



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2022

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 9 August 2022

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 9 August 2022

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) took the chair at 1.00 pm, acknowledged country and read prayers.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER — BELLS — DIDGERIDOO MUSIC

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.01 pm]: Members, for over 100 years, this chamber has been convened and divisions have been called by a ringing bell sound. That sound has changed and adapted with technology over the years but has still reflected a very British tradition. Today marks a change from that tradition to a uniquely Australian sound. It is the sound of the didgeridoo—the ancient sound of an ancient land. The didgeridoo piece that members heard as they entered the chamber today is titled *Makuru*. It was composed and performed by respected and musically gifted Noongar elder Mr Jeremy Garlett, whom I welcome to my gallery this afternoon. I also acknowledge Jeremy’s mother’s heritage being Yamatji and Yawuru. *Makuru* was the season of the creation of this piece. It is the Noongar season of the first rains and fertility. It is also traditionally a time of transition when Noongars moved from coastal areas to inland areas ahead of those rains. The piece in its entirety runs for two minutes, which is the duration of the ringing of the bells during a division. I intend trialling this very beautiful and very Australian piece of didgeridoo music as the sound of the Assembly bells until the end of the year, and I welcome members’ feedback and suggestions. I have already had some positive responses, which is great.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF NORTH WEST CENTRAL

Resignation of Member for North West Central — Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.03 pm]: I advise members that yesterday I received a letter from the member for North West Central, submitting his resignation from his position as member for the electoral district of North West Central in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in the following terms —

Dear Speaker,

I wish to inform you that as of the 8th of August 2022, I resign as the Member for North West Central.

Regards

Vince Catania MLA
Member for North West Central

Declared Vacant — Motion

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

That the seat for the electoral district of North West Central be and is hereby declared vacant by reason of the resignation of Vincent Alexander Catania.

Issue of Writ for By-Election — Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.04 pm]: Following the passing of the motion moved by the Premier, I advise that it is my intention to issue a writ directing the Electoral Commissioner to conduct a by-election for the electoral district of North West Central on Saturday, 17 September 2022.

PAPERS TABLED

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

CARERS ADVISORY COUNCIL COMPLIANCE REPORT 2020–21

Correction — Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.09 pm]: That is a very long list of tabled reports after the break! I have some further statements. First, on 25 July 2022, I received a letter from the Minister for Community Services requesting that an erratum be added to the Department of Communities’ *Carers Advisory Council compliance report 2020–21* tabled on 23 June 2022. The erratum corrects a minor graphic design error on page 4. Under the provisions of standing order 156, I authorise the corrections to be attached as an erratum to the tabled paper.

[See paper [1318](#).]

ANIMAL WELFARE AND TRESPASS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Removal of Order — Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.10 pm]: I inform members that in accordance with standing order 144A, the government business order of the day that appeared on the last notice paper as “Animal Welfare and Trespass

Legislation Amendment Bill 2021” has not been debated for more than 12 calendar months and has been removed from the notice paper. I advise that a bill removed from the notice paper under this standing order may be restored by motion to the point it reached prior to its removal.

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — FIRST 100 DAYS — PERFORMANCE
McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — HEALTH — PERFORMANCE

Removal of Order — Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.10 pm]: I inform members that in accordance with standing order 144A, the private members’ business orders of the day that appeared on the last notice paper as “100 Days of Government” and “Western Australian Health Service” have not been debated for more than 12 calendar months and have been removed from the notice paper.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER — HEATING

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [1.11 pm]: For those members who have said it is rather cold in here, apparently the heating system was not working earlier today. I am advised it is now working, but it is just going to take a little while for the chamber to heat.

ANIMAL WELFARE AND TRESPASS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Restoration to Notice Paper — Notice of Motion

Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —
 That the Animal Welfare and Trespass Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 be restored to the point it reached prior to its removal from the notice paper on Tuesday, 9 August 2022.

MINING AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Notice of Motion to Introduce

Notice of motion given by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**.

MINISTERS — PERFORMANCE

Notice of Motion

Ms M.J. Davies (Leader of the Opposition) gave notice that at the next sitting of the house she would move —
 That this house calls on the Premier to sack his incompetent ministers after a winter recess that has exposed a raft of delivery failures in key portfolios.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON, APM — APPOINTMENT AS GOVERNOR

Statement by Premier

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [1.12 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the appointment of Western Australia’s thirty-fourth Governor, His Excellency the Honourable Christopher Dawson, APM. I attended Mr Dawson’s swearing-in on Friday, 15 July, along with the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Central Wheatbelt; and the Lieutenant Governor, Honourable Justice Peter Quinlan. Mr Dawson served for 46 years as a sworn police officer and is the first police officer to ever be appointed to the role of Governor. He went from young cadet to Commissioner of Police, and served Western Australia incredibly well during the pandemic, especially in his role as Vaccine Commander. Now, after 46 years of upholding the law at both the state and federal level, he will be providing the laws of the land with royal assent! We have every confidence that he will do an outstanding job and wish him and his wife, Darrilyn, all the best in the role. I would also like to take the opportunity on behalf of the government to offer our thanks to the outgoing Governor, Hon Kim Beazley, and his wife, Susie, for their service to the state and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

RECONNECT WA

Statement by Premier

MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [1.13 pm]: Between 25 June and 7 July, I undertook a Reconnect WA mission to promote WA as a safe place to visit, work, study and invest. It was my first overseas trip since 2019, and it began by joining Qantas representatives, travel industry representatives and media on the official launch flight of the first-ever nonstop Perth to Rome route. Supported by the state government, the route puts WA front and centre as the western gateway, as the only nonstop flight between Australia and continental Europe. The new route has been so successful that it will return next year, with plans for an expanded format.

In Rome and Milan, I hosted several tourism round tables to promote WA tourism opportunities and held media engagements to showcase WA and attract more visitors to our state. I also met with energy companies with interests in WA and reinforced Western Australia’s reputation as a place to invest. Further, I met with Webuild, currently building the Metronet Forrestfield–Airport Link, which is looking to take on further infrastructure work in WA.

While in Rome, WA secured a AAA credit rating through S&P Global. It is the first time in nine years that WA has held a AAA credit rating. This news was welcomed in a series of financial investor briefings in London and Dublin, highlighting WA's strong economic performance and our unique experience of dealing with the pandemic, whilst keeping WA safe and our economy open. WA Treasury Corporation chairperson, Michael Barnes, and CEO, Kaylene Gulich, joined me in hosting these briefings to help further enhance WA's borrowing program, and I thank them for their support.

As part of our efforts to attract skilled workers to WA, I launched the expanded Build a Life in WA campaign into the UK and Ireland. Meetings with skilled migration and recruitment agencies were insightful, as we keep working with the commonwealth government to enhance our skilled migration program. Working holidaymakers are also a target market in getting skilled and unskilled workers into WA and that was also on the mission agenda. I met with the Prime Minister as well as the President of Ireland in Dublin. Both were very complimentary of WA's management of the pandemic and the meetings reinforced WA's strong connection with Ireland.

In Qatar, the Australian ambassador acknowledged WA's attention as he stated I was the first state Premier to visit Doha in an official capacity. Meetings with skilled migration agents and international education, tourism industry and business representatives provided opportunities to broaden our trade and investment connections with Qatar. I also met with the Qatar Airways Group CEO to thank him and the company for their commitment to keep flying to Perth during the pandemic and highlighted our support for the airline to double its daily connection between Perth and Doha.

