to manage feral pigs.

- (1) Was the trial successful?
- (2) How many feral pigs were destroyed?
- (3) Will the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions progress from trial to full implementation?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I saw that question this morning, but it is not in the file, so I will answer it if someone brings it back in at the end of question time.

FIREARMS ACT — REFORM

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

I refer to the Minister for Police's media statement published yesterday in which he said —

“The State's outdated laws currently allow guns to be legally owned by people who have been convicted of serious crimes, including dangerous family and domestic violence offenders.

- (1) Which section of which law is the minister referring to that currently allows this?
- (2) Of the firearms surrendered in the first 10 weeks of the buyback scheme, how many were surrendered by a person convicted of a serious crime?

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 Police.

- (1)–(2) The new law will create a disqualification order that is not currently within the Firearms Act 1973. Those subject to the disqualification order under the new laws are ineligible for the buyback.

LIVE EXPORT — FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY

466. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to federal Labor's inadequate live export transition package.

- (1) When did the minister first become aware of the date 1 May 2028?
- (2) When did the minister first become aware of the amount of funding in the transition package?
- (3) How much of the \$107 million will be received by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development?
- (4) How much of the transition package will be spent on farmers' mental health?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(2) I first became aware of the proposed end date of 1 May 2028 and the \$107 million of transition funding during a telephone conversation with Senator Hon Murray Watt on the evening of Friday, 10 May 2024.
- (3) There will be none.
- (4) This question should be directed to the federal government.

POLICE — STAFF

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

- (1) What was the total number of police officers as of 30 April 2024?
- (2) Of those police officers referred to in (1), how many were —
 - (a) male;
 - (b) female; and
 - (c) other?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Western Australia Police Force advises that due to operational priorities, it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frame. A response will be provided for the honourable member tomorrow.

SOUTH COAST MARINE PARK — MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT— COMMENTS

468. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the minister's response to a grievance raised by the member for Roe on 9 May 2024, regarding the south coast marine park. Does the minister stand by the comments he made during his response?

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.

If the member is referring to the minister's introductory comments in the first paragraph of *Hansard* that, and I quote, "no commercial fishers are operating", this was a simple mistake. The minister and the government fully intend for commercial fishing to remain a key component of the south coast marine park on an ongoing basis.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (FINANCE AND OTHER MATTERS) ACT — IMPLEMENTATION

469. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs:

I refer to the level of consultation with registered political parties on the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Other Matters) Act 2023.

- (1) Is the implementation process on track so as to enable the implementation of the associated regulations, particularly those concerning new disclosure obligations, on 1 July 2024?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?

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 Electoral Affairs.

- (1) Yes. The necessary regulations to give effect to the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Others Matters) Act 2023 are currently being finalised, alongside the systems development and training to enable stakeholders to use an online disclosure system from 1 July onwards.
- (2) Not applicable.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CENTRES

470. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to the five language development centres operated by the Department of Education.

- (1) For each centre will the minister advise —
 - (a) the total number of enrolment applications received for the 2024 school year for the following year groups where applicable —
 - (i) kindergarten;
 - (ii) pre-primary;
 - (iii) year 1;
 - (iv) year 2; and
 - (v) year 3; and
 - (b) the total number of students currently enrolled in the year groups identified in (1)(a)(i)–(v)?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The answer to both (1)(a) and (b) is in tabular form, so I seek leave to have that incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

(1)	(a)	Enrolment applications received for the 2024 school year for the following year groups	
		(i) Kindergarten	270
		(ii) Pre-primary	230
		(iii) Year 1	208
		(iv) Year 2	0
		(v) Year 3	0
		TOTAL	708
	(b)	The total number of students currently enrolled in the year groups identified in (1)(a)(i)–(v).	
		(i) Kindergarten	166
		(ii) Pre-primary	338
		(iii) Year 1	442
		(iv) Year 2	264
		(v) Year 3	120
		TOTAL	1,330

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

471. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the Australian Energy Market Operator report *Quarterly energy dynamics Q1 2024: April 2024*, detailing that procured demand reduction was implemented on the wholesale electricity market on 14 occasions between 1 January 2024 and 31 March 2024.

- (1) Was the government or Synergy advised by AEMO of the details of the demand reduction procured; and, if so, will the minister please table that advice?
- (2) What specific entities were served procured demand reduction notices and on what dates?
- (3) For each of the 14 demand reduction notices, what time frame was accorded, and what specific and detailed costs and/or payments were associated?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1) The government or Synergy is not required to be advised by AEMO on the details of demand reduction services procured through the reserve capacity mechanism and the supplementary reserve capacity mechanism in accordance with the wholesale electricity market rules.
- (2) Demand reduction procured through the reserve capacity mechanism is dispatched by the Australian Energy Market Operator in accordance with the relevant provisions in the wholesale electricity market rules. Demand reduction procured through the supplementary reserve capacity mechanism is activated in accordance with the contracts between AEMO and the relevant service provider.
- (3) Dispatch notices for demand reduction procured through the reserve capacity mechanism are issued up to two hours before the relevant dispatch interval. The length of activation notices for demand reduction procured through the supplementary reserve capacity mechanism is in accordance with the contracts between AEMO and the relevant service provider.

Payments for demand reduction procured through the reserve capacity mechanism are based on the prevailing reserve capacity price calculated in accordance with the relevant provisions in the wholesale electricity market rules. Payments for demand reduction procured through the supplementary reserve capacity mechanism are in accordance with the competitively procured contracts between AEMO and the relevant service provider—and my tongue is sore!

ENVIRONMENT — VOGEL–McFERRAN REVIEW

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

I hope this does not have quite as long an answer. I refer to the Vogel–McFerran review, which examined red tape in environmental approvals.

- (1) Has recommendation 10 been implemented, requiring that all proponents for significant proposals or projects be offered an opportunity to meet with the Environmental Protection Authority board?

- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Since the government has accepted this finding, what direction has been given to the EPA board on this matter?

The PRESIDENT: Of course, honourable member, the length of answers is sometimes dependent on the length of the question.

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

Thank you, President. I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I can be helpful, President.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) This practice is consistent with EPA procedures. I have regular meetings with the chair of the EPA and they have reaffirmed their commitment to thorough engagement with proponents and key stakeholders.

LSD — MEDICAL RESEARCH

473. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to an article published in 2020 titled “Therapeutic Use of LSD in Psychiatry: A Systematic Review of Randomized-Controlled Clinical Trials”, which can be found on the United States National Library of Medicine website. The article concludes that LSD has the potential to be used as a therapeutic agent, with new studies needed to find its place in twenty-first century psychiatry.

- (1) Is the department aware of this research?
- (2) Does the department plan to explore the potential use of LSD in a psychiatric environment?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

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) No.
- (2) The Department of Health supports research organisations in conducting legitimate medical research on schedule 9 poisons through the existing permit system, including research organisations wishing to conduct research on lysergic acid diethylamide.
- (3) Not applicable.

STIRLING TOWERS — REFURBISHMENT

474. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to Stirling Towers, where tenants were evicted a decade ago.

- (1) How many proposals to refurbish Stirling Towers were received as part of the housing diversity pipeline’s expression of interest and request for detailed proposal processes?
- (2) When looking at options for Stirling Towers, what evaluation criteria was used to consider these proposals?

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) There were none.
- (2) Following due diligence and engineering reports on the site, refurbishment is not viable on the ageing building, with significant structural issues including, but not limited to, the presence of concrete cancer, significant asbestos and noncompliant balconies. Additionally, it is unlikely that the building could be brought up to current national standards and building codes including, importantly, accessibility and energy efficiency standards.

CANNABIS — LEGALISATION

475. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer the Premier to a new paper, published by researchers at the University of Toronto that debunks a number of cannabis myths, including the suggestion that recreational cannabis users are somehow lazy or unmotivated, while finding no evidence for the next day so-called “weed hangover” that has been peddled in the past.

- (1) Will the Premier circulate this research around to his ministers to better help them understand the realities of cannabis use, rather than the unfounded tall tales that are often told to scare us?

- (2) Given that the researchers are on record as having conducted the study to “take a neutral, clear-eyed approach” to the effects cannabis has on its users, will the Premier follow the science, as his predecessor urged us all to do, and commit to the same neutral and clear-eyed approach to cannabis legalisation going forward?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I am so tempted to talk about clear eyes and cannabis, but I will not, because I would not know anything about that! I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(2) There have been no changes to the government’s position on cannabis laws. The Premier and cabinet are focused on delivering cost-of-living relief, boosting housing supply, creating local jobs of the future, investing in our health system and building major infrastructure for our growing population.

HOMELESSNESS — CENTRE FOR NATIONAL RESILIENCE — BULLSBROOK

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

I refer to the answer provided to my question without notice 428 on 9 May 2024 in relation to the Bullsbrook Centre for National Resilience.

- (1) Can the Premier confirm that no request was made by Western Australian government representatives to the federal government in November 2023 to make the Bullsbrook facility available to Western Australians affected by a bushfire emergency?
- (2) How was the WA government made aware by the federal Department of Finance that the Bullsbrook facility was available to be used in November 2023?
- (3) Will the Premier table all the documents that outline how the Bullsbrook facility was made available in November 2023, including what procedures the state agencies needed to take to direct Western Australians to the commonwealth facility, and how long it was to be available and under what conditions?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(3) The Bullsbrook Centre for National Resilience was critical in supporting families affected by the Mariginiup bushfire, as well as accommodating response staff. A total of 86 evacuees from 48 households, as well as 33 response staff were accommodated over the course of the emergency. The Bullsbrook Centre for National Resilience was formally activated through a request for non-financial assistance from the Australian government in line with the Australian government disaster response plan.

PROPOSED EMERGENCY HELICOPTER — GERALDTON

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

I refer to comments attributed to the member for Geraldton, Lara Dalton, MLA, in the *Midwest Times* and *Northern Guardian* on 12 May 2024, that she was strongly advocating for a new emergency helicopter to be based in Geraldton.

- (1) Has the member’s advocacy resulted in a Geraldton-based helicopter in the 2024–25 state budget?
- (2) On how many occasions has the member for Geraldton written to the minister strongly advocating for the helicopter?
- (3) I refer to evidence before the Deputy State Coroner, WACOR 29, by Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Carr that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services had supported three submissions for funding of a midwest-based rescue helicopter. Why does the minister’s government continue to ignore the member for Geraldton, DFES and the needs of regions that do not readily have access to a lifesaving emergency rescue helicopter service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The member for Geraldton, Lara Dalton, MLA, continues to strongly advocate for a new helicopter, including as recently as today.
- (3) The Cook government is acquiring three new Leonardo AW139 rescue helicopters, which will go faster and further than the helicopters they are replacing.

FIREARMS ACT

478. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Firearms Act 1973, section 33B, “Amnesty for things surrendered to Commissioner”. As far as records provide, how many firearms in Western Australia have been surrendered according to section 33B of the Firearms Act 1973?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. Answering this question would require redirecting police resourcing away from operational activities.

I think it was read as the member asking historically, since 1973, how many have been surrendered. If that is the case, the answer stands. If the member is asking as of recently, under the buyback scheme, she is welcome to tell me behind the chair and I will seek an answer for that part of the question for her.

COMMUNITIES — CHILDREN IN CARE AND HOMELESS STATISTICS

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

I refer to the article published by the ABC on 8 May 2024 entitled “Homeless teenage girl avoids penalty for stealing water as Kimberley court spotlights WA child protection failures” and Magistrate Potter’s remarks that “her case was reflective of many children in the region who appeared before the courts”.

- (1) How many children are in the care of the Department of Communities?
- (2) How many are homeless?

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 the following.

- (1) As of 30 April 2024, 5 310 children were in the care of the CEO.
- (2) All children in care have access to care arrangements. In some circumstances, young people will self-select their accommodation and may be unwilling to disclose their living arrangements. When a young person self-selects their accommodation, they continue to have access to the same supports that would be made available to them if they were residing in an approved care arrangement. Communities will always prioritise efforts to engage young people who have chosen to leave their placement and will support their safe return to their planned placement.

LIVE EXPORT — TRANSITION PACKAGE

480. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to federal Labor’s live sheep transition plan, which proposes spending slightly over \$20 million a year to transition an industry worth significantly more.

- (1) Has the WA government asked for more transition funding given that its own submission said that the ban would cost WA’s economy \$123 million a year?
- (2) If yes to (1), will the minister please table the relevant correspondence?
- (3) If no to (1), why not?
- (4) If yes to (1), how much more has the WA government asked for?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(4) I have sent a letter to Senator Hon Murray Watt advising that the \$107 million transition package will not meet the current and future needs of the WA sheep industry and supply chain. I am particularly disappointed that only \$64.6 million has been earmarked for sheep producers, the industry supply chain and regional communities. I table the letter.

[See paper [3143](#).]

POLICE — ROAD TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS UNIT — STAFF

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

- (1) What is the total allocated FTE of police officers in the road traffic enforcement operations unit?
- (2) How many police officers are currently employed in the road traffic enforcement operations unit?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I have an answer here, but I can see an obvious error in it. If it is okay with the Leader of the Opposition, I will check it and provide an answer tomorrow.

DISTRICT COURT — CRIMINAL TRIALS — DELAYS

482. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to ongoing delays in progressing criminal trials in the District Court.

- (1) Why did the feasibility study into increasing court resources fail to meet budget cut-off?
- (2) What explanation can the Attorney General give for again failing to provide additional resources?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1)–(2) Options analysis arising from the feasibility study on the expansion of criminal trial facilities in the Perth central business district for cabinet’s consideration continues. Addressing this issue remains a priority for government.

AIR QUALITY MONITORING — COMO**483. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the air quality monitoring site established in Como in January 2023, which is close to the intersection of Kwinana Freeway and Canning Highway, for the purpose of understanding the influence of motor vehicle emissions in areas close to major transport thoroughfares.

- (1) From its establishment in January 2023 to date, what information, data and summations of air quality readings have been received by the government from the Como air quality site?
- (2) To whom are the Como air quality findings remitted and at what frequency and methodology?
- (3) Will the minister table the feedback, data and information provided by the Como air quality trial; and, if not, why not?

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)–(2) The Como monitoring program was a 12-month program that was completed in February 2024. National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure criteria pollutant data from the monitoring station were published hourly for the community during the program on the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation’s air quality index webpage.
- (3) The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is currently analysing the data and will publish a report on the findings of the Como monitoring program in 2024.

TROY MERCANTI — BAIL APPLICATION*Question without Notice 434 — Answer*

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Nick Goiran’s question without notice 434 asked last Thursday, 9 May, which I table.

[See paper [3144](#).]

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 table an attachment in relation to information requested by Hon Tjorn Sibma’s question without notice 392 asked last week on 8 May.

[See paper [3145](#).]

FERAL PIGS — SOUTH WEST*Question without Notice 464 — Answer*

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 pm]: I now have a copy of the answer to the question asked by Hon Louise Kingston earlier today of the Minister for Environment.

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer.

- (1) The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions undertook a trial using HOGGONE in the Moore River region with an external contractor managing the toxin and pre-feeding of hoppers. This trial was successful in controlling feral pigs.
- (2) It is estimated that that 11 pigs were destroyed from the deployment of HOGGONE in this trial.
- (3) DBCA trialled HOGGONE in response to requests from community-based groups to determine the efficacy of the product. As a result of the trial undertaken by DBCA and others led by community-based groups, it was determined that the product has greater potential to impact non-target species and is not as cost effective as 1080 in grain. DBCA will continue to use grain and 1080 for feral pig control in areas where resources are available. DBCA recognises that HOGGONE is a suitable tool for private landholders due to restrictions on the use of schedule 7 toxins such as 1080.

STANDING ORDER 43 — APPLICATION*Ruling by President*

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [5.06 pm]: During members' statements on Thursday, 18 April 2024, Hon Nick Goiran requested a ruling clarifying the rule against allusion to debate in the Legislative Assembly. It is correct that standing order 42, which had contained an express prohibition against allusion to debates in the Assembly in members' speeches, was repealed by the Council on 9 September 2021. It is, however, instructive to note the rationale for the repeal as set out in the sixty-fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges, which stated at paragraph 6.9 —

The rule against allusion to debate in the Legislative Assembly has been part of the Council's Standing Orders since the 1890s. The principle behind the Standing Order was to prevent debate that may anticipate and seek to influence a matter that is before the Assembly. Multiple rulings in relation to Standing Order 42 highlight that the practice of the Council has been to tolerate such debate so long as it does not begin to closely examine a debate or proceeding in the Assembly.

Paragraph 6.10 states —

Noting that such a similar provision does not appear in the Standing Orders of other houses of parliament in Australia (except South Australia), and the requirement in Standing Order 47 for a Member's speech to be relevant to the matter under discussion, the Committee is of the view that it can be deleted.

Accordingly, as part of maintaining the relevance of debate in the Council, it is the custom and practice of the Council that when a bill is under consideration in the other place, a member should not delve into and forensically examine the specific content of the bill and should confine their speech to general comments. In this way, the comity between the houses is preserved and this house does not embark on an irrelevant debate. However, merely referring to a bill or a matter under the consideration of the Legislative Assembly, particularly during business with a wide scope as to what is permissible debate, does not offend the practice of the house.

FIREARMS BILL 2024*Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [5.09 pm]: I will continue my remarks where I finished off, which was expressing my frustration about the lack of information that was provided to the Parliament and me in preparation for this bill. As I said, I was asking what I regarded to be fairly basic questions on the numbers of firearms, in preparation for the debate. Given that this legislation was then in the process of being constructed, I would have thought that would have been a principal motivating factor for the bill to come to Parliament in the first place, so surely that information must have been known.

I have asked multiple questions, and I will go through a couple more. I have already identified a few. The consultation period was established in October 2023 and concluded in November 2023. I asked —

I refer to the current firearms licensing and registration system.

- (1) How many firearms licence holders are currently registered on the licensing and registration system?
- (2) Of those registered on the licensing and registration system, how many firearms licence holders have more than —
 - (a) five firearms on the licence condition “recreational hunting shooting”;
 - (b) 10 firearms on the licence condition “club use”;
 - (c) 10 firearms on the licence condition “occupational use, primary producer”; and
 - (d) 10 firearms on the licence condition “occupational use, professional shooter”?

That was part of the consultation paper. The response I received was, in part —

... it is not possible to provide an answer within this parliamentary sitting period. It is requested that the honourable member place the question on notice.

Members in this chamber will know why that was a problem. I asked that question at the end of November, so when was I going to get an answer back? Three months later, because we had the long break. For goodness' sake, all I was trying to do was to prepare and, dare I say, weaponise myself for the legitimate questions I was getting from legitimate gun owners.

I also asked, in part —

I think I might know the answer to this one, but I will give it a crack.

- (1) How many firearms, excluding paintball guns and firearm parts, were stolen from firearm licence holders in the years 2020, 2021 and 2022?

It was the same answer: put the question on notice. Again, these are details that we would surely assume the Western Australia Police Force could retrieve at the press of a button, if we are basing the entire bill on this information. Every single time I am asked to put the question on notice.

On 16 November 2023 I asked, in part —

How many registered firearms owners have more firearms than the proposed limits across the following categories —

- (a) individual club/competition (10);
- (b) individual target (5);
- (c) individual hunt (5);
- (d) individual with multiple subtypes (10); and
- (e) primary producers (10)?

The response was, in part —

These categories of firearms licence do not currently exist; therefore, it is not possible to determine how many firearms licence holders will be subject to specific category limits.

Yet, that information is on the WAPOL website and fact sheet—that exact category. That is why I asked the question, because it is additional information for the public on numerical limits. I asked that very relevant question and was given the hand, yet again. I am not being difficult here; I am just asking for basic information.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You were given a hand?

Hon PETER COLLIER: “The” hand. Not the finger, the hand!

It goes on and on; it was the same with questions about paintball guns. I keep saying this, and I do not say it flippantly: I have great respect for WAPOL. I know the police do a hard job, and every time they get three or four questions from me, they must just roll their eyes, but we are dealing with a piece of legislation that will impact a significant number of legitimate gun owners in Western Australia. I owe it to them to provide them with answers. If a piece of legislation is being developed, surely it is being developed on facts, not just on whims, how the minister might feel or how WAPOL might feel. Surely it is based on facts, but apparently not. That is why I am frustrated.

The government also said that there was going to be a great new IT system; I hope it is going to be better than the one it currently has because that is not working. I asked what the estimated cost would be of the IT system required to cope with the increased administrative burden that would be placed on Western Australia Police Force to track compliance. WAPOL must know that; that is an operational issue. The second part of the question was: what is the estimated compensation to be paid to firearms owners? The response was —

A response is not able to be provided to the honourable member as funding issues related to the Firearms Act 1973 reform are subject to cabinet confidentiality.

I even mildly get it for the second part about compensation—we all know that now, anyway—but the first part is an operational issue. Surely they must know how much the IT system is going to cost. This happens every single time, including today. I did not get responses to four out of four questions. This expresses my frustration.

Hon Martin Aldridge: At least they’re consistent.

Hon PETER COLLIER: They are consistent, and I hate saying that. I do not mean to undermine WAPOL, but we are dealing with a very significant piece of legislation and I feel completely disempowered. I am sitting there, trying to deal with legitimate gun owners, as I keep on saying. Let us make one thing clear: these people are the same as anyone in the community. They are not doing anything wrong. We have laws with regard to guns; they have licences to say that they can have guns. If I cannot provide information to them, it makes my position difficult. We want to have good, sensible reform of gun legislation in Western Australia. We can understand their cynicism if we cannot provide that information and we can understand why they are frustrated. They literally feel targeted.

I have had multiple submissions sent to me about this bill. I cannot possibly read them all, but I have chosen a couple and I have permission from the people who sent them to read them into the chamber. These are the genuine concerns of people out there. It is not someone saying that it is the end of mankind, or whatever it might be; these are genuine concerns. The first one states, and I will read this very succinctly —

Dear Mr Collier Sir.

...

I currently own 8 firearms. 7 of which are licensed to my uncle’s property in Quairading. I also shoot on another larger property there by word of mouth.

The other rifle not licensed in Quairading is licensed with a letter from Limestone Station in Marble Bar (for donkeys). My brother (Owen) used to work there for many years, My brother met the owner’s son

through Scotch I think. My brother even met his wife up there. They now have two children and live in South Australia. So this connection is family based again. Not a purchased letter like a heap of people have. If I don't manage to get a letter of authorization from him in Marble Bar when it all changes I will be sending my 30-06 to my brother in SA. At least that way it stays in the family and isn't destroyed ect.

So that might leave me with 7.

I don't understand where they came up with 5. I guess that happens when you ignore the final uses of the system and only listen to a small group of stakeholders that suit your narrative. (Or ignore the LRC Project 105 section 9.4) None of mine are licensed with purchased letters. All family or family based connections. So I have more of a reason than most.

These firearms I use to remove feral and invasive pests from my uncle's farm for him in my own time with my own money. No payment is made to me. I do it for enjoyment and to spend time with him as he gets lonely out there by himself. Mental health improvements for both of us. I'm one of very few who visit him these days. He also can't have firearms as his got stolen and was charged with storage offences. A lot of the farms I go to seem to have poor storage. Which needs to change. But people shouldn't be stealing from farms either. WAPOL doesn't exactly do checks here like they do in NZ or other states. You send them a stat dec instead.... more admin and very little police work again.

I read through that and realised that he just wants an explanation. They do not understand the limits, particularly when there does not seem to be any real explanation about why the limits are there and why we are the only state that has them.

Another letter states, in part —

This is my recent correspondence with the police regarding my 2 category C firearms that I have licensed under a nominated shooter for primary producer.

I am already limited with these two firearms to only use them on the approved property.

I have been informed that these 2 firearms will count towards the total individual use amount of 5 so I would effectively need to either sell my other firearms or license them as competition and never be able to use them for hunting or recreational shooting purposes.

I do have a portfolio of properties I have built over the years where I help farmers and landowners in controlling numbers of kangaroos, foxes, cats etc so the only way around this from what I can see at the moment is I would need to register a business and apply for a professional shooters license however the police do not know what the requirements will be so I can not put any plans in motion.

It upsets me greatly that ill need to start invoicing the farmers to keep my firearms and the right to use them for their intended purpose.

Rick Mazza put in a submission for the consultation paper. I have Rick's permission to read in this part. His submission is well worth a read. He writes —

The Western Australian state government embarked on a politically charged propaganda campaign to vilify firearm ownership. Without factual evidence they have claimed that their proposed legislation cracking down on already law-abiding people will improve community safety.

Much of the WA state government rhetoric has centred around stolen firearms and the need to reduce the number of legally held firearms by license holders and, further burden their ability to use firearms for legitimate purposes through onerous legislative requirements and restrictions. It is suggested that this will somehow reduce the number of firearms stolen which could then be used in the commission of a crime. There is no evidence-based information to support this assertion which interestingly contradicts the findings of the ASCR which found at chapter 4 the following:

1.168 There was no evidence presented to the Committee which demonstrated a significant problem with stolen firearms being used for criminal activity:

- Data provided by state and territory police indicated that firearms from a very small percentage of theft incidents (less than 5 per cent) reported in the four year period 2005–06 to 2008–09 were subsequently used to commit a criminal offence or found in the possession of a person charged with a non-firearm related criminal offence; and
- ... there are very few firearms that have been stolen and subsequently used in illegal acts or established as coming from a pathway from a registered firearm owner, through theft, into a recorded crime.

There is no apparent evidence the governments proposed firearm laws will do anything towards improving public safety when the evidence provided to the ASCR indicates that very few firearms stolen from a licensed firearm owner are used in committing a crime.