Finally, I would like to thank staff at the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation for helping organise the mission, and thank the WA office in London and John Langoulant for their support. I table a copy of the itinerary.

[See paper [1319](#).]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Thirty-seventh Report — Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition — Government Response — Statement by Minister for Health

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Health) [1.16 pm]: I rise today to table the government's response to the final report of the Standing Committee on Public Administration's inquiry into the delivery of ambulance services in WA. It is titled *A new century for ambulance services*. All 74 findings and 48 recommendations from the committee's report were unanimously endorsed by members spanning representation from government, the Liberal–National coalition and the crossbench.

St John Ambulance has been the subject of 12 reports and 122 recommendations since 2009. Despite this, the committee's findings indicate substantial issues persist with its performance, staffing levels, governance, transparency and workforce culture. There is a clear need to fundamentally shift the relationship between the Department of Health and St John Ambulance, starting with a more contemporary contract embedding a more active role for government, with much stronger performance management and clinical collaboration. WA Health also needs to re-examine how it partners and works with St John Ambulance to deliver better outcomes for our community. The success of a recent initiative to embed senior WA Health and WA police officials in St John Ambulance headquarters demonstrates the value of integrating ambulance services with the wider health and emergency management systems.

Of the 48 recommendations, 46 received support or in-principle support and will be implemented through 28 actions across five themes. The first theme is working together to improve emergency access. This will review triage accuracy, improve the coordination of ambulance dispatch, divert patients to more clinically appropriate alternative care pathways, and enhance competition in inter-hospital patient transfers. The second theme is a more contemporary contract. This will introduce new performance management measures, strengthen clinical oversight, and improve transparency of how public funds are spent. The third theme is a new service delivery model for country ambulance. It will move away from the "best endeavours" model, trial innovative new workforce models, and do more to upskill volunteers and support paramedics. The fourth theme is improving access and equity. It will explore options to address the financial impost of ambulance fees for vulnerable members of the community, enhance Aboriginal communities' access to services, and ensure that services are culturally safe. The fifth theme is strengthening governance, transparency and accountability. This will ensure that St John Ambulance meets best practice in board governance and improve public oversight of St John Ambulance's performance.

Government will report annually to Parliament on the status of each action and the performance of St John Ambulance against key performance indicators set out in the new contract for emergency ambulance services currently being negotiated between WA Health and St John Ambulance. To ensure that these 28 actions translate into meaningful and enduring change, the government will conduct an evaluation in late 2025 to assess whether St John Ambulance is delivering against its new KPIs. Consistent with recommendation 48, this evaluation will also consider whether the contract delivers sufficient value for WA to continue engaging St John Ambulance for emergency ambulance services or whether an alternative model should be considered.

I table the government's response to the report.

[See paper [1320](#).]

RECONNECT WA*Statement by Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade*

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade) [1.19 pm]: It is with great pleasure that I stand today to report on the outcomes of the government’s first official visits abroad since the COVID-19 pandemic, which I embarked on to “Reconnect WA”. Since the opening of Western Australia’s borders, I have been on four missions—to Singapore, East Java, the United Kingdom and Europe.

During my visit to Singapore, I signed a memorandum of understanding with Singapore Airlines and Scoot to return operations on the Singapore–Perth route to pre-pandemic levels within two years. I also met with key tourism partners. I held productive meetings with industry and investment stakeholders, as well as a round table to discuss opportunities for investment in Western Australia and their needs in energy transition, infrastructure development, and environmental, social and governance considerations.

At the end of May, I visited our sister state in Indonesia, East Java, to re-establish our close relationship and discuss the mutual priorities that will shape our engagement over the next five years under a new sister-state agreement. I toured the Millennial Job Center in Malang, where we talked about our mutual interest in skilled workforce development. I also visited Singhasari, East Java’s special economic zone for tourism and digital technology development, to understand the developer’s vision and the opportunities it presents for Western Australian businesses and education providers.

My trip to the UK and Europe focused on promoting investment and trade opportunities, and showcasing Western Australia’s industry capabilities to European markets. During this mission, I supported Western Australian participants at one of the world’s largest tech events, London Tech Week, and announced our plans to open a new investment and trade office in Frankfurt in recognition of growing economic opportunities between Western Australia and Germany. I met leaders in the UK space sector to discuss progress in the development of the UK–Australia Space Bridge and the Goonhilly space communication gateway. I held a targeted discussion with migration agents in London that highlighted the opportunities and challenges that skilled migrants face, including the visa approval process, which was raised as a key issue. Finally, in Frankfurt and Munich, I held a number of constructive discussions with key stakeholders in the space, research and manufacturing sectors to promote opportunities for collaboration.

All these missions have played an integral role in reconnecting WA, sending a clear message that Western Australia is full of opportunity and is a safe and vibrant place to visit, work and invest. I table my travel itineraries for the Singapore, East Java and UK–Europe missions.

[See paper [1321](#).]

INDIA VISIT*Statement by Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade*

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade) [1.22 pm]: Hon David Templeman, MLA, Minister for International Education, and I led the state’s largest ever business delegation mission on investment and trade when we travelled to India in July. We were provided with invaluable assistance during the delegation from Mr Yaz Mubarakai, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance; Aboriginal Affairs; Racing and Gaming; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests; as well as Mr Kevin Michel, member for Pilbara; and Dr Jags Krishnan, member for Riverton. More than 100 representatives joined the mission from six priority sectors, including mining and mining equipment, technology and services; international education; energy; innovation hubs and smart cities; primary industries; and tourism events and creative industries.

During the mission we visited four cities—Delhi, Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Chennai. The mission focused on strengthening government and industry connections; unlocking opportunities for local businesses in the Indian market, including those arising from the interim Australia–India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement; and promoting the state as a destination for tourists, students, events, business and investment. Government relations were strengthened through engagement with chief ministers and senior officials in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. I also met with three union ministers in Delhi responsible for the commerce, industry, mines, civil aviation and steel portfolios.

Western Australia signed a letter of intent with our sister state Andhra Pradesh focused on exploring mutual cooperation across priority sectors. I had productive discussions, particularly on direct aviation links between Western Australia and India, with the chairman of Tata Sons, one of India’s largest multinational conglomerates. I was delighted to announce the establishment of a new “spoke” office in Chennai, which will provide a vital link for WA businesses pursuing investment and trade opportunities in South India. More than 20 memoranda of understanding were signed between Western Australian and Indian businesses and industry groups during the mission. For the first time ever, 200 kilograms of WA rock lobsters were transported from Geraldton to Chennai, and showcased at a special Invest and Trade WA event. This facilitated discussion on further seafood industry cooperation and imports into India. Events to promote tourism between WA and India were held in Mumbai. The TWA team and I were ably assisted by Mr Brad Hogg, former test cricketer for Australia, who did a great job promoting WA to the Indian media, and we thank him for his efforts.

It was fantastic to be on the ground in India to see firsthand the overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic response to the delegation. Now more than ever we need to strengthen and grow relationships with our key strategic partners like India. Missions like this prove the McGowan government's commitment to diversifying and reconnecting WA.

I now table my travel itinerary for the India mission.

[See paper [1322](#).]

YOUTH DETENTION FACILITY — CASUARINA PRISON

Statement by Minister for Corrective Services

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Corrective Services) [1.25 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the recent transfer of a complex cohort of young offenders from Banksia Hill Detention Centre to a newly gazetted, temporary youth detention facility. I ordered the gazettal under section 13 of the Young Offenders Act to allow for a standalone unit at Casuarina Prison to be designated as a youth detention centre and operate as an extension of Banksia Hill.

I can inform the house that I did not take this decision lightly. I have worked with the leadership of the Department of Justice throughout this year as it sought to manage a cohort of young offenders who have shown unprecedented levels of violent behaviour. I met with the representative union leadership and staff, and heard how difficult and unsafe the working environment has become for staff. I want to take a moment to acknowledge the hardworking, dedicated staff we have working at our youth detention centres and throughout the wider custodial and justice system. They do difficult jobs in tough circumstances and I commend their efforts.

The ongoing violence and destruction that continued to be exhibited by this small cohort of young offenders was also having a negative impact on other young detainees, who would often have to be confined to their units while an incident was responded to. Ultimately, I was not prepared to have the rehabilitation and education of the other detainees continue to be impacted in this way. Therefore, I made the decision to relocate the detainees to a safer and more secure place because of their sustained and unprecedented destruction of living quarters and infrastructure, and attacks on staff.

The temporary centre is separate from the rest of Casuarina Prison and detainees accommodated there will have no contact with adult prisoners. Support provided includes education and programs, and cultural, medical and psychological services, which are all delivered onsite by experienced Banksia Hill and youth justice staff. The detainees will also have access to secure recreation facilities. Detainees are being regularly assessed and will return to Banksia Hill once the multidisciplinary team makes the decision that it is safe to do so. Meanwhile, the \$25 million upgrades to Banksia Hill that I have previously announced will be expedited to enable the return of detainees from the temporary centre when it is appropriate to do so.

HOMELESSNESS WEEK

Statement by Minister for Homelessness

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Homelessness) [1.28 pm]: I am pleased to rise to advise the house on some of the significant activities during this year's Homelessness Week, from 1 August to 5 August. Homelessness Week is an important week to bring together government, the community sector and other stakeholders to both reflect on the success we have had and acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead. I want to sincerely thank the sector for the great work that it does in addressing homelessness and making a tangible difference in people's lives. This year's theme was "Housing, Health and Homelessness". As we know, homelessness often intersects with a range of deep traumas, including drug and alcohol dependence, family and domestic violence, and mental health or other trauma. This is why our government has invested in a clear, evidence-based approach to homelessness. We understand that to address homelessness we need to address these issues, along with providing housing. Unless we can achieve this, we are not fully able to address homelessness. As a government we are investing around \$225 million this year directly in homelessness supports, including to run facilities like Boorloo Bidee Mia. Investments such as this make a real difference in people's lives.

This Homelessness Week I was fortunate enough to visit many people and service providers. I met with Ruah Community Services, St Patrick's Community Support Centre and local government outreach services. I met people experiencing homelessness and spoke to people in the sector about what is being experienced on the ground. It is critical and important that we bring people together across sectors to work towards solutions and coordinated responses to homelessness, and Homelessness Week is a great facilitator for this. Seeing the difference that we can make when we come together is what gets me up in the morning, and I know it is what drives many people in the sector, too.

I just want to finish by giving a shout-out to Michelle Mackenzie from Shelter WA, who will be ending up very soon. I want to personally thank her for her hard work and advocacy in the homelessness space and say how good it has been to work with such an outstanding leader in the sector supporting the most vulnerable people in Western Australia.

SENIORS STRATEGY*Statement by Minister for Seniors and Ageing*

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [1.30 pm]: I rise to inform the house about the progress of Western Australia's first seniors strategy. The WA seniors strategy is a whole-of-government, 10-year strategy led by the Department of Communities to support older Western Australians of all backgrounds throughout the state to live their best life as they age. Public consultation sessions for the strategy's development, which commenced in November 2021, have now concluded. The public consultation period included online, face-to-face and phone consultations and public submissions, as well as local government and community organisation-hosted events. The use of online and postcard surveys translated into Chinese, Arabic, Italian and Vietnamese to ensure that we engaged people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has worked well during the COVID-19 period. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to the more than 2 000 seniors and pre-seniors who have generously given their time to participate in the consultation process to date. I also want to thank MPs who were involved in consultation sessions, particularly my parliamentary secretary, Hon Kyle McGinn, MLC, who attended every single session on behalf of the McGowan government.

A series of targeted consultation sessions will be held over the coming months to further strengthen the voice of older Aboriginal Western Australians in the development of the strategy. The preliminary themes arising from the consultation include: access to information and services; social inclusion; connectivity and digital inclusion; community participation; cost of living; ageing with choice; housing and living independently; health; safety and physical activity; transport options and accessibility; employment; and ageism. For the benefit of members, ageism is about defining and indeed discriminating against a person based solely on age rather than recognising a person's ability and ongoing contribution. It is important to acknowledge that regional and remote issues transect almost all these themes and will be a key focus for the strategy.

The strategy, which is set to be launched in 2023, will include a series of action plans that will connect and coordinate activities across government agencies to ensure that systems and services are responsive to older persons' needs. The strategy will guide whole-of-community action in making Western Australia a place where older people can age actively, healthily and in a way that they choose and be happy.

BILLS*Assent*

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

1. Planning and Development Amendment Bill 2022.
2. Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021.
3. Soil and Land Conservation Amendment Bill 2021.
4. Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021.
5. Transfer of Land Amendment Bill 2021.

CASINO LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BURSWOOD CASINO) BILL 2022*Appropriations*

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriations for the purposes of the bill.

BUSH FIRES AMENDMENT BILL 2022*Second Reading*

Resumed from 22 June.

MR M. HUGHES (Kalamunda) [1.35 pm]: It has been a long time since we assembled in the chamber! As members will know, the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022 will amend the Bush Fires Act 1954 to instate the nationally agreed Australian Fire Danger Rating System and corresponding fire behaviour thresholds. The amendments to the act form part of the Western Australian government's response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Recommendation 13.1 of the royal commission stated —

State and territory governments should expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System.

Recommendation 13.2 of the commission stated —

State and territory governments should deliver education to ensure that the public understands the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System ratings, the potential danger attached to each rating, and the action that should be taken in response to each rating.

Bushfire is a seasonal danger across Western Australia, including the 448 square kilometres of the electorate of Kalamunda. From the outset, I wish to commend the selfless service provided to my community by the volunteer bush fire brigades, the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, the emergency services and the full-time members of

the Department of Fire and Emergency Services to protect both lives and property. Particularly, I want to commend the over 19 000 bush fire service volunteers across the state, comprising the 566 bush fire brigades. Without them, we would be in difficult circumstances each and every season that we experience bushfires.

In commending them, I also want to commend the McGowan Labor government for the work undertaken since the election in 2017 to enhance the state's capacity to protect our communities from, and to respond effectively to, natural disasters. Members will remember that a key part of this work was the government's effective response to the report titled "*Reframing rural fire management*": *Report of the special inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona fire*, which was tabled in Parliament by then Premier Barnett on Thursday, 23 June 2016. However, it took the election of the McGowan Labor government to respond to the Ferguson report's recommendations.