The government would not know that because it does not keep those records, which is my point.

I want to find out how many people have more than the limit. I have not been able to get that information. I asked at the first briefing but I could not get it. I expressed my frustration at the second briefing, which was a good briefing. I am not complaining about the briefing; I am very grateful for it. Finally, when I expressed my frustration, I was provided with information. I appreciate the minister's office providing this information, but, if anything, it just reinforces my concerns. Sorry, did the minister want to say something?

Hon Stephen Dawson: It was an issue the member raised with me during estimates.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, it was. Like I said, I do not want that information to make life difficult for the government. I want it, as I said, to empower myself to assist the government, believe it or not, in this process. But I could not get it. Finally, I asked for a breakdown of the number of firearm owners. If anything, this is what the government should be doing. The information that I got out of the briefing is what the government should have been putting out in technicolour for the last six months. It is quite profound that it is a minuscule number of current licensed firearm owners who breach the current limits. It is going to have a limited impact on current licensed firearm owners, yet somehow it took me up until only a few weeks ago to get this information. The analysis says, in part —

An analysis of licensing data from 3 March 2023 indicated that:

- 66 144 Individual Licences then existed with firearms on them that were licensed for Recreational/Hunting/Shooting;
- 7 534 Individual Licences existed with firearms on them that were licensed for Club/Competition.

I asked a question two years ago about the numbers. I got them then, but I could not get a breakdown now. The simple fact of the matter is that the issue of hunting licences is important, and members should listen to this. The analysis states —

Table 1 displays the number of Individual Licences with firearms listed under the Genuine Reason of Recreational/Hunting/Shooting. These individual licences would need to transition to Hunting Licences under the new legislation.

Based upon this data, it is estimated that **8.78%** of holders of Recreational/Hunting/Shooting licence holders will be impacted by the limit of five firearms applying to a Hunting Licence. The balance of 91.22% of Recreational/Hunting/Shooting licence holders hold five or fewer firearms for that purpose.

Surely that is good news for the government. Over 90 per cent of hunting licence owners are not going to be impacted; but it is even better for the next cohort—that is, competition shooting licences. The analysis states —

Based upon this data, it is estimated that **2.57%** of holders of Club/Competition licence holders will be impacted by the limit of ten firearms applying to a Competition Shooting Licence. The balance of 97.43% of Club/Competition licence holders hold ten or fewer firearms for that purpose. (As has been outlined during debate, it is envisaged that elite shooters who are impacted by the limit will be able to apply for additional firearms under proposed section 30(3)).

To be clear, only 2.5 per cent of competition shooting licence owners will be impacted. The minister stood outside Parliament House yesterday and said that the streets would be flooded with guns and that thousands more guns would go onto the streets if my amendments were agreed to, and that the opposition was “gutting the bill”. That sort of emotional nonsense and rhetoric does not help his cause. It is garbage. It is rubbish. It is absolute rubbish. What the minister said yesterday about my amendments was wrong. Well over 90 per cent of current gun owners will not be impacted by this legislation. My amendment would grandfather the rights of those who are above the limits. That is eminently sensible. If a person has 17 guns, they could keep them. How many people have abused it? Fewer than nine per cent of people. In some instances, up to 98 per cent of gun owners will not be impacted.

I have a number of questions, but due to their composition and given the fact I am rapidly running out of time, I will leave them for the committee stage. To the gun owners out there, if they are listening or they read this, I have the thematic approaches to gun owners' concerns about limits and I will ask those questions during the committee stage.

Let us face it, as far as limits are concerned, if the premise is that we will come into line with other jurisdictions, it is wrong. There are no other jurisdictions that have it. WAPOL does not know and cannot provide information about the number of illegal guns; therefore, that premise is wrong. The final concern, that there is a high number of gun owners with multiple guns, is wrong. This legislation will not capture just under 95 per cent of the gun-owning population. That is why, as I said, I will introduce my amendment not to gut the bill but because a significant number of legitimate gun owners out there feel aggrieved and that they are being targeted, and unnecessarily so. The amendment I have on the supplementary notice paper is eminently sensible.

I have covered property letters. As I said, that came from the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board. I will not go through that again.

The final area I would like to deal with is the firearm owner's capacity to hold a licence. As I said before, part 4 of the bill refers to the fit and proper person requirement that must be satisfied before the granting of a firearms licence to ensure that a person is suitable to possess firearms and related things safely and responsibly. This may include the commissioner's consideration of a person's conduct, behaviour, views, opinions, attitudes, character, domestic circumstances, honesty and integrity, as well as their close associates. Clause 153 provides that the commissioner can classify that a person is not a fit and proper person if he is satisfied that the person does not meet the prescribed authority health standards, which are spelt out in clause 148.

All applicants renewing a licence will be required to undergo a health assessment carried out by a registered health practitioner, examining their physical and mental health. The health practitioner will provide health advice to the commissioner to inform a determination. Should any matters arise from the initial assessment, the person may also be directed to a specialist for further examination as to whether they meet the standards that will be set in the regulations. This area has created enormous consternation among legitimate gun owners, as I said, and there needs to be much more explanation of why it is necessary.

Again, if one other jurisdiction had that requirement, the government might have something to hang its hat on, but as far as I know, we are the only jurisdiction that will have that requirement. I might be proven wrong by the minister, but even if it is one or two, a much greater explanation needs to be provided to legitimate gun owners of why they will be required to have a mental health, welfare and physical check. I have an amendment to that effect to grandfather existing gun owners.

I heard multiple concerns from the community about this issue. I will read part of one response —

The proposed health both mental and physical requirements in the draft need some serious thought about prior to amendments being made. Physical health restrictions should go no further than to limit the access to someone who cannot practically demonstrate the safe operation and use of their intended firearm, in this day and age of inclusivity the ballistic sports and firearms in particular are the great leveler. In the club that my wife and I are members of we shoot competitively every weekend, with up to 60 shooters male and female between the ages of 16 to 90 competing against each other, I'm not ashamed to say that My wife regularly out shoots me and about 95% of the other competitors, everyone is equal, age, sex, health issues, as long as they are safe! The mental health factor I agree is a serious issue, and it is absolutely not a god given right to own a firearm, same as drive a car on the road, all that I would hope is that any form of assessment would be open and fair, along with practical, and not prohibitively expensive and onerous upon honest licensed firearm owners. People with past violent criminal histories and legitimate VRO's in place against them should rightly be denied the possibility of firearm ownership, that is only reasonable to expect with the interests of public safety in my opinion, inversely the government should not be able to deny an applicant for the reason that they have an opinion contrary to the government ... surely we aren't being ruled over by the thought police?

Again, that is one of the multiple responses I got on this very issue. The physical component has really concerned a number of people. I refer to the firearms licence mandatory health assessment that was tabled in this place. Questions that require a response and an explanation, which are concerning a lot of people, include —

Heart disease or disorders? Including but not limited to: high blood pressure, chest pain/angina, irregular heart beat/arrhythmia.

...

Any physical injuries or disorders? Including but not limited to: head Injury, injuries to the limbs or joints, arthritis?

...

Nervous system disorders, such as but not limited to: Seizures, fits, convulsions, epilepsy, blackouts, fainting, dizziness, vertigo, problems with balance

...

Diabetes

...

Double vision, difficulty seeing? Hearing loss, deafness? Do you wear hearing aid? Have you had eye or ear surgery in the past (5 years)?

...

Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental health, psychiatric or nervous disorder?

...

Have you ever had, or been told by a doctor that you had a sleep disorder, sleep apnoea, or narcolepsy?

Again, I understand that a similar health assessment is used for long haulage truck drivers et cetera. It does appear onerous. We need some sort of information out there on what is going to be required. It is all well and good to alienate the gun lobby and say, “Well, they’re rednecks. They’ve got their guns. Who cares? Most of the public do not want guns” et cetera. It is easy enough to put that title on them. But they really are not. We are talking here, as I said, about a significant cohort, particularly of regionally based people—for example, farmers who have used guns all their lives and done so safely without any problems with the community whatsoever. They are the ones who need some explanation. Do not alienate them and assume that because a significant cohort of the public really embraces stricter gun laws and making WA a safer place, we can ignore them. We can get around this. As I said, the gun limits in isolation, if we are the only jurisdiction, so be it; it is good. If the government wants to use it as a chest-beating exercise, that is great for you guys, but gun owners are also saying that they have been doing the right thing for generations in their families and now the government is alienating them.

I have listened. As I said, I want to make it clear that the Liberal Party is not opposing this legislation. We understand the necessity for sensible gun reform, as most people whom I have spoken to do. But at the same time, we also want to ensure we have good legislation. Due to the lack of information that has been available to me over the last 12 months—I have highlighted numerous areas over the last three-quarters of an hour—I am not convinced that we have definitely got it right here. One way we can help resolve the issue is to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. This is where this bill needs to go. The government has the numbers. We will have a winter break in about three or four weeks. It can go off for three months now for the Standing Committee on Legislation to look at it. It is necessary to assess the bill on its merits and ask legitimate gun owners and different focus groups and different organisations and farmers to come in and have a say. This is what the minister said in the other place. He pretty much endorsed it, saying —

It is extraordinary that Hon Mia Davies would suggest that the only party, the only organisation, the only part of this Parliament capable of making amendments to or reviewing the legislation is some committee set up in the upper house. It is incredible that the member for Central Wheatbelt would suggest that. Nevertheless, as we have indicated, this legislation is not being rushed. It will be dealt with in a methodical, reasonable manner. It will go through this place, and the opposition can do its duty and assess every single clause, propose amendments to its heart’s content, make suggestions and identify things —

...

Mr P. PAPALIA: — that it does not like and make suggestions on behalf of anybody. That is the opposition’s job; that is what it is supposed to do. That opportunity will be afforded to the opposition.

...

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thereafter, the bill will proceed to the other place where, in the normal course of events, it will go the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review for three months of assessment—three months.

Three months was emphasised. There are two things wrong with that, of course. It did not go for three months of assessment. It went for 45 days. Three months is 90 days. It was half what the minister said. Everyone knows that the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review does not look at the policy of the bill. The minister misled the Legislative Assembly. That committee will not look at the policy of a bill. The uniform committee does a wonderful job of making sure that our bills comply with national agreements. It is not the Standing Committee on Legislation. For goodness sake; surely members can see that there are some problems here.

In addition, the tabled statement from the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review said —

... clauses proposing wide, open-ended regulation-making powers leave substantial details to be prescribed by regulation.

Members can wonder why the gun owners feel completely alienated. Remember that, in life, knowledge is power, and if we give them the opportunity to have their say to the Standing Committee on Legislation, we will be empowering them. We would take away the notion that they are feeling ignored and alienated and they are being targeted by the government. Everything they have been told from all the information that we have been feeding back to them is that the government does not know. They do not know why. Why will we have the limits? No-one else has. Why will we have the mental health assessment? No-one else has. Why can the minister not provide this information? Minister, my amendments are not going to flood the streets with guns. Having said that, I strongly urge the house to support this motion.

Discharge of Order and Referral to Standing Committee on Legislation — Motion

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [5.39 pm] — without notice:
I move —

That the Firearms Bill 2024 be discharged and referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation for consideration and report by no later than 13 August 2024.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [5.40 pm]: Ordinarily, I would expect the government to respond to a motion by the Leader of the Opposition. I appreciate the minister might want it circulated to him, as I would not mind having a copy myself.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I am just waiting for it, honourable member.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Do you want to seek the call?

Hon Stephen Dawson: No, you are on your feet.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I hope that the minister is genuinely considering supporting the motion.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I will consider the motion when it comes to me.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes.

I will just make this quick observation before I launch into my support for the motion moved by the honourable Leader of the Opposition. If the government were serious about supporting the motion, it would have already dealt with this well before now. I think it is reasonable for us to assume that at some point this evening, we are going to hear from the government that it intends to oppose the motion. It should not require a great deal of intelligence to understand that if the government agreed to the motion just moved by the Leader of the Opposition, it would eliminate the rest of this debate and the bill would be off to the Standing Committee on Legislation for its inquiry and investigation. That would save the time of the chamber. The government is perusing and considering the uncomplicated motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, but I have no confidence that it intends to support the motion. I hope I am proven wrong later this evening and that Hon Stephen Dawson will rise on behalf of the Minister for Police and say, “Actually, honourable member, you have got it wrong and we intend to support this motion. It is going to be off to the legislation committee.” That would be an outstanding outcome. I will operate on the basis that that will not be the case.

There is a plethora of reasons why this gigantic bill ought to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I will go through some of those reasons. I have now been kindly provided a copy of the motion moved by Hon Peter Collier, the Leader of the Opposition. I hope that the government now has the opportunity to peruse and consider this very uncomplicated motion. All it sets out to do is to refer this gigantic bill off to the legislation committee, and we will be able to consider it in August. There is no danger of this bill not being considered by this Parliament prior to the end of the year. In August, we can deal with it. Let us see what the government has to say later this evening.

There are a range of reasons why a gigantic bill like this ought to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Let us start with whether there has been a call for a referral from Western Australians. Last week, on 7 May, I tabled petition 3121. It read as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

1. Support law-abiding owners of firearms in Western Australia; 2. Call on the Government to prioritise its taxpayer funded resources towards those who possess and use unlicensed firearms; 3. Have significant concerns about multiple provisions in the Firearms Bill 2024; 4. Are dismayed that after all the talk and promises of consultation, the Bill is currently with a parliamentary committee whose restricted terms of reference prohibit it from conducting a full public inquiry; 5. Urge the Legislative Council to refer the Bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation for a full public inquiry into the policy of the Bill to assess its impact on the rights and liberties of law-abiding Western Australians and its efficacy at tackling those with a history of showing disregard for the laws of our State.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

I had the privilege of tabling this petition last week on 7 May on behalf of those petitioners. Keep in mind that in the history of e-petitions, there have only been eight petitions that have exceeded 10 000 signatures. This is one of those eight. In the history of these e-petitions, two have exceeded 20 000 signatures. This is one of those. There has been one that has exceeded 30 000 signatures: that is this petition. We cannot be under any illusion whatsoever about whether there has been a call from Western Australians that this gigantic bill be referred to a parliamentary committee for inquiry and investigation.

Reason number two that this bill ought to be considered for referral to a committee is because members ought to ask themselves whether Western Australians have had an opportunity to have their say on the bill before us. It is instructive at this point that members pick up and read the 147th report of the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. Evidently, the Minister for Police is confused about the processes of Parliament because on multiple occasions I have heard him indicate that this bill has already gone to a committee. Of course, in isolation, what he said is not untrue. It has gone to a committee. It has gone to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. I suspect he does not know, because that is the more charitable interpretation, that that particular committee had a short time frame in which to report. Hon Peter Collier has already outlined that it was 45 days. Secondly, it did not look into the policy of the bill.

Do not take my or Hon Peter Collier's word on this. Let us go to what the committee had to say. Keep in mind that the deputy chair of the committee is Hon Martin Pritchard, and Hon Rosie Sahanna and Hon Dr Sally Talbot are on the committee. We have three members who support the government who have agreed to this. The report was recently tabled by Hon Donna Faragher—on Tuesday last week, if memory serves. Paragraph 2.3 states —

The Committee is not able to consider any other matter, including the policy of the Bill.

Accordingly, no submissions were sought.

Let us not be under any illusion that the people of Western Australia have somehow had their say on this particular bill. The Minister for Police tries to cutely and shiftily say that the bill has already been to a committee, but there has been no call for submissions whatsoever. There is no doubt about that because three government members have signed off on the report saying so. That is the second reason why this gigantic bill ought to be discharged and referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

Reason number three is for us to consider what would be the attitude of a responsible government to such a call. This is in the context that a record number of Western Australians have petitioned and pleaded for the Parliament to refer this gigantic bill to a committee, despite the fact that the Minister for Police tries to tell people in a shifty fashion that it has gone off to a committee when the committee itself says “No. There haven't been any submissions.” There has been no call for submissions so there has been no opportunity for Western Australians, including this record number, to be able to make submissions to a parliamentary committee.

What would be the attitude of a responsible government in these circumstances? I put it to members that a responsible government's approach should be firstly to pause long enough to listen—hit the pause button and listen to the record-breaking number of Western Australians who pleaded with the Parliament to have this gigantic bill referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Secondly, whilst pausing to listen, it should genuinely listen and unpack the concerns that have been raised by those petitioners.

Under our standing orders Hon Peter Collier, the Leader of the Opposition in this place, had only 45 minutes or an hour, sixty minutes, to try to address some of those concerns. As he said himself, there was insufficient time. He had to be selective about the matters that he had to raise. Therefore, it is going to require a responsible government to pause long enough to genuinely listen to those concerns from a record number of Western Australians on this gigantic bill.

Thirdly, while the government pauses and genuinely listens, it ought to strive to facilitate those concerns and not frustrate them, as we have seen, particularly by the Minister for Police, I must say, with his antics in the media. Earlier this afternoon, I had the opportunity to give my speech in reply to the budget, and during that time I reminded members that in the reporting period covered by the budget, we had the quite incredible episode whereby rather than listen to the concerns of law-abiding firearm owners, the government decided to release maps identifying where they live. As I said, I could not make this stuff up, but that is the kind of approach that has happened, and it has frustrated those law-abiding firearm owners. The government has not sought to genuinely pause, listen and strive to facilitate their concerns.

Fourthly, in respect of those concerns—I hope we are going to hear from the government shortly—if the government has paused long enough to listen and it has genuinely listened, and if it is striving to facilitate and not frustrate, it ought to articulate a response based on principles. This is not the kind of stuff that we have seen in the media in last 24 or 48 hours. None of that has been based in principle whatsoever. All that has been is a weak attempt to imitate Hollywood, nothing more than that. We need far more than that on a serious issue like this. A record-breaking petition has been put before us. It requires a responsible government to pause long enough to genuinely listen, strive to facilitate the concerns, not frustrate them, and articulate a cogent response based on first principles. That is the approach that I am advocating for in this instance.

In contrast to that, of course, the alternative is to take an irresponsible government approach. What would that look like? That would look like dismissing these concerns with disdain and making disparaging remarks to petitioners, dripping with arrogance. Let us keep in mind of course that this particular government has form in that respect. Trust was broken last year, and the very last thing we need is a sequel. The Premier of Western Australia, Mr Cook, was so bad last year that I felt it necessary to give notice of a motion. It still sits on the daily notice paper, listed at number 2. Currently, the notice reads as follows —

That this house —

- (a) expresses its concern with the disparaging remarks of the Premier on 20 June 2023 regarding official parliamentary petitions hosted on the portal established through the Parliament of Western Australia's website;
- (b) has considered and had particular regard for the recommendations contained in a number of reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges in the period 2016 to 2021, which were the genesis for the establishment of official parliamentary e-petitions —

The motion goes on to list those reports —

- (i) the fortieth report, *E-Petitions*, dated 28 June 2016;
- (ii) the forty-fifth report, *Outstanding matters from the 39th Parliament*, dated 24 August 2017; and
- (iii) the sixty-fourth report, *Review of the standing orders*, dated 2 September 2021;
- (c) thanks the members and staff of the standing committee for their subsequent review of e-petitions that manifested in the sixty-ninth report being tabled in February 2023;
- (d) notes the standing committee was satisfied that the process was operating effectively;
- (e) acknowledges and affirms the right to petition;
- (f) encourages the Premier to familiarise himself with that right, which was established in 1215 under the Magna Carta;
- (g) further encourages the Premier to read article 5 of the Bill of Rights 1689, which reaffirmed that right;
- (h) recommends that the Premier obtain a briefing from the Attorney General or the Solicitor General to ensure that he is clear on this right held by all Western Australians; and
- (i) calls on the Premier to listen to the grievances and requests of Western Australian petitioners and desist from treating those concerns with disdain.

We saw what happened last year: the unedifying, unstatesmanlike remarks by the Premier of Western Australia referring to people with concerns as dogs. That is what led to me giving notice of this motion last year. We do not need a repeat performance of or sequel to the events of last year. Instead, we need to pause, to really listen, to try to facilitate those concerns rather than frustrate them, and to respond based on first principles. Instead of doing that, we had the Premier of Western Australia referring to people as dogs and making those disparaging remarks. What was the outcome? The outcome was a complete shambolic debacle with respect to the rollout of the Aboriginal cultural heritage laws. The government wanted to blast things through. It knew everything. It was a flawless piece of art, not possibly able to be critiqued in any way! In the end, so bad was the outcome that even this arrogant government had to repeal the legislation. We do not need a repeat performance, a sequel, least of all in circumstances in which we have a record number of Western Australians pleading with this house to refer this gigantic bill to a committee.

Reason number four: it is instructive for us to consider what has been the past practice on referrals by this house of review. That is right; the Legislative Council is the house of review. The very reason some would say it justifies its existence is to review the legislation pushed forward by the other chamber. I think we can all agree that this is a serious bill. I do not think that is a controversial point to make. It is a serious bill and an important bill. It warrants giving consideration to the stakeholders most affected by this bill—that is, current law-abiding licensed gun owners.

On 6 August 2013, when considering the Insurance Commission of Western Australia Amendment Bill 2013, Hon Sue Ellery, who at the time was the Leader of the Opposition, said amongst other things —

I want to speak in support of referring the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. This is a serious bill.

She went on to say —

... that the compelling argument is: who is the stakeholder affected by this and what has it said? That stakeholder is the RAC.

The translation is that Hon Sue Ellery, in opposition, had two criteria. Firstly, is it a serious bill? Well, somebody can tell me whether they do not think this is serious. I think even the government acknowledges that this is a serious bill. Secondly, what Hon Sue Ellery said in 2013 was that we needed to have regard to the stakeholder affected. The stakeholder affected that she referred to was one; we have 32 000 Western Australians who have signed this gigantic record-breaking e-petition. That is far more than one—not in any way whatsoever to belittle the importance of the RAC. The point that Hon Sue Ellery made at the time was: what had that stakeholder said? The problem at the moment is that law-abiding Western Australians do not have the opportunity to have a say. With all due respect to the RAC, it is very, very good at its advocacy. It is very, very professional. It has the means, the capacity and the skill. Most law-abiding Western Australian firearm owners were just pleading for a little bit more time for consultation. Last year Hon Colin de Grussa tabled a petition seeking to extend that consultation period from one month to three months, but the government said no, such again was the arrogance. Therefore, if we are using the standard that has been applied by Hon Sue Ellery, we ought to be referring this gigantic bill to committee.

Reason number five: what is it that the petitioners themselves—that is, the stakeholders; remember Hon Sue Ellery wanted us to listen to one stakeholder's view—the 32 000 Western Australian petitioners, have to say on this?

I cannot be the only member of Parliament who has been bombarded with countless submissions and emails by affected stakeholders on this gigantic bill. One in particular expressed concern that he would have to close his business if the Firearms Bill was passed in its present form.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Stephen Pratt): Member, noting the time, I will leave the chair until the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Prior to the interruption for the dinner break, the chamber was considering the motion by the Leader of the Opposition, Hon Peter Collier, that would see this gigantic Firearms Bill 2024 referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Prior to the interval, I said that there are a number of reasons why this bill ought to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

It is important to note that, at this point, during the course of the debate, we are yet to hear the official position from the government. As I indicated prior to the interval, I find it hard to believe, on the basis of previous experience, that a government of any persuasion would allow a prolonged debate to take place if it was its intention to agree to the motion. It would be irrational for that to be the case because if it agreed to the motion, the debate would cease and the bill would be referred to the committee, which would be in the best interests of the government in dealing expeditiously with its legislative agenda. The fact that the government has not yet had the opportunity to respond, because, as I understand it, the minister with carriage of the bill wanted an opportunity to peruse and consider the exact form of words moved by Hon Peter Collier, suggests to me that the intention of the government is to oppose this motion. We will see later this evening.

But in the meantime, working on the basis that the government intends to, I suspect, arrogantly oppose this excellent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, there are, I put to members, a number of reasons why we ought to refer this gigantic bill to the legislation committee.

First and foremost is the fact that there has been a huge, record-breaking call by Western Australians for exactly this to occur. Members will recall that prior to the interval, I had taken members through the sequence of events that led to the tabling of a record e-petition last week on 7 May—the only one that has exceeded 30 000 signatures. Keep in mind that it is rare for a petition to attract more than 10 000 signatures, let alone 30 000. That was the first reason—that there has been a very significant record-breaking call for the referral of this bill to the legislation committee.

The second reason that I provided to members was that there has not been a genuine opportunity for Western Australians to have their say on this bill. The Minister for Police has said that this bill has been referred to a committee. As I indicated earlier, that is not, in and of itself in isolation, untrue. There has been a referral to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review, which the minister ought to know has very narrow terms of reference; it does not have the opportunity to inquire into the policy of the bill. It did not do so and, in fact, the report that was tabled by Hon Donna Faragher last week and co-authored by three Labor members of Parliament confirms that no submissions were sought.

The third reason that I provided to members was for us to consider what attitude ought to be provided by a responsible government in these circumstances and that a responsible government ought to pause long enough to listen. It should actually listen. It should strive to facilitate the concerns, not frustrate them, and its response should be articulated based on first principles. The last thing that we can afford is a sequel performance from last year when we saw the disparaging and contemptuous remarks by the Premier, Mr Cook, about a petition.