Just to remind members, the Waroona fire, which gave rise to the special inquiry, burnt out over 70 000 hectares of land. In that fire, two people died and at least 166 buildings were destroyed in Yarloop, with only 90 buildings surviving. In total, 181 buildings and structures were lost, with a total cost of fighting the fire, the damage and the resulting loss estimated to be in excess of \$155 million.

The Ferguson report recommended that the WA state government create a rural fire division to enhance the capacity for rural fire management and bushfire management. It also recommended that this function would establish a centre for fire management. Following the election of the McGowan government in 2017, the concept of a Bushfire Centre of Excellence was discussed at the Bushfire Mitigation Summit and the inaugural Western Australian Prescribed Burning Forum, which I attended. It was agreed that creating and capturing learnings through the Bushfire Centre of Excellence would build bushfire capacity for the future. As a result, the state government announced a comprehensive rural fire reform package in 2018, in response to the Ferguson report recommendations. Changes included the establishment of a rural fire division within the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the establishment of the Bushfire Centre of Excellence. In March 2019, the Shire of Murray was selected as the preferred centre location. At the time, I was disappointed that the proposal for the location in Stoneville, in my electorate, was not successful. The decision was made following an extensive request for proposal process whereby local governments across the state would formally express their interest. The permanent state-of-the-art buildings housing the Bushfire Centre of Excellence were opened in January 2021. The centre of excellence operates with a number of specific guiding principles, not least to decentralise the delivery of the centre's training programs and services, which it is doing in an admirable fashion.

I am pleased to note that the Bushfire Centre of Excellence is committed to gathering traditional and cultural knowledge about fire practices. To achieve this, the centre has established a cultural fire program that will consider how best we can link contemporary fire management with traditional fire practices. As we speak, a mixture of traditional and contemporary practices is being used across WA, with great success. I note the announcement made this morning by the Minister for Environment about that particular initiative. The intent of the cultural fire program is to support the development, implementation, coordination and promotion of both existing and future fire mitigation programs.

Closer to home, a little more than 12 months ago we experienced the Wooroloo bushfire. From that, lessons were learnt, in addition to those learnt from the 2014 Parkerville, Stoneville and Mt Helena fires. I want to remind members of the impact bushfires have upon our community. In the Parkerville, Stoneville and Mt Helena fires, 57 residential properties were destroyed, six were extensively damaged and numerous sheds and other structures were also affected. Although no lives were lost or serious injuries reported in those fires, 1 386 people were registered as evacuees with the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and the Australian Red Cross. During the recent Wooroloo fire, which started on 2 February 2021, more than 140 firefighting appliances and 280 firefighters from various agencies attended in the first 12 hours of the incident alone. The first reports of property damage were received a little over an hour after the start of the fire, as it rapidly spread through the semirural townships of Wooroloo, Gidgegannup and Tilden Park.

In that fire, 10 500 hectares inside a perimeter of 154 kilometres were burnt, with 86 homes lost and more than 100 other structures in its path destroyed or damaged. The majority of the property losses were experienced in the first 24 hours. More than 200 properties were reported as saved during the incident, as a result of carefully planned and executed strategies, and the outstanding work of fire crews, aircraft and support personnel. Luckily, the rainfall associated with a tropical low moving slowly from the south west coast assisted in extinguishing the fire on 7 February. We were lucky in that regard.

The recent Parkerville, Stoneville, Mt Helena and Wooroloo fires are stark reminders of the ever-present risk of catastrophic bushfires in the Perth hills and the damage and disruption they cause. The independent review of the Wooroloo bushfire acknowledges the ongoing action plan for the bushfires framework review established by the state government. The report covered a number of aspects particularly relevant to the 2021 Wooroloo fire. I will not range through the terms of reference or the nine specific items that the inquiry was required to give attention to. The independent inquiry was undertaken by a three-member panel, which comprised two interstate fire management experts and a local community representative who the member for Swan Hills and I met recently at the Shire of Mundaring, where we also met with the federal minister responsible for this area. The independent

review made 13 recommendations to enhance prevention, preparedness, response and recovery to bushfires in Western Australia: 10 were accepted in full, one was accepted in principle and two were noted by the state government. Importantly, several of the recommendations contained in that independent inquiry report supported the continuation of existing programs, indicating that recent investments in bushfire preparedness by the state government are well targeted.

Throughout Western Australia, fire mitigation activities are essential to help prevent the loss of life and property when a catastrophic blaze breaks out. Since 2017, the McGowan government has allocated more than \$38 million to 55 local governments to conduct nearly 5 100 mitigation activities. The mitigation activities program has proven to be a highly effective tool in boosting the number of bushfire mitigation activities being carried out each year. It is very encouraging to see more local government authorities apply for this funding for the first time. This year alone, in the electorate of Kalamunda and the neighbouring electorate of Swan Hills, the Shire of Mundaring has received half a million dollars from the fund for bushfire mitigation activities.

My community was also very heartened by the announcement in the last state budget of the \$11 million investment that will deliver Western Australia's first large air tanker for the bushfire season for the next three years. The tanker will provide a major boost to the state's firefighting capacity and reduce our reliance on national aircraft availability. In February, a large tanker such as this dropped retardant that helped staunch the fire on Canning Mills Road and Martin Road in my electorate.

The whole community needs to be alert throughout the fire season. Fire danger ratings describe the potential level of danger should a bushfire start. They are important because they provide people with information so that they can take action to protect themselves and others from the potentially dangerous impacts of bushfires. I quote —

The new nationally agreed consistent AFDRS model, a departure from the six-category system, comprises four categories—"moderate", "high", "extreme" and "catastrophic". Proposed amendments to this section will remove reference to two current Fire Danger Rating terms, these being "severe" and "very high". This amendment will ensure that activities which are currently prohibited when the ratings "severe" or "very high" are issued, will also be prohibited when the new AFDRS ratings of "extreme" and "high" are issued.

The new redesigned system will more accurately forecast fire danger in Australia. The system is a project of national significance that has been developed collaboratively by state, territory and commonwealth governments with the aim of improving public safety and reducing the impacts of bushfires. This is achieved by improving the scientific accuracy behind fire danger predictions, improving the way that fire danger is communicated, providing government and industry with better decision-making tools, and reducing the costs associated with bushfire impacts. I turn now to seasonal predictions in the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System. New seasonal prediction research was developed with fire agencies for long-range planning as part of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System ahead of its launch this year. The seasonal prediction research provides fire agencies with the most accurate information possible to prepare for fire conditions ahead of time.

In a Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre project, led by the Bureau of Meteorology, researchers developed new capability for Australia to successfully predict dangerous bushfire conditions weeks, months and whole seasons ahead, which will greatly extend existing fire weather forecast capacity. This technology will be also part of a broader aim to create seamless predictive services across different timescales, which will enhance fire agencies' long-term planning capabilities and help to make Australia more resilient to disasters. Previously, long-range outlooks released by the Bureau of Meteorology used temperature and rain measures to predict fire danger; whereas, the new methodology combines measurements of humidity, wind, temperature, rain and vegetation moisture to create longer range predictions of dangerous fire conditions. The new technology also factors in large-scale weather variability; sudden increases in stratospheric temperatures, such as the polar vortex variation that contributed to the severity of the 2019–20 fire season; and long-term climate change trends. The predictions researchers developed throughout this project by combining all these factors have been found to be consistent with observed weather conditions. This research has provided an important stepping stone for the new capabilities that are being developed within the revised Australian Fire Danger Rating System. By using the very latest Bureau of Meteorology models and a more detailed approach to bushfire fuels, which were developed as part of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System, agencies will now have access to better information to support important decisions before and during fire seasons. This research will also be used as a guide when producing the seasonal bushfire outlook, a valued industry resource that the Cooperative Research Centres program developed, and will now be published by the Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council to help guide public messaging about fire risk.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M. HUGHES: I probably will not need the extension of time.

It is this latest research to inform fire danger rating calculations in Australia that the system incorporated from the Cooperative Research Centres science over the last 18 years. The minister said in closing the second reading

speech that by passing this bill, the government will ensure that the Western Australian community has available to it a better system and, therefore, will be better prepared for the threat of bushfire by being an active participant in the modernised system.

I commend the bill and revision of the existing legislation to the house, which will enable us now to take part in a nationally agreed and improved system.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [1.53 pm]: I would like to make a contribution to the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. I state at the outset that I am the lead speaker for the opposition on this matter in this house, although, of course, the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Martin Aldridge, in the other place will no doubt ask a lot about this legislation when it gets to that place. The former Minister for Emergency Services is in this house and he will be taking this matter forward for the government. I have suggested that if he answers any questions I ask during my second reading contribution in his second reading reply speech, we may not need to go into consideration in detail. However, we will see how all that unfolds.

I am conscious that there are only a few minutes before question time commences, so I will probably not get too far into the detail of the bill. However, we know that as we approach the bushfire season this year there has been a good period of rain throughout the year and that some areas will have high fuel loads. We know that during summer over recent years some very, very difficult situations have been caused by bushfires in my electorate. In the period before I came on board, there were some major fires in the Toodyay area. I think the Toodyay fire occurred in 2010 and I was elected in 2013, but people still had not got back into their homes by that time. We know that a major fire can be very traumatic for a community. The member for Kalamunda spoke about the Wooroloo fire, which is just outside my electorate. I assure members that on the days those fires were running, in the Shires of Toodyay and Chittering people were indeed looking to the skies. I know for a fact that there were some outbreaks many kilometres away around the lower Chittering area from sparks that were carried ahead from that fire, which had to be put out in some pretty difficult country. It was a very worrying time and we know that that will have a traumatic impact on those people who lost their houses for many years to come.

I am not going to go into the details of the Wooroloo fire because there are still some issues down that way. We also know that bushfire control is a very topical issue in local governments at the moment. The Western Australian Local Government Association is looking to make some changes for an appropriate model for local governments as they go forward. I think there has been talk about new legislation to consolidate the Fire and Emergency Services Act. That legislation may change the way in which the provisions of the Bush Fire Act 1954 have been operating for the last nearly 77 years. Obviously, consideration will have to be given to that as we go forward.

Some matters have been brought to a head because some local government CEOs are especially concerned about the level of their responsibility under work health and safety regimes and that has left them feeling as though they may be exposed to unmitigated risks. Some CEOs think that some processes could be put in place that will lead to sufficient mitigation of those risk, but others do not believe that that will necessarily happen. I recently attended a number of different zones and local governments to observe their meetings and gain an understanding of some of their issues. This issue is certainly one of the most contested and discussed by local government. I am not sure at what level volunteers have been consulted in local government areas, because they operate under many different circumstances. Some local governments bush fire brigades are comfortable to work within a shire or a local government sponsored situation; whereas, some brigades within that same shire prefer to work in line with the operations of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, mainly using their equipment, for instance, and to operate in areas where other assets are routinely needed. Here I am talking about places like Chittering, where aircraft or other resources need to be brought in because of the challenging terrain and the great risk that that bushland creates for the local community. I am not taking a position on that, but just highlighting that WALGA is working through this at the moment. I assume that by the time they arrive at a local government convention, they will have put forward a uniform position. Interestingly, they seem to be pushing a hybrid model. I do not know how a hybrid local government and departmental model will work under departmental control, but we will see how that works when local governments have gone through the consultation process. The bill we are discussing at the moment, the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022, is fairly simple in some ways, or apparently seems simple. It will simply change the number of indicators of fire danger that people would normally see. I think two categories are being chopped from the indicator: “very high” and, if I have it right, “extreme”, I think.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3256.]

**VISITORS — CHURCHLANDS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
AND LABOUR MOVEMENT INTERNSHIP PARTICIPANTS**

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.00 pm]: Members, I acknowledge some guests in the gallery today. Firstly, on behalf of the members for Scarborough and Churchlands, I would like to welcome students, leaders and staff from Churchlands Senior High School. On behalf of the member for Mirrabooka and others, I would like to also welcome the Chris Evans Labour Movement Internship participants who are also with us in the Speaker’s gallery.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ATTORNEY GENERAL — PERFORMANCE

441. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Attorney General:**

I refer to comments by Federal Court judge Justice Lee that the Attorney General was a “confused and confusing” witness in the defamation case between the Premier and Mr Clive Palmer, that he misstated evidence, and that he was not reliable and was “all over the shop”. Will the Attorney General advise the house why he should remain the state’s chief law officer in light of these damning comments on his performance, which has cost Western Australian taxpayers time and money?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I stand on my record as Attorney General.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, a question has been asked. I, for one, would like to hear the answer. Your attention to the Attorney General, please.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: I have been very humbled by both the speech that the Premier made in this chamber, going through my record of achievements in the law reform area, and his subsequent public comments on the legislation and reform agenda that I have prosecuted. Of course, His Honour said that he accepted that I had made an honest mistake about a matter, a date, and also commented that anyone who had ever called a witness in a trial would be used to an honest mistake. He said that.

Of course, when one makes an honest mistake, what should one do? They should move immediately to correct it as soon as they realise that they have made an error, which is what I did. When we make errors, we feel embarrassed. I felt embarrassed that I had made an error, and I apologised. We all make errors, and when we make them, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, we feel a bit silly. I can recall that when we were debating a very important bill in this chamber, the Leader of the Opposition stood up to speak on a completely different bill. When the Acting Speaker raised —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Acting Speaker drew the Leader of the Opposition’s attention to it —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Just to clarify, Leader of the Opposition, we are on the Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I am prepared to give you a supplementary question, but not if you continue to interject. Attorney General, bring your answer to a close.

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY: The Acting Speaker drew that to the Leader of the Opposition’s attention —

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Just to clarify, Leader of the Opposition, we are on the Criminal Appeals Amendment Bill 2021.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is not what I am on. That is why I asked! My apologies. Sorry; I was under the impression we were doing the Administration Amendment Bill, which is on our green sheet.

Mr D.R. Michael: We did do it, just very quickly.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I missed that. Right, I am clearly fast asleep. I am having a good day today! I will stand and talk to this bill while our speaker makes his way to the chamber. Again, I am going to demonstrate my in-depth knowledge of this legislation. My apologies; I was not paying attention and that is entirely down to me. The Attorney General will be pleased to know that I was very supportive of the passage of the previous legislation! There are many moments in this job, members, for people to look pretty silly. That was one of them.

That was what the Leader of the Opposition said to the chamber. Unfortunately, I made an honest error, which I corrected. I was not taken to it by the presiding officer, the judge, like the Leader of the Opposition had to be. I did not cavil with the presiding officer and say, “No, you’re wrong”, and require the presiding officer to say, “No, you’re wrong.” That is what happened in the Leader of the Opposition’s case, and in the end she said she felt silly! I can say that I felt silly for making an error under pressure. It was an honest error, and as soon as I realised I had made it, I sought to correct it.