The fourth reason that the bill ought to be referred to a committee is based on past practice. In particular, I highlighted an example in which the honourable Leader of the Government, Hon Sue Ellery, who at the time was the Leader of the Opposition, had indicated that the compelling argument for her about the Insurance Commission of Western Australia Amendment Bill 2013 was which stakeholder would be affected by it and what had they said. The point made was that the stakeholder at the time was one—singular—RAC, whereas in this particular case, we know that more than 30 000 Western Australians have called for this bill to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Prior to the interval, I had indicated that astute observers will note that RAC is very professional, very capable and very well resourced to perform advocacy to government, whereas individual Western Australians very much need the processes facilitated by the Parliament through a parliamentary committee if they are going to respond to a gigantic bill, as we have before us.

The fifth reason is that we should be concerned about what the stakeholders have actually said. Many members in this chamber—I suspect all members—will have had a plethora of submissions or responses on the bill before us provided to their offices. I touched on an individual who had written to me. He was concerned, and is currently seeking legal advice, about the likely closure of his business. Another person, who is a concerned farmer, is also a recreational shooter. When he wrote to me, he indicated that the bill will be very restrictive for him. He is concerned about the regulations, which are, as yet, unknown and, to my knowledge, undrafted. He is concerned that these unknown regulations would likely add further restrictions on him. He outlined a number of clauses of the bill that cause him concern, including clause 29(3), clause 172, clause 61(3), clause 148 and clause 368. If I have the

opportunity and there is sufficient time in this time-limited debate, I intend to unpack some of those clauses. All of that is to say that we have all received an enormous amount of submissions from individuals expressing their very real concerns, not in a generic way, but about how it will individually impact on them.

The sixth factor that we should consider in deciding whether this gigantic bill should be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation is whether the committee has capacity. It is all well and good for Western Australians to call for a bill to go to a parliamentary committee, but if the committee is inundated with work, it may not be the most practical use of time. Members will be aware that the Standing Committee on Legislation currently has no work before it. It has nothing to do. The legislation committee, evidently, has capacity.

Members might also be interested to note that a quick perusal of the parliamentary website indicates that the Standing Committee on Legislation has tabled one report in the forty-first Parliament. Keep in mind that each Parliament has a life of four years and we are three years into the life of this Parliament. At this point in time, three quarters of the way through the life of this Parliament, this standing committee has tabled one report and currently has no business before it. It is worth comparing and contrasting that with the committee's work in previous Parliaments. It seems to me that there were 13 such referrals of bills for analysis to be conducted by that same committee over the four-year period of the previous Parliament. Members opposite might say that the composition of Parliament was different then, and they would be right—no party had a majority in and of its own right. But if we look back to the previous two Parliaments, when members opposite and their party were in opposition and the government alliance of the day had a majority, it is clear that during the period 2013 to 2016 some eight reports were considered. In the term prior to that, there were six reports considered. What we have here is truly extraordinary; a committee of Parliament has nothing to do now, and during the three years of its four-year life it was given one job and tabled one report. Again, I would like to go back to the instructive comments Hon Sue Ellery made on 1 May 2012, when the house was considering the Criminal Organisations Control Bill 2011. At the time, she was the Leader of the Opposition. On Tuesday, 1 May of 2012 at 8.22 pm she stood and said, amongst other things —

It is disappointing that, effectively, the numbers are such that hardly any—in fact is it one or two?—pieces of legislation have been referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. And it is disappointing that taxpayers' money —

Before she finished what she has had to say, she was interrupted —

Hon Michael Mischin: Three.

Hon Michael Mischin reminded Hon Sue Ellery that, in fact, at that point in time there had been three referrals to the Standing Committee on Legislation. This was on 1 May 2012. According to Hon Michael Mischin, three years into the four-year life span of that particular Parliament there had been three bills referred to the committee. Hon Sue Ellery continues —

Since May 2009 the committee has considered three pieces of legislation. It is disappointing that taxpayers' money is being used to pay members to participate in the committee that, since May 2009, has only considered three pieces of legislation.

On 1 May 2012, Hon Sue Ellery said that it was disappointing that taxpayers' money was being used for members of Parliament to sit on a committee that had had the opportunity to consider only three pieces of legislation. Where are we now in the forty-first Parliament? There has been one bill. When Hon Sue Ellery robustly put forward that criticism, three times as many bills had been referred than we have at the moment. Does the legislation committee have capacity? Absolutely. It has literally nothing to do at the moment and it continues to be funnelled taxpayers' money expressly for this purpose. Let us use that committee, particularly when a record-breaking number of Western Australians have called for this gigantic bill to be sent to it because they did not have the opportunity to put in submissions to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review due to its very sharp 45-day inquiry that did not allow for that to occur.

I move to the seventh reason why this gigantic bill ought to be referred to the committee, and ask: is anything shifty going on that warrants investigation? I think a number of shifty things are going on here. The first thing is the government's inconsistent answers on the Law Reform Commission's recommendations. Going as far back as November last year, I have been asking the government about the extent to which the reforms will implement the recommendations made by the Law Reform Commission. Let us remember that the genesis of this bill, in large part, was the Law Reform Commission's report of October 2016. In November last year, I asked which of the 23 recommendations would not be implemented by the proposed reforms. The response provided at the time was —

The additional information provided to the honourable member was preliminary and based on the consultation paper. The full extent of adoption of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations will not be known until feedback from the consultation period is compiled and the firearms bill presented before Parliament.

In November, the government was unable to inform Parliament precisely how many of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations will be implemented. Are we in a position now to have this information provided

to us? I do not have any confidence that we will be able to get that information because, as we have seen in recent times, there is a pattern of behaviour from this government whereby any time a member asks a question without notice to the government on the police portfolio, it has become routine for the response to be that there was insufficient time to answer the question. Keep in mind that the government and WA Police have had at least four or five hours' notice on a question like that—often much more. If we do not refer this bill to the committee, how does the government and the minister with the carriage of this bill expect to answer questions in the Committee of the Whole House when no notice will be given? It will not be four or five hours' notice for which the government routinely says there is insufficient time to answer the question; the answer will need to be provided on the spot. Is the government confident that it will be able to do that? It would be quite a miraculous transformation, because only this afternoon Hon Peter Collier and others asked questions on the police portfolio and were not provided with a response. Why when we go into the Committee of the Whole House will a miraculous transformation suddenly take place whereby answers will be provided at short notice? If that is the case, let me give a bit of notice. I would like to know how many of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations are in this gigantic bill and will be implemented. How many, and which ones are not?

Hon Stephen Dawson: Are you talking to the amendment or to the bill?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I know that the minister was busy in dialogue with his colleague for a moment there, but if he is following my contribution, he will know I am saying that this is why the bill ought to be referred to the legislation committee. Those are the types of questions I would like answers to. The pattern of behaviour has been that we are not able to get responses during question time, despite the fact that the government has been given four or five hours' notice. How does he then expect to cope with no notice at all? We will see in due course, because if I suspect what is going to happen does happen, the minister will rise to his feet and tell us that he will not support this gigantic bill going to the legislation committee. That will force us to go into Committee of the Whole House. Then the minister responsible for the legislation in this house will need to provide answers with no notice, not four or five hours' notice or sometimes several days' notice.

In the meantime, there is also something that is highly suspicious—that is, the timing of the working group recommendations. Parts of the questions that I have been asking were about the government forming this working group to look into one or more of the recommendations, particularly with regard to the health policy. On 15 February this year, the government received a recommendation relating to mandatory health assessment processes. We should keep in mind that the bill was introduced on 21 February. Six days after the government received recommendations from the working group that looked into mandatory health assessments—I think it had been meeting for the best part of a year—it introduced the bill into the other place. Do the ministers of the Crown seriously expect me to believe that during that six-day period, the government had sufficient opportunity to consider one year's worth of work by the working group and instruct parliamentary counsel to draft a bill and then introduce it into the other place? We did not come down in the last shower, with all due respect to those ministers of the Crown. Evidently, something very suspicious has gone on with respect to the work of that working group and how those mandatory health assessment processes ended up in this bill. This is the type of thing that the legislation committee will be able to inquire into. We will not have the opportunity to do that if we go into Committee of the Whole House.

I also put to members that yet another reason this bill ought to go to the legislation committee is that it is evidently flawed. Why do I say that? The bill before us is not the same bill that was brought into the other place. It was amended in the other place by the government. For the police minister's rhetoric about how excellent this legislation is, he is obviously not interested in it being scrutinised by a parliamentary committee. It is interesting that the government was forced to make amendments in the other place. There may be some inadvertent errors in this gigantic bill.

Members will have received supplementary notice paper 150, issue 3, this evening. Apart from the amendments on the notice paper from Hon Peter Collier and Hon Louise Kingston, if I am not mistaken, I see that another amendment is on the supplementary notice paper—4/29. Who is the author or the proposed mover of it? It is none other than the Minister for Emergency Services, the minister representing the Minister for Police. Despite the fact that this gigantic bill has been to the other place and amended by the government while it was there, it has come to this place and the government wants it to be amended again. But it is likely that in a few moments, in the same breath it will tell us that it does not need it to go to the legislation committee. According to this arrogant government, this is a flawless piece of art that cannot be critiqued, yet it was amended in one place and further amendments will be moved in this place.

What more evidence do we need that this gigantic bill warrants scrutiny by a taxpayer-funded parliamentary committee that has nothing to do at the moment? It is sitting there doing nothing. It has had one job to do in three years.

What else can this parliamentary committee usefully inquire into? It can inquire into a range of things. I will conclude on the note that it could usefully investigate an inquiry into direct contraventions of the Law Reform Commission's recommendations. I will give members one example, which relates to the upper limit of the number of firearms. Recommendation 54 in the large Law Reform Commission report states —

There should be no upper limit on the number of firearms a single Firearm Licence holder may possess.

Is that recommendation consistent with the bill presently before the house? It is interesting that the dialogue that leads to this recommendation by the Law Reform Commission states —

Stakeholders were of the view that any limits were unnecessary in light of the genuine reason test.

Sometimes we may wonder whether we are reading the correct report, given the rhetoric of the police minister. It continues —

WA Police were also of this view, although they stated that they would consider supporting a scaled limitation on firearms numbers, acknowledging that it would be difficult to establish a definitive number ...

From what I can gather, it is intended that a definitive number will be implemented. These are the types of things that the Standing Committee on Legislation ought look into. Let us be very clear that it can only happen if the Cook Labor government agrees to it. If this motion is not passed, it will be because ego was prioritised over legislative scrutiny, all the while a committee sits with no work to do in a Parliament in which previously the Leader of the House said that sending only three bills was an outrage and now only one is proposed to be sent. Clearly, this motion ought to be supported.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [7.25 pm]: I have listened intently to Hon Nick Goiran. A bit of grandstanding went on but, nonetheless, I listened intently, as I listened to the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition. I rise to indicate that the government will not be supporting the referral motion. The Firearms Bill 2024 is the product of extensive consultation with key stakeholders in both the firearms and also the primary production industry and, indeed, with the public over a great number of years. It seeks to implement a firearms regime that will balance public safety with the privilege of possessing a firearm. There has been discussion, consultation and deliberation around reform of the Firearms Act since about 2014; in fact, it was probably earlier if we think of the conversations that took place after the Port Arthur massacre. Since that time, there have been conversations on legislation and the need for reform.

The Law Reform Commission's review of the 1973 act made 143 recommendations, of which the new firearms scheme implements a majority. I will provide those figures at a later stage. The Law Reform Commission review was informed by over 1 200 submissions from a range of stakeholders from every walk of life—from members of the public, from firearms interest groups and from the Western Australia Police Force. I am advised that the number of submissions the Law Reform Commission received was the most it has ever received on one of its reviews. The government has already implemented some of the recommendations but we are now pursuing the most significant recommendation—to completely rewrite our firearms legislation to make it fit for purpose. It is noteworthy that WA is the final Australian jurisdiction to completely rewrite the firearms legislation since the National Firearms Agreement was signed in the late 1990s.

The bill seeks to implement a much more consistent approach with other jurisdictions, placing primacy on public safety by regulating the safe possession and use of firearms. The bill was transparently debated in the other place and was referred to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. Indeed, we have a report on the legislation from that committee. It examined the matters that concerned it. The first finding made in its report was that the bill implements the most important aspects of the government's intended reforms and is not skeletal legislation. Surveys were undertaken, multiple briefings were given to members, the public was consulted, a consultation paper was released and there is still ongoing consultation with affected parties. This bill has been informed through a considered process and should proceed to the Committee of the Whole to properly debate the concepts. I am happy to answer questions from honourable members in that forum. These crucial firearms reforms should not be delayed further. With that, I indicate again that the government will not be supporting the referral.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [7.28 pm]: I support the motion moved by Hon Peter Collier to refer the Firearms Bill 2024 to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I strongly encourage members to give this motion serious consideration; if not, indeed, their support.

The government announced public consultation on these proposed reforms on 16 October 2023. The following day—strangely, it did not release it that day—it released a consultation paper. Feedback on the proposed laws was invited by 14 November 2023. By my count, that was a period of 29 days of public consultation. The public of Western Australia was given 29 days to consult on a 62-page consultation paper outlining extensive reforms. Many of the proposals had very limited information beyond a paragraph or two. As we now know, we are debating a 241-page bill with a 142-page explanatory memorandum. That is some 383 pages in those two documents.