I am not perfect. I have introduced 70 bills into this chamber. I am not perfect, and I have been told on many occasions that the bills that I introduced would not stand the test of the courts—for example, the Iron Ore Processing (Mineralogy Pty. Ltd.) Agreement Amendment Act. We were told by the shadow Attorney General that it would

fail. Of course, it did not, and Premier McGowan's government saved Western Australia. The silly little error that the Leader of the Opposition referred to was not an issue in fact in the trial. I have apologised to the court and I have apologised to this chamber for making a silly error that was an honest error, and I felt as the Leader of the Opposition felt on that day: she felt silly, and I felt silly for making an error. I am sorry.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! I am hearing the Leader of the Opposition calling for a supplementary question, and I would like to be able to hear it, please.

ATTORNEY GENERAL — PERFORMANCE

442. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Attorney General:

I have a supplementary question. Does the Attorney General agree that the judge was accurate in his reflection on the Attorney General's evidence and performance—that he was “confused and confusing”, and that he was not reliable and was “all over the shop”?

Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I have just said that I made an error, an honest error, and the judge said that he accepted that I was an honest witness who had made an honest error. He said that he accepted that.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

443. Ms A.E. KENT to the Premier:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting households and providing cost-of-living relief to Western Australians. Can the Premier update the house on the updated public sector wages policy, and outline how it will responsibly deliver significant pay increases for the 150 000 workers in the public sector?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I thank the member for Kalgoorlie for her question.

We are very aware that households across Western Australia are facing many cost pressures. That is why we have provided a \$400 household electricity credit for every household. We are the only state in Australia that is doing that. We have the free rapid antigen test program, and we are the only state in Australia that is doing that. We have capped regional airfares and Perth public transport fares as well, to assist families across the state. We have also put in place a new public sector wages policy. That will include a three per cent per annum wage increase over two years, plus for every public sector worker, a sector-wide \$2 500 cost-of-living payment where an agreement has been reached. There is also the already legislated 0.5 per cent guaranteed superannuation increase per annum; that will come into effect as well.

This means that many public sector workers will this year receive a pay increase significantly above inflation, and for many public sector workers, that will be a pay increase of way above eight per cent. Although the policy is generous, it is also responsible. It is significantly above inflation for most public sector workers. Members also have to understand that our inflation rate was recently artificially elevated because of the \$600 household electricity credit we provided to every household in late 2020; it artificially elevated the inflation rate over the past financial year. Without the electricity subindex included, the figure would actually be a 5.1 per cent inflation rate.

We can do this because we have had good financial management over our time in office. The cost of the entire wages policy is \$2.54 billion over the next four years. We can do that because of strong financial management. I remind the house that we have restored Western Australia's AAA credit rating. We did a lot of work to repair the state's finances. We are the only government in Australia paying down debt and the only one in surplus. S&P Global has upgraded our rating to AAA for the first time in nine years—since the Liberal Party lost it when it was in office. S&P stated that its upgrade was supported by Western Australia's track record of robust financial management, a very high income economy and exceptional liquidity. It stated that Western Australia's financial management is very strong and that the current government has displayed a track record of robust cost control. That is very different from what Standard and Poor's had to say about the last government.

We need to continue to be responsible and ensure that we continue on the track we are on, particularly in the high-interest rate environment. The wages policy strikes the right balance. It rewards every single public sector worker, especially lower paid workers, across the state, and ensures everyone gets a significant pay increase.

HOMELESSNESS — SOCIAL HOUSING

444. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Homelessness:

I refer to the government's 10-year homelessness strategy, and the once again delayed East Perth Common Ground facility, which is still nowhere after three years.

- (1) How many social houses have been delivered by this government since this strategy was announced?
- (2) What has been the net change in the number of social houses provided by this government since March 2017?

Visitors — Meadow Springs Primary School

The SPEAKER: Minister, just before I give you the call, I neglected to acknowledge some guests of the member for Mandurah, the year 6 leadership team from Meadow Springs Primary School. Hello everyone! I know that you might have to move out of the chamber soon, so on behalf of the member for Mandurah I wanted to make sure that I acknowledged you before you left. Thank you.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. It is very clear that the Leader of the Liberal Party does not listen to the large number of questions that have been asked of me and to which I have outlined what the government is doing in delivering for social housing. I note, as I have repeated often in this Parliament, that we have announced the largest injection ever in the state’s history of \$875 million for social housing. That equals \$2.4 billion over the next four years for homelessness and housing. That is contrary to the statistics that the Liberals put out, which are incessantly wrong, I have to say—consistently wrong. The most recent example of that was the member for Vasse in her column on the weekend, in which she made the false claim that there are 1 000 rough sleepers in the CBD. I ask the member for Vasse: where did you source that from?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Member for Vasse, where did you source that false statistic from?

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: She will not answer it, because what we see from this —

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Minister for Homelessness, this is an opportunity for members to ask questions of ministers. It is not an opportunity for ministers to ask questions of others. I am sure you would not like to trade places, minister.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I do not want to trade places, Madam Speaker. The member for Vasse just got it completely wrong. She peddled a blatant lie to the public. She misled the people —

Withdrawal of Remark

The SPEAKER: I do not require a point of order, but there is certainly a point of order to be had here. Minister for Homelessness, you cannot accuse another member of this house of lying, so I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I withdraw that.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.N. CAREY: What I point to is that the member quoted a completely incorrect figure as part of the Liberals’ campaign to mislead the people of Western Australia. It was completely wrong. It was false. That is the fact. It is based on evidence.

We are undertaking significant investment in social housing. That is despite a heated construction market. In the last financial year, we have added 600 social homes. That was through spot purchasing and a range of different mechanisms to accelerate the delivery of social housing.

In relation to Common Ground, again we saw the opposition make false statements. The opposition said it had been shelved. That is absolutely not the case. The advice from the multiagency panel was clear—that we should not proceed with that particular result.

Dr D.J. Honey: So you’ve stopped it, but you haven’t shelved it?

Mr J.N. CAREY: This is what I mean! We have an opposition that will say anything and do anything but does not have any policy on homelessness. It is not shelved. We are absolutely committed to the Common Ground project. We are working back through the tender process to get it out there as soon as we can. We are absolutely committed to the Common Ground project, just as we are absolutely committed to delivering social housing in Western Australia.

HOMELESSNESS — SOCIAL HOUSING

445. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Homelessness:

I have a supplementary question. Has the government even replaced the 1 300 social homes it sold in its first term?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

We have a very clear commitment, which is on the public record, to deliver 3 300 homes over four years, with a significant investment of \$2.4 billion. I am happy to compare that with what the opposition offers on homelessness, which is nothing. Hon Steve “Missing in Action” Martin—we do not see him anywhere—said in the last week that Boorloo Bidee Mía was a good project, but previous to that he had incessantly attacked it. He said it should be full

overnight. That is despite all the advice from the Aboriginal-controlled organisation. I note that the member for Cottesloe has not been down there. When we speak to the Aboriginal-controlled organisation, which has done an outstanding job, its advice is very clear that we have to build this over time, and that is what we are doing. We have listened to the advice. We have a clear plan. We have a clear investment for that.