Hon Darren West: You are debating the referral to committee, not the bill.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Hon Darren West is exactly right. He is onto it even at this late hour in the evening.

It is worth reflecting, Hon Darren West, that this bill has already been amended twice by the government. I think those amendments are worthy of consideration in the context of this referral and are what I think the Standing Committee on Legislation should be charged with looking at. The first of these two amendments was the removal of clause 57(3) with respect to a primary producer licence and landholdings.

The subclause that was deleted states —

A Primary Producer Licence must not be granted for a landholding for which another Primary Producer Licence has been granted and is in force.

I want to draw members' attention to the second reading speech. On the first page, the minister said —

Firstly, to clause 57(3). Upon consultation with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association and the Western Australian Farmers Federation, it was acknowledged that many farms and pastoral stations have a complex and unique ownership structure, making this subclause impractical in its application as to restrict one landholding to one primary producer licence. After listening to the concerns of these organisations, this subclause was removed.

I draw members' attention to page 5 of the second reading speech when the minister said —

It should be noted that a primary producer licence will not be able to be granted to a landholding for which such a licence already exists. This is to prevent multiple persons on a given property having multiple primary producer licences and therefore accessing a greater number of firearms.

Those two statements in the minister's speech appear to be entirely contradictory. The amendment that was moved in the Assembly, the explanation given in the minister's second reading speech and the statement found on page 5 do not add up. I do not think they are accurate. I draw this to the attention of the house and, I hope, the legislation committee because I think a correction is required, at least to the second reading speech. Members might say that at the end of the day the act will be the basis of the bill that passes. However, in terms of interpreting the act and Parliament's intention, the second reading speech of the minister in charge of the bill and the explanatory memorandum are often important and referred to by the courts when trying to understand the intent of the legislation and the intent of the Parliament at the time. To that end, I think it is questionable whether the second reading speech is accurate.

The second reading speech makes reference to the PGA and WAFarmers. Those two bodies informed members of the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board, established in April 2023, some 12 months or so before the bill was introduced. Both groups have repeatedly indicated their public support for the reforms and would have had the benefit of the 29-day consultation process. Yet we get to the Assembly and, following further consultation with what appears to be those two groups, we identify further deficiencies in the government's own legislation. This is not a criticism of the PGA or WAFarmers. However, I make this point because those two organisations have been engaged in this process much more than others, or more than the general public at large, who were very much limited to a 62-page consultation paper over 29 days. They did not walk the same journey as perhaps some of the other stakeholders or indeed the government over the year that preceded the introduction of this bill.

This is, as has been said, a complex and significant reform. It is a complete rewrite of the Firearms Act. To the government's credit, it was prepared to make amendments. However, what other deficiencies were there? We know there was at least one other because the minister's second reading speech refers to clause 444 being amended to address administrative conflicts with the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Bill 2023. I note that there is no such bill any longer; it is an act because royal assent was granted on 14 March 2024. The effect of the Assembly's amendment was to insert the amendment at part 14 rather than part 15 of the CCM act. It begs the question: was the Corruption and Crime Commission consulted in the drafting and formation of the firearms bill before the Legislative Council; and, if it was, why was this administrative error not identified? This is prima facie evidence that government bills are not perfect.

We heard earlier today—on the day the debate commenced on the Firearms Bill 2024—of further government amendments that are listed on the supplementary notice paper. I hold the view, and have held it consistently, that all bills should be subject to scrutiny by a legislation committee or something similar in a fashion that is not dissimilar to the way the Australian Parliament treats its bills by subjecting them to the scrutiny of its committee system. I think there is an even stronger case to be made for a bill that is not an amendment bill but one that is as extensive and complex and with the added contention that this reform will bring. With those things in mind, why was the public consultation period limited to just 29 days? There is no logical explanation. It is not like the government at the end of the 29 days would have introduced the bill into Parliament on the thirtieth day, because Parliament did not come back until February sometime this year, as I recall. I do not understand why, after this long history of inaction since the 2016 Law Reform Commission report, there was just 29 days to consult with the public. If someone were minded and invested in this issue and wanted to seek legal advice on the matters that were identified in the 62-page consultation paper, I am not sure whether they would have got serious or detailed legal advice in 29 days or in a period that would allow the person to make a submission to the process within that 29-day consultation period.

We have discussed at some length tonight the Legislative Council petitions on this legislation. There have been two to date, one of which was tabled last week by Hon Nick Goiran calling specifically for the referral of this bill to the legislation committee and identifying the inadequacies of simply relying on an automatic referral to the

Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. There were 32 234 petitioners. That is a very serious number of people agreeing to the sentiment of that petition. What will the government do? Will the 21 members of the Labor Party completely disregard the 30 000-odd petitioners? Will they say that they are wrong and do not know what they are talking about and that there is nothing to see here?

Remember that it was not that long ago that the Premier of Western Australia was ridiculing petitions of this house because they were not “real” petitions; at least, he was implying as much. It is interesting that, in the short time that has passed since those sloppy comments were made in the other place, FOMO has kicked in there. If I am not mistaken, the Assembly has adopted an e-petition process and is conducting e-petitions. It realised what was going on, which was that there was greater weight and interest in the upper house’s e-petition process. Assembly members were even referring, sponsoring or assisting with Council e-petitions. We now have an Assembly e-petition process.

The minister just now outlined the government’s response, which is that there is no need to refer the bill to a committee because there has been extensive public consultation, but I do not think that can be supported. Particular stakeholders have probably been on the journey with the government over the last year, but I do not think that has been a wide net of stakeholders. I do not think that too many of the 32 000 petitioners would have been consulted by the government in the last 12 months in the lead-up to the introduction of this bill.

Although the government will never agree, I believe that legislation committee reports help expedite the passage of bills. The motion we are debating now will allow the Standing Committee on Legislation to use the winter recess and report, as I understand it, on the first Council sitting day in August. On my count and I am counting, members, we have 13 sitting weeks left and four sitting weeks before the winter recess. That would give the Legislative Council four weeks to get on with other business, and when we come back, we would have nine weeks to deal with this and other government priorities, but we would have the benefit of a report of the Standing Committee on Legislation. The legislation committee report will not somehow ensure that consensus breaks out and we all agree on everything, but we will at least move forward in an informed way, and the public will genuinely be consulted. It would not be some embarrassing consultation process that the Minister for Police announces in the dying days of a calendar year and gives people 29 days to respond to. It is embarrassing for government members to even defend that as a consultation process.

Of course, the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review was not able to examine numerous policy issues. Those numerous policy issues ought to be considered by the Standing Committee on Legislation, and I want to address some of them now. I remain hopeful that the government might change its mind because, if it thought about this logically, we have time. The bill will pass. We have time, so let us make sure that we get it right. If the government’s primary motivating factor is public safety, let us get this right. The government will get its bill passed. We now have three instances, and they are growing by the day, of the government identifying where it can improve the bill.

I will not have time to identify all the policy areas I want the Standing Committee on Legislation to consider, but I want to focus on the key ones in my mind. I distilled them down to these. One is about the number of firearms and the buyback scheme. The buyback scheme is not specifically a product of the bill before us, but it is a connected and related matter. It cannot be denied that the repeatedly stated policy intent of the government is to reduce the number of firearms in the Western Australian community. In the government’s view, fewer firearms equals less risk. A media statement issued this week, on 13 May, identified that more than 10 000 firearms have been surrendered in the first 10 weeks of the buyback scheme. A media statement on 20 April 2023 identified that more than 349 000 firearms are licensed in Western Australia, and the government referred to a 60 per cent increase in the number of licensed firearms compared with 13 years ago. If my question is not something that can be understood by the legislation committee in its work, it will be a question that the minister must answer during the clause 1 debate on this bill, and my question is: How many firearms is an acceptable number? How many firearms is a safe number? The publicly stated policy intent of this bill is to reduce the number of firearms. There are two things to consider: obviously, the government must have a number, a target or where it wants to get to in mind, and then we can consider whether the reform measures in the bill will get us there. I do not think that they necessarily will.

The buyback scheme is something that the government could have addressed completely independently of rewriting the Firearms Act, and it could have done so six years ago. It is still rather odd that the current buyback scheme has an end date of 31 August. Why? I understand that some \$60 million has been allocated to the scheme, and I understand that when that money runs out, it runs out, but why put a hard end date on it? Why set an end date when the government will introduce a new firearms regime to Western Australia and will transition some 90 000-odd firearm licence holders to the new act? Why would the government put an end date of 31 August? Nothing will have happened with the implementation of this bill by 31 August. I do not understand the policy of doing that. If the government’s intention is to reduce the number of firearms, why have a hard and fast date so soon? The buyback scheme has been successful in sharpening the minds of some firearm licence holders to surrender firearms that are no longer needed or may no longer be serviceable. It has been the necessary incentive for a number of firearms that are no longer needed in the community to be returned on a voluntary basis. We do not need a bill, a grandstanding minister or 54 media statements.

The other policy issue that I want the legislation committee to consider is numerical firearm limits. I am concerned about the maximum limits that have been provided in and by the bill. A committee examination of this issue would be most useful, particularly given the Law Reform Commission specifically recommended against it. The minister just did it then. He said, “We just had a Law Reform Commission process with 1 200 submissions, the largest number of submissions the Law Reform Commission has ever received. That is how much consultation we have done on this bill.” The Law Reform Commission says —

Recommendation 54:

There should be no upper limit on the number of firearms a single Firearm Licence holder may possess.

Notwithstanding all the things the minister is resting his hat on, we are completely flying in the face of recommendation 54 of the Law Reform Commission. From reading the explanation provided, we can tell that the Law Reform Commission was considering a number of significant issues at the time, but at the end of the day when it was considering this issue, it felt the strongest aspect of the regulation of firearms was ensuring that people had a genuine reason to have one. Even the WA Police Force acknowledges that establishing a definitive number would be difficult.

Page 55 of the Law Reform Commission report is interesting because it cites a submission by the WA Police Force made on 9 February 2016. In question time today, I asked for the minister representing the Minister for Police to table the document. I did not think it would be hard. The WA Police Force is a very big organisation, employing an extra 950 officers, so I am sure it can find one document in the filing cabinet. “Put it on notice” was the answer. The answer to that single, basic question in question time today does not give me any confidence or trust that the government will genuinely engage in the consideration of this bill.

I think I heard Hon Peter Collier say in his second reading contribution that based on the data that he was able to gather from parliamentary questions, numerical firearm limits would affect a relatively small number of licence holders—a significant number, but a relatively small number in relation to the total number of licence holders. But I am concerned, as he is, about the perverse outcomes that will follow once we get a sugar hit from the buyback scheme by way of an overall reduction in firearm numbers. I wonder whether over time we will see an overall increase in the number of firearms in Western Australia—I hope I am proven wrong. If there is one thing in this bill to refer to the Standing Committee on Legislation to examine, it is the policy around these arbitrary firearm limits. Let us say, for example, that a farmer–producer is getting by at the moment with two firearms—a .22 calibre rifle and a shotgun. Some might have more, but, depending on the circumstances, a rifle and a shotgun might be sufficient in many circumstances. But the government is saying it thinks it is acceptable to have up to 10 firearms. Of course, I am sure the government’s response will be that a person will have to demonstrate a genuine reason for having 10 firearms.

Hon Darren West: Is this the bill or the referral?

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I do not want to go back to the days when Hon Darren West used to just read the *Sunday Times*; that was his contribution to debates.

Several members interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Does the member have the bill in front of him?

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, please direct your remarks through the chair.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It is interesting that government members are getting excited about this referral motion, but I wonder how many of them actually have the bill sitting on their desks.

Hon Lorna Harper interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: That is good; there is one.

Hon Stephen Dawson interjected.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: There are two—I would expect the minister to have it. That is two out of 21 members.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I have two copies!

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: There is a limit!

Of course, the government’s response will be that a person cannot just have 10 firearms because the government says that is the limit; they will have to have a genuine reason to have 10 firearms. The genuine reason test is not new. The criticism that will come for the firearm licence holder who has 17 firearms will be that at some point in time, they will have demonstrated a genuine reason. According to the Commissioner of Police, the regulator of firearms in Western Australia, they will have a genuine reason. If that is not the case, the police will have broken the law of Western Australia. It is not a new principle. As the Law Reform Commission identified, this issue is complex, and it will be interesting to understand why the WA Police Force has changed its position and, indeed, why the government of Western Australia has decided to completely do the opposite of what the Law Reform Commission recommended.

The other issue is the new licence categories. I think we have all had a considerable amount of correspondence to our offices, some of it in the usual standard campaign form, but a lot of it spelling out genuine individual cases explaining that people do not understand the Firearms Bill and the new licence categories, which they will have to transition to. Remember, there will be a retrospective application of the new Firearms Act all the way through. It will not be a case of someone with an existing licence moving to another one, it will very much be on an application and a renewal basis. While filtering through the correspondence and looking at the practical examples and limitations, I am finding the questions I am being asked very difficult to answer. I am sure the government will say that it does not want to engage in hypothetical scenarios because usually it means that it finds itself entrapped, but there are a number of genuine examples. From my basic understanding, I think the government is trying to address one of them through the amendment that has been placed on the supplementary notice paper today.

I believe that the new categorisation system will potentially increase the number of firearms a person is required to have, if they have a requirement to be licensed under more than one category. I believe that the new regime will potentially result in poor animal welfare outcomes. I think the regime will result in poorer vermin control and agricultural outcomes. It will lead to a more complex system of regulation and potentially higher costs and greater demands on the WA Police Force. We need to make sure that we are supporting measures, supporting reforms, that will actually contribute to public safety. That is why I think the legislation committee is the best vehicle to consider these important issues in the next three months.

That takes me to the fit-and-proper-person test. The new Firearms Act will require a health assessment as part of the fit-and-proper-person requirement. We have seen the options that were presented to the minister by the WA Police Force. One of those was prospectively applying the health assessment requirement. That was not the option that the government chose. It chose retrospectivity, so it is heading down the path of conducting physical and mental health assessments as part of its fit-and-proper-person requirement on a randomly selected basis over five years. According to the issues paper tabled in the other place, a firearms licence holder will be subject to a health assessment every five years thereafter, and when they turn 80, it will be annually. That will require 1 500 such assessments a month. Having followed issues related to firearm policy in Western Australia for some time now, I have grave concerns about the capacity of the Western Australia Police Force to do business as usual with respect to firearms regulation, let alone contemplate the new reform measures contained in this bill. One of those measures is that there will be 1 500 assessments a month.

Another important thing to reflect upon is that a significant number of firearms and firearm users in Western Australia will be exempt from the regulations in this legislation, as they are under the existing Firearms Act. It is interesting to note—perhaps it will not be surprising to members—that the Western Australia Police Force is exempt from the Firearms Act. I asked a question of the minister about this issue, because if regular mental and physical health assessments are good enough for one person in possession of a firearm, why are they not good enough for another? Keeping in mind that police officers carry firearms for their own and public safety, they do a very difficult job. They are often exposed to trauma and traumatic events. Given that the Western Australia Police Force is exempt from the Firearms Act, I asked whether a similar system would apply to officers of the Western Australia Police Force who carry firearms on a daily basis. No, it will not. It does not now and it will not in the future. These regulations are just for non-police firearm holders. Of course, the answer to the question was that some officers who work in high-risk environments are subject to more regular assessment, and, of course, there is a psychological assessment on entry to the police force, but there is no five-yearly mental and physical health assessment, or at least that was the evidence provided to Parliament in answer to question on notice 1227 on 14 March 2023.

Interestingly, at page 51 of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's *Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA): Project 105 final report*, recommendation 50 stated —

The Western Australia Government should initiate a detailed analysis and assessment of the policy surrounding mental health and access to firearms.

I look forward to the minister tabling during the discussion on clause 1, if not in his reply, the detailed analysis and assessment of the policies surrounding mental health and access to firearms. I suspect that it does not exist, but I think that the Standing Committee on Legislation should examine this issue more fully. For example, there is a provision in the proposed legislation—I think it is similar to an existing provision in the current act—that will allow the commissioner to require a health assessment on an individual, who will have 28 days to comply with that requirement. In some areas not that far from Perth, one cannot get an appointment with a general practitioner in six to eight weeks. These are some of the practical concerns that people have.

A health assessment working group was formed in February 2022. I think that this is the group Hon Nick Goiran referred to. What did that group come up with? What did it decide? Did it do the detailed analysis and assessment of the policies surrounding mental health and access to firearms? I would love to know. I am sure that the legislation committee would love to know. Are we actually landing in the right place?

There are a number of issues with this bill; they are the main ones. I remind members that I think the type of debate that we will get throughout the course of the debate on this bill will be similar to the type of response I got in question time today when I asked for one WA Police Force submission on an identified date to the Law Reform Commission

to be tabled. I was told to put the question on notice. I think I will, because I suspect that we will still be debating this bill in a month's time when the answer will be due. The government is trying to be smart. I suspect that the WA Police Force is competent enough to provide the Minister for Police one document from the filing cabinet in the time allocated for questions without notice on a sitting day, keeping in mind it has from 11.00 in the morning until 4.30 in the afternoon—five and a half hours to find one document in the filing cabinet. Apparently, it needs 30 days to find one document in the filing cabinet. I suspect that the document is probably in the minister's file over there. I suspect that the WA Police Force was able to provide the document to the minister, but the minister chose not to provide it to the Legislative Council today. That is why the legislation committee is the appropriate vehicle to navigate these difficult, complex and poorly consulted issues before us in the Firearms Bill 2024. As I said, I have identified only a small number of those matters tonight. They reflect in some small way the themes of concerns that I have received—I am sure they are probably not dissimilar to what other members have received—on aspects of this bill. A number of equity issues are worthy of exploration in the bill, not to mention the practical limitations and the unintended consequences that might arise from the bill, or, indeed, the enormous regulation-making power that the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review has identified.

I was at the briefing. Again, an interesting test would be how many members of the government went to a WA Police Force briefing on this bill—probably the same two who have the bill in front of them tonight. A question was asked at the briefing I think by Hon Steve Martin about the government's reforms to storage requirements. Of course, that will be subject to regulation. The officers providing the briefing said that it was the intent to provide information on the revised storage requirements prior to consideration of the bill in the Assembly. I am pretty sure that I am not mistaken. I am not sure whether that was provided prior to the consideration in the Assembly or during the course of the Assembly consideration, but I have certainly not seen any updated information on the work that the government has done on where it is heading with the new storage requirements. We are effectively, in the interests of public safety, writing a blank cheque to the government to say that it is going to make the right decisions. Of course, members of the government will say that regulations are subject to disallowance, but we all know how many regulations have been disallowed in this Parliament. It is probably the same as the number of bills that have been referred to the legislation committee. I think it was just one, and we probably disallowed it only because it was a local government regulation.

Above all, this motion should be supported because I have very little faith—it is waning by the day—in the Minister for Police to actually deliver this reform. I give credit where credit is due: he is strong on media opportunities, but light on detail. He has repeatedly misspoken when discussing the detail of the reforms, and when he is challenged, he just invites people to read the consultation paper.

I agree with the government that public safety is paramount. That is the exact reason this bill should not be rushed, and it should be carefully considered by the Standing Committee on Legislation. I remind members of the last and rare occasion that the government referred a bill—the innocuous Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023—to the legislation committee. I was there, Hon Peter Collier was there, he was waiting to deal with it, and I remember interjecting and saying, “You've got to be joking; we could deal with this this afternoon.” The government was right. The government got it right, and I fall back to my original principle: all bills should be referred to committee. The government and the Legislative Council got it right on that day, because the one bill the government has referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation breached the Western Australian Constitution and was unlawful. That bill is still on our notice paper. One would think that a minister would turn up during motions without notice under formal business and at least discharge it from the notice paper. It is a stain on the government that it remains on the notice paper. Soon, we will have the new bill from the Assembly, if we do not have it already, and we will have two of them on our notice paper. What an embarrassment. But the Legislative Council got it right and the Leader of the House was right. The bill was referred. The bill was illegal. The bill is not going anywhere. In the interests of public safety, I commend the motion.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [8.10 pm]: I am conscious that other members wish to speak to the motion that is before the house for our contemplation. To state the obvious, I absolutely, without any reservation whatsoever, support the motion moved by Hon Peter Collier, and I do so for a number of reasons that are similar to those already expressed by Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Martin Aldridge. I will amplify some of that argument, but, first, I will begin with a homily of sorts.

Destiny is formed by our daily habits. We are what we repeatedly do. That is as true of this Parliament as it is of individuals. Taking the time to scrutinise legislation is, unfortunately, in the course of this Parliament, being left to the meagre resources of the opposition during debate in the chamber. I familiarised myself with the workflow that the previously constituted Standing Committee on Legislation dealt with over the course of the fortieth Parliament. Over the course of the previous Parliament, when the government obviously did not enjoy the command of both houses, approximately 19 bills were referred to that standing committee for its review. In the final year of the fortieth Parliament, the calendar year 2020—bear in mind that we were dealing then with the imposition and, frankly, some of the inconvenience of COVID—the regular standing orders were interrupted and amended somewhat and the contemplation of that standing committee was itself interrupted to a degree. Nevertheless, over the course of the 2020 calendar year, the Standing Committee on Legislation reviewed four bills that had been referred to it by this

house. Over the course of the last three or nearly four years of the forty-first Parliament, the Legislative Council has referred a sum total of one bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. It is not as though the membership of that committee, if I might say so, is any cause for alarm. These are experienced, dedicated and thorough parliamentarians.

Hon Martin Aldridge was right to remind us of the solitary piece of work that that standing committee has undertaken in the course of this forty-first Parliament—the forty-ninth report, *Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023*. Hon Martin Aldridge was right to be generous and bipartisan in his commendation of the government for seeing cause to refer that seemingly innocuous bill to the standing committee for its review. It effectively scored a direct hit on the decision-making process that drove the way, and the house, in which the bill was introduced, effectively rendering the process unlawful and unconstitutional on something so innocuous. The Firearms Bill is not a simple bill. It is not an innocuous bill. It is deeply complex, complicated and intricate. Not one minister, even if they had done nothing else over the past two years than to beaver away for 18 hours each day and night drafting the bill by hand, could possibly be across the 492 clauses that constitute this bill. That should be obvious.

The reason I started with my homily and referred to the standing committee's recent and solitary report of this term is that it serves as a reminder, because at appendix 1 of that report is an articulation of fundamental legislative principles. This is the first time they have been reported to this house in this way in four years. In the last constituted Parliament, there were 19 reminders of this sort. What are these fundamental legislative principles? Broadly speaking, we can characterise them in two groups—whether a bill has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and whether a bill has sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament. Expressed under those headings is a sum total of 16 more granular or detailed questions on which a government should seek to satisfy itself. This should be done on any bill proposed by any government, and no less a government than one with absolute command of both houses that can get whatever it wants through whenever it wants, so that it can exercise any nascent or residual intellectual integrity that it or its individual members might have. What are some of these questions? I will not go through the full list, but they bear repeating and they absolutely bear on this bill and the motion to refer the bill to the standing committee.

The first question asks: are rights, freedoms or obligations dependent on administrative power only if sufficiently defined and subject to appropriate review? The first task that the Standing Committee on Legislation might inquire into is whether this bill, as presented, is dependent on administrative power or will create administrative powers that are sufficiently defined and subject to review. Nothing that I have seen so far suggests that that condition has been satisfied. The second question is: is the bill consistent with principles of natural justice? It would appear that this is a live question, particularly as the bill will affect the current property rights of individuals. The other natural justice consideration is whether the concerns of those that we in bland bureaucratic managerial language now call “stakeholders”, which are people—individuals, whose ordinary business is not to read legislation or to provide extensive submissions to consultation papers released very briefly and fleetingly by an executive government—and every single firearm licence holder in this state have been afforded natural justice. Will this bill and its implications offend against that principle? This is a question the Standing Committee on Legislation might usefully ask. Will the bill confer power to enter premises, search for or seize documents or other property with only a warrant issued by a judge or other judicial officer? From my understanding, a very loose and broad power delegated to individual police is embedded in this bill. We have normalised these powers to a degree under COVID-19, but perhaps we should refresh ourselves with some fundamental legislative principles. Is that right? Is that reasonable? Will this bill create powers that are unacceptably and dangerously too extensive?

The seventh on the list, and this is not the full list, asks whether the bill will adversely affect rights and liberties or impose obligations retrospectively. It would appear on not only a first reading of the bill—when in opposition, we have to read bills by ourselves—that that retrospective principle has been offended against, I would ascertain, but it would also be a more reasonable undertaking or responsibility to be given to the Standing Committee on Legislation to investigate further. My fears may be groundless. Would it not be better to disabuse them? But if indeed the bill will adversely affect those rights, liberties or impose obligations retrospectively, would that not give us cause to reconsider the bill? Or would it not give the government reason to amend its bill, which it has demonstrated an ability to do, so that the principle is not offended against but is still in keeping with the broad policy of the bill?

A broader question: will the bill have sufficient regard to the institution of Parliament? Governments over time, but particularly this government in its first iteration in the fortieth Parliament under the premiership of Hon Mark McGowan and the current Parliament over the course especially of the last 12 months under the premiership of Hon Roger Cook, have demonstrated a tendency to use, overuse and frankly abuse regulation-making powers. This bill will create enormous scope for regulations to be made that will be either ineffective, counterproductive, potentially unlawful or beyond the scope of review. Herein lies a very real danger that I am not giving any hyperbolic acceleration to. It is true to say that of a bill such as this at 492 clauses, whose explanatory memorandum itself is verging on over 140 pages. It is always a danger sign when an explanatory memorandum is that dense and long.