What we see from members opposite is nothing. They are missing in action —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: They are missing in action and not delivering. They cannot deliver. They have no policies at all. I am deeply proud of our government's effort and our record investment in social housing, and we will continue to deliver on that.

OUT-OF-HOME CARE — INDEPENDENT LIVING

446. Dr K. STRATTON to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to supporting vulnerable young Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how this government's groundbreaking Home Stretch program is supporting more young Western Australians to transition from out-of-home care and towards independence?
- (2) Can the minister outline how this pioneering program builds on this McGowan Labor government's record of supporting those in our child protection system?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Nedlands for the question. I will answer it by telling the story of two young people who are the product of our Western Australian child protection system. One is Shell Jacovic, who is a 30-year-old teacher. She actually just got her certification to become a level 3 teacher. She spoke recently at the Western Australian Achiever Awards, which I was very happy the Premier was able to attend, because that is a fantastic celebration of young people in care who are going on to university, training, apprenticeships or work. Shell spoke about her journey in the child protection system. Due to tragic domestic violence circumstances, Shell and her three siblings came into care when she was seven years old. She had a number of placements, but she talked about the constant that had been in her life in child protection, and that was two of her care workers, Rick and Tania. In fact, Rick still catches up with Shell and her siblings and they have Christmas together.

Shell also spoke afterwards about being in her final year at school studying for her ATAR and being told when she turned 18 that there was no longer financial support for her under the child protection system, and told by her foster carers that she would need to make her own arrangements, which she did, to her credit. She couch surfed; she stayed with friends, including when she was at university. As I said, she has gone on to be a teacher and she has a partner. She delivered her messages very passionately and eloquently, and we are very grateful to her for telling her personal story.

We also heard on the weekend from Tyler, who has just turned 21. Tyler has been involved in the trial of Home Stretch and the extension of child protection supports for young people aged from 18 to 21 years. We have been piloting this for the last couple of years. In his words, Tyler said, "I can't speak more highly of Home Stretch". He has a mentor who was also present at the media event we held at the weekend. He said that Home Stretch had enabled him to get his responsible service of alcohol certification and a forklift ticket. He also has accommodation now, and the Invest in Me fund payment of \$2 500, which is part of the Home Stretch package, enabled him to make the accommodation that he had been given a home. He was able to get some of the basic supports. I think that most of the Western Australian public knows that young people are often not ready—probably many of us at 18 were not ready—to make it on their own in the world, and when we think about young people who are in our child protection system, they have had their fair share and more of challenges thrown at them with the difficulties that have brought them to the child protection system.

I am very, very proud of the Home Stretch program. It will be rolled out initially in the metropolitan area, but through the rest of the state by the end of the year. It will provide support for young people and they can use that money either to stay with their foster carers or as some sort of housing support. They will have a mentor whom they can work with, and, as I said before, they will have an Invest in Me fund payment of \$2 500 that they can put towards education or however they want to spend that money in liaison with the provider. Initially, Yorganop, which is an Aboriginal-controlled organisation, will manage that rollout in the metropolitan area, and then we will work with existing providers throughout the rest of the state.

This is something that I am very proud of, as I think it will be significant for the between 250 and 350 young people who age out of care in our child protection system each year. It is a very, very significant change. I would like to acknowledge not only the community sector organisations like Anglicare and others that have championed this policy over the whole country, but also particularly the child protection workers

and foster carers in our state who provide support day in and day out to young people in care. It is very difficult to capture the public's imagination about our child protection system and how child protection works, but I think that most people get it with Home Stretch. It has made them understand that, in fact, we provide some support, but we need to provide a bit more. That is what the McGowan government is doing. It is a \$37.2 million support. As I have heard the Premier say, as a result of good financial management, we can start to invest in life-changing policies, which is what the Home Stretch program is; I am very proud of it.

HEALTH — KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

447. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the record 6 982 hours of ambulance ramping last month and this government's plan to fix St John Ambulance, as outlined in today's *The West Australian* and referred to in the tabled report. Given that the minister is setting new KPIs to hold St John accountable for its perceived failings in the health system, will she also set KPIs for the government and the Department of Health to address their multiple failings, including growing elective surgery waitlists and emergency department wait times, exceeding recommended triage times and having ever-increasing code yellows and bed state blacks?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

To assert that somehow hospitals and the Department of Health are not held to KPIs or standards is completely and utterly ridiculous. We publish the annual report; health service providers publish. Every day, we can see the activity in emergency departments online. Every single day, we can go online and see emergency department activity live. There is the emergency department Western Australia Emergency Access Target—WEAT—the four-hour rule and the elective surgery median wait time. There are all the things that we are held to, and to which our national funding is tied. I am sensing from the question from the opposition that, somehow, government contracts should not be held to a standard—that, somehow, imposing KPIs on the ambulance service is an unreasonable request! It is an absolutely appropriate request. There are KPIs currently. The issue is that this contract was kicked down the road, and it was kicked down the road in the eight and a half years that members opposite were in government. When we hit the pandemic, we extended the contract. We are now working to modernise the ambulance contract and to work hand in hand with our partner St John Ambulance to deliver an ambulance service across the entire state—a very different ambulance service. This is a game changer and a reset for how we deliver those ambulance services. We have had record investment in those ambulance services from this government. The funding to St John Ambulance increased by 16 per cent over the two years of the pandemic. We are putting \$50 million into country ambulance services. It is a very reasonable—in fact, responsible—requirement that that ambulance service has KPIs when it comes to delivering those services.

HEALTH — KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

448. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question. Given that the minister has put St John on notice that its services will be terminated if it fails to meet these new KPIs, will she commit to resigning if our health system fails to improve over the next 12 months, given the record levels of ramping we have seen?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

It is a silly and spurious question that does no service to the community—and it is immature. It is pathetic and immature. Stand up and be an opposition and ask a sensible question! Read the detail, read the report and read the response, and then come in here with a prepared question. Show us some respect! Show some respect to the community and do the work. Members opposite are not interested in doing the work. They are absolutely not interested in doing the work. I stand on this government's record investment in our health system.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms A. SANDERSON: If members of the opposition did the work, they would see that every health system around the world is under pressure—every single health system around the world. I welcome the day that they actually have an original thought and come up with a constructive suggestion. I welcome that day, although I fear it will never, ever come.

We are in the middle of a global pandemic. We are in the flu season. This was always going to be a challenging year for us and it was always going to be a challenging winter. We are putting our money where our mouth is as a government when it comes to the health system, and we are investing more in our health system than members opposite ever did in their eight and a half years in office.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION —
DELIVERY OF AMBULANCE SERVICES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: CRITICAL CONDITION —
 GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

449. Mrs L.A. MUNDAY to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's response to the Standing Committee on Public Administration's final report into the delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia that was handed down earlier today.

Can the minister advise the house how the action this government has committed to take will help to improve emergency care as well as support country ambulance services, and can the minister outline what actions have already been taken to address the challenges facing our health system?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I thank the member for Dawesville for her question. I know that she is deeply passionate about this issue, being a former paramedic and her partner also being a paramedic. I am proud that we support candidates and members in this place from a broad range of experience, with real on-the-ground experience of what it is like to do this work. I thank her for her commitment, and her commitment to pursuing the improvements in recognising PTSD in our paramedics and our ambulance workforce.

We provided a thorough and rigorous response to the parliamentary inquiry into ambulance services. That inquiry produced an entirely unanimous report containing 48 recommendations. Committee members represented the government, the Liberal–National coalition and the crossbench. We have supported 46 of the 48 recommendations in principle or in full. They will improve the on-the-ground relationship with St John and the Department of Health and the health service providers and hospitals and improve good ambulance care in Western Australia. We want to improve access to emergency departments and review the triage accuracy, coordination of dispatch, the diversion of patients to more clinically appropriate alternative pathways and enhance competition in inter-hospital patient transfers. We are going to modernise the contract. We have good public–private partnerships in place with Midland Health Campus and Joondalup Health Campus, and strong relationships. They work in a coordinated way with the department. We want to bring St John into that relationship.

We have a new service delivery model for country ambulances, with a record \$50 million investment in paid paramedics in regional areas. We continue to support the training and rollout of those professional paid paramedics in regional areas. We want to improve access and equity and support vulnerable patients who may not want to call an ambulance because of the fee and how we can support those patients around those fees and, importantly, improve access for remote Aboriginal communities to ambulance services. We are seeking to strengthen the governance, transparency and accountability for the taxpayer in this contract and require St John to meet Australian Institute of Company Director standards for not-for-profits. This is a very standard approach. It is a good approach. It is solid governance and it will produce an excellent ambulance service moving into the future.

CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR — CARNARVON

450. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Police:

I refer to a letter addressed to the Premier from the president of the Shire of Carnarvon, Eddie Smith, in which he describes the community he loves as a war zone. I also refer the minister to his claim in question time on 21 June “that there is not a series of reports of children wandering the streets and reports of truancy on a daily basis and that there is not a crime wave” in Carnarvon.

- (1) Does the minister stand by this assertion?
- (2) How does the minister respond to the shire president's suggestion that the lack of accountability for the crime problem has left his community absolutely broken?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for her question. I love Eddie; I think he is wonderful. He is a great representative of the people of Carnarvon. But one thing I would say is that he has never been to a war zone, if that is what he is claiming. That is the answer I give to that particular statement.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Leader of the Opposition, you have had the opportunity to ask your question. I would also counsel other people who are interjecting to let the minister answer.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am trying to give the member an answer. It is an observation that I make quite reasonably. I saw Eddie with his CEO in my office on 5 May. He came to see me. I guarantee the member one thing he said to me with respect to any issues in Carnarvon; that is, the police are doing a wonderful job and there is no concern. I am the police minister. The Leader of the Opposition just asked me a question about my portfolio, and I am assuming that is something to do with policing in Carnarvon. I have no doubt that Eddie would not mind me conveying this part of the conversation we had because his observation was that the police are doing a wonderful job. I am the police minister.

With respect to issues around juvenile crime, I stand by what I said before. Obviously, people are concerned. There is a by-election on. A lot of people are running around, as has been the case for a couple of years now, unfortunately because of the prior member for that particular area, in many cases, as I said on a number of occasions last year, almost encouraging vigilantism, encouraging racist behaviour, and encouraging the community to split and be divisive in their behaviour. That is what happened last year under the previous member. I urge you not to go down that path; take the opportunity for a fresh start in the absence of the former member, who was pretty disgraceful at times last year with regard to this community. Think about what you say and think about the impact on people in the community when you encourage this sort of divisive language.

CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR — CARNARVON

451. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Police:

I have a supplementary question. The minister denied there was a crime wave and now he is denying any responsibility. Why is he continuing to ignore the pleas of the shire president of Carnarvon who came to meet with him face to face and has now been forced to put his concerns in writing publicly because he is not getting the attention he needs?

The SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, a supplementary is to be a single sharp question and not contain argument.

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I will repeat what I said and I am sure that Eddie will not contradict my observation about our conversation. He said that he had no question about the quality of policing in Carnarvon. The issues that he was raising with me were not to do with my portfolio and they were not to do with policing. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to dispute that and make a different claim, she should ask Eddie to come and see me and tell me about it because that is not what he said to me. That is not what he put in writing to me post the meeting we had. He came to advocate for his initiative —

Ms M.J. Davies: It's not your problem. Is that what you're saying?

Mr P. PAPALIA: I am the police minister. I am saying that contributions have been made in the police portfolio towards addressing concerns around juvenile offending in Carnarvon. We have more police than when the Liberals and Nationals were in government. That is a fact. There are more police. We have initiated Operation Regional Shield right across the state to respond, as necessary, to acute issues around juvenile offending. That is currently active in the Kimberley and the Pilbara—not in the midwest because it is not required at the moment. The Commissioner of Police determines where it is required and when it is required. There are as many resources as necessary to address any issues observed by the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner of Police determines where police resources are required. Does the Leader of the Opposition think she knows more about policing than the Commissioner of Police? Is that what she is suggesting? The Commissioner of Police for Western Australia should be taking advice from the Leader of the Opposition on policing operational matters. That is what she is saying. There is more than \$1 million to rebuild the police and community youth centre, more police than was the case under the former government and more resources for police, if necessary, in the event of any acute matter that confronts the police commissioner. There is no problem with policing in Carnarvon, according to Eddie Smith. If the Leader of the Opposition is making a claim that there is, she should —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr P. PAPALIA: Eddie, if you are watching, give me a call because the Leader of the Opposition claims that I am not telling the truth about our conversation. Give me a call because you have my number, and we talk regularly.

HOMELESSNESS — BOORLOO BIDEE MIA SERVICE

452. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Minister for Homelessness:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented commitment to reducing the number of people experiencing homelessness. Can the minister outline to the house how the groundbreaking first-of-its-kind Boorloo Bidee Mia facility in Perth is delivering life-changing support to vulnerable Western Australians?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

I thank the member for her question.

Boorloo Bidee Mia is an incredible story. Last week, as part of Homelessness Week, I attended the accommodation service to note an important milestone—that is, a year since its operation. I am very pleased to report that it is at near capacity, with 64 of the 66 rooms now filled with people who were rough sleeping who have been referred there. It is part of a bigger picture and bigger investment. We are investing \$225 million in this financial year in homelessness support and programs. We are trying to use every lever we can, including innovative models like Boorloo Bidee Mia. Why is it so special? It is because for the first time we have had an Aboriginal-controlled organisation that has had oversight to provide culturally appropriate accommodation that is actually suited to providing intense wraparound support services. The referrals have been coming through from our boosted outreach homeless and emergency accommodation response team—HEART. We also boosted that to seven days a week.

This model is working. It is working very well and we are seeing people transition into accommodation. We also know that the people going there do suffer, have deep trauma, and may have become institutionalised by living on the street. I want to give a shout-out to one of the residents I met—it was Dwayne—who told his story to the media last week. He had been in BBM for five months. He acknowledged that it had been a major change for his life, and he was able again to see his children. This is one of the incredible success stories. It might not make sexy headlines, but this is changing people's lives. I want to acknowledge the former minister who had responsibility, Simone McGurk, for persisting with this vision. I note that while we sought to make this model work, it was relentlessly attacked by the opposition. They said at every opportunity: fill it overnight and ignore all the key advice that said that for the model to work, we had to do it over a period of time. That is what Hon Steve Martin said very clearly on the record. This is my point about members of the opposition when it comes to homelessness: they are lazy and do not listen to the advice from the sector. They could not even be bothered, out of 15 members, to send one to the most critical Mission Australia