We are at very real risk of subverting this institution. The only guarantee that this house can have that this bill will not offend egregiously against the rights and liberties of individuals as they have been established over centuries of practice in Westminster Parliaments, or against this institution and us as individual members discharging our

responsibilities to the public to legislate properly, cannot be known unless this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. If a legislator takes seriously their role and calling irrespective of their political allegiance, they would at first glance look at a bill such as this and observe the sentiments that the minister has carried on with over the course of the last 18 months. They would record and remark the brace of media statements, record and reflect on a series of examples that demonstrate that the minister as the responsible minister is not at all across any of the detail and whose response to any scrutiny—not criticism, but scrutiny—is to engage in ad hominem attacks or excessive, exaggerated Chicken Little protestations that the sky will fall in if something so simple as three very sensible amendments put on the notice paper by Hon Peter Collier are anything to go by. Needless to say, on this pointless, ridiculous statement that somehow this jurisdiction will be flooded with guns if the amendments are agreed, how can any serious person in this Parliament let alone in this house take the statements of that minister seriously? That is what I expect the government will ask this house to do if its expected refusal to allow this bill to be referred to that committee takes hold. The minister is fine as a person and I like him personally, but as a professional, he leaves a lot to be desired. He would put that word above the integrity, the principles and the practices of this house.

Is there a risk that the government's legislative program will be derailed if this bill is referred? How could it possibly be? It is for two reasons. First of all, the date has been set or recommended as 13 August. Obviously, that is the first Council Tuesday sitting day back from the winter recess. It has been remarked, quite obviously, that we have nine full sitting weeks after that date—27 full sitting days—to deal with this legislation. The government will be able to go to the next election—I imagine this is part of its plan—and say that it brought in reforms to the firearms legislation. That political objective will not be imperilled by referring this bill to a committee for sufficient and proper scrutiny. It is not as if, as some of the media might have been told or the community has been led to believe, this bill will suddenly come into effect and magically spring out of the box with all the articulated regulations, forms, practices and processes ready to roll.

I ask any diligent member here to look at clause 2, the commencement clause. It contains a disaggregated and fragmented group of provisions around the operation and implementation of certain parts of this bill. They will not happen. With the best will in the world, they will not come into effect fully and properly until, I imagine, the end of next year. They cannot. I will justify this by saying that we made a very significant reform in this Parliament to the way the criminal law treats mentally impaired people. That was a very complicated piece of legislation generated by years of reform, review, submissions and the like. Dedicated staff in the Department of Justice have been working on that bill for seven years. The next two years or so will be dedicated to drafting all the appropriate regulations and then provide advice to different agencies on the operationalising of those provisions. Significant reform does not end the day the media statement is dropped. It does not end the day a bill receives royal assent. The hard work in making a bill function takes months, if not years sometimes, to embed and realise. That is very likely to be the case with this bill. There is absolutely no rush to deal with it this week, which might be a very optimistic hope, or even by the winter recess, which I think is now looking increasingly more likely. If this house does not make the determination and demonstrate some wisdom by referring this bill to where it should be referred, it will again fall on the opposition and the crossbench to do the work not only of that committee, but of the entire Parliament. We will do it. At least 32 000 people in this state have an interest, if not potentially 90 000 overall, which serves somewhat as a neatish segue into my conclusion.

The advantage of the Standing Committee on Legislation is that it can inquire into the policy of the bill but throughout that inquiry it has the capacity and has demonstrated the practice of inviting submissions and conducting hearings on the bill. I have heard the government remark frequently when it was held to account for a lack of consultation on its bills, waving it away and saying, “Bill X: Law Reform Commission report 10Y dealt with this and took 3 000 submissions 15 years ago” or remarks of that nature. What the government does not do though is consult on the bill. I had a very productive, but on occasion alarming, meeting with the Law Society of Western Australia about five weeks ago. One of the take-home messages after that meeting was that it expressed a deep frustration with the lack of consultation on serious bills that affect its profession and its clients.

Hon Ben Dawkins: Workers comp.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is one of them. Motor vehicle insurance changes is another one, or any bill we care to mention.

One of the opportunities gained through a referral, as has been put, is to take on board the views and perspectives of those individuals who will be affected by the bill. One such individual, who I will not name but who expresses a sentiment that I think on one part is unique to their circumstances but broadly reflective of the way law-abiding firearms owners in this state believe they have been treated, feels as if they have been treated with contempt. A refusal to refer this bill to the committee will probably reinforce or concretise that perception. That is not helpful for the committee or the government. This particular individual is a veteran. Noting that the Minister for Police is also the Minister for Veterans Issues and himself a distinguished ex-serviceman, this individual wrote the following —

... I respectfully request that you change the tone and the language that you use when you refer to licenced firearms owners, as many are the very people you are meant to be representing as Minister for Veterans Issues ...

I believe that you need to acknowledge that a vast number of veterans, serving and ex-serving members of the ADF enjoy the sport of shooting and firearms ownership; these are people of exceptional character who served Australia. There are mental health benefits for veterans, serving and ex-serving members of the ADF being involved in the shooting sport, hunting or shooting at a range, through engagement and contact with like-minded people.

I have no convictions. I have always been interested in firearms, which led me to join the Army. I served as a professional soldier in the regular Army for 23 years, all of that service in SASR. Additionally, I served for eight years in the Army Reserve. I instructed and oversaw firearms training for numerous types of firearms when serving. I served on the national counter-terrorist team multiple times.

You are treating me and a section of the community, including other veterans, serving and ex-serving members of the Australian Defence Force like we are members of an outlaw motorcycle gang.

Gentlemen —

This email was also sent to the Premier —

the draft firearms bill needs to be reworked.

That was just an excerpt of the correspondence but it is fair to say that it did not rely on sentiment alone. That email also covered off on a range of provisions in the bill that cause this individual concern. To the degree that he has identified them with clarity and specified exactly where the offensive provisions are in the bill, I suggest that he may well have a case. I will not go through the extensive list, but I will cover it off briefly. There are three that I will cite. The first is the ability of the Commissioner of Police to refuse, deny or revoke a firearms licence based on a person's views, opinions and attitudes, which appears in clause 150; second, that a person may be subject to the use of hearsay evidence at the State Administrative Tribunal in proceedings related to the Firearms Act, which appears in clause 334; and, third, warrantless inspections, which appears in clause 311. They are just three issues that are related to whether or not a bill sufficiently regards the rights and liberties of individuals. Prima facie, there is a problem here that is best referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation to give more detailed consideration to. It is absolutely essential that this bill be referred. I could not speak in support of this motion more strongly.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [8.40 pm]: Noting the time, I probably will not get through my contribution on this motion to refer the Firearms Bill 2024 to the Standing Committee on Legislation. However, I rise to start my comments on this matter. I fully endorse the motion to refer the Firearms Bill 2024 to the legislation committee for its consideration. I want to reiterate some of the points my colleagues made about the e-petition that was presented to this place not long ago with 32 334 signatures. That is a massive number. To reiterate, it states —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

1. Support law-abiding owners of firearms in Western Australia;
2. Call on the Government to prioritise its taxpayer funded resources towards those who possess and use unlicensed firearms;
3. Have significant concerns about multiple provisions in the Firearms Bill 2024;
4. Are dismayed that after all the talk and promises of consultation, the Bill is currently with a parliamentary committee whose restricted terms of reference prohibit it from conducting a full public inquiry;
5. Urge the Legislative Council to refer the Bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation for a full public inquiry into the policy of the Bill to assess its impact on the rights and liberties of law-abiding Western Australians and its efficacy at tackling those with a history of showing disregard for the laws of our State.

I support the broad sentiment of the petition. We could argue about some of the specific wording, but I certainly support it. I also support measures to control firearms. I believe that it is important to have the maximum level of public safety for firearms and any other weapons. We have seen the rise of knife crime in Western Australia, which is deeply concerning. My father was a serving police officer with the New Zealand Police for nearly 30 years. Approximately 50 years ago, he almost never came home from duty. I was only a child at the time when he had to attend the local port where a stolen yacht had come into harbour. He went down to talk to the gentleman on the vessel and as he got to the campsite where the gentleman was, a firearm was pulled out from behind the campsite and the person attempted to discharge the firearm as my father tackled him to the ground. The only reason that he was not shot was that the offender had been at sea and the firearm had rusted. Sadly, that person later went on to commit further firearms offences. From my recollection, he may have murdered a child at a school in New Zealand and turned the gun on himself.

It is not that I come from a position of not supporting the maximum protection in our community, particularly for serving officers in their capacity to keep us safe from firearms and knife crime. This is a very serious issue. It is a reality that firearms are used in society for both enjoyment and also to shoot feral animals, for example. That is a massive issue in my region. Firearms are a necessity for recreational shooters so they can shoot feral animals, along with professional shooters.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

BATTLE OF CRETE MEMORIAL*Statement*

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [8.45 pm]: In November last year, I rose to speak in this place on the occasion of the sod turning for the Battle of Crete in the Saw Avenue precinct of Kings Park. I finished that statement by saying that I looked forward to the consecration of the memorial sometime in 2024. I am pleased to report that the consecration of the memorial occurred last Saturday. The crowd there was enormous, as was the list of dignitaries. I will not go through the entire list, but I will note some of them. In attendance were His Excellency the Governor; Premier Roger Cook; His Excellency the Greek Ambassador; and the Greek Consul in Perth, who, sadly, is coming to the end of her tenure. There was a host of federal and state politicians, including from this chamber. As well as me, there was Hon Tjorn Sibma and Hon Kate Doust. Hon Kate Doust has a very personal connection to the Battle of Crete memorial. Her great-uncle, Frank Graffen, of the 2nd/11th, one of five brothers who served in World War II, was killed in an action at Crete on 20 May 1941 at the age of 22.

The star of the show was the everlasting Arthur Leggett, OAM. He is the last Western Australian survivor of the Battle of Crete and is just shy of his 106th birthday. In an organised break from protocol, he quite fittingly laid the first wreath at the new memorial, sneaking in just before His Excellency the Governor, Chris Dawson. It was an absolutely magnificent day not just because of the large crowd that had assembled or the weather or the beautiful surrounds of Kings Park, but because of everything the memorial represents. It is, by definition, a commemoration to all those Australians who fought and died and those who, like Arthur, were captured, and those who escaped. It is also a commemoration to the many Cretans who helped the Australian soldiers survive through the dangerous act of hiding and provisioning them, as well as the Greek soldiers and the Navy personnel who were involved.

It is so much more than this; it is a link between Western Australia and the people of Crete. It is another representation of the bond that exists between Australia and specifically Western Australia and the Hellenic Republic. The strength and depth of this is underscored by the fact that both the Governor and the Greek Ambassador were front and centre at the ceremony.

But for the fact that the Western Australian Greek community is such an important part of this state's culturally diverse society and has contributed extensively to the development of this state throughout many decades in every field of endeavour and but for the fact that Western Australia's warm relationship with Greece is as firmly based on strong community links and shared democratic values as it is on historical bonds, one that is now commemorated in this memorial, and but for these important ties between our two jurisdictions, this memorial would never have been erected.

The other key component that deserves recognition is the formation of the committee nearly 10 years ago to see this project through to fruition. It has been a long journey for the hardworking committee members of the Battle of Crete Memorial. I will name them once again. The committee included Mr Bill Evangel; Major Mike McDonald; former Governor Dr Ken Michael, AC; Dr John Yiannakis, OAM; Mr John Dombrose; Commander Phil Orchard; Mrs Catherine Papanastasiou; and Mr Manoli Yeroyianakis. It has been an incredible effort by all of them and they should be rightly proud to see the results of their hard work almost a decade after its inception.

I want to speak briefly about the memorial before I close. The memorial itself is truly magnificent. It is based on a broken column, which represents a life cut short. There are four life-sized images in relief around the base: an Australian soldier of the 2nd/11th battalion, which was raised here in Perth, who faces north, the direction that the enemy came from. To his left and facing west is a 1941 Greek soldier. The symbolism of a west-facing ally is that of an enduring connection. Facing south—behind the Australian soldier—is a Royal Australian Navy rating symbolising the allied naval forces having the backs of their Army counterparts on the island. Facing east is a Cretan peasant woman. This recognises the heavy involvement of local civilians in the battle, their sheltering of Australian soldiers evading capture by the enemy and their ongoing resistance against what was an oppressive invader, which, we must remember, resulted in the loss of hundreds of lives of the local population.

This is the only memorial to the Battle of Crete in Australia, and the only memorial that links Australia and Greece to be found in Western Australia. I would encourage all members to visit it, to admire the memorial's unique built form and all it symbolises, and at the same time to reflect on what it represents.

House adjourned at 8.50 pm
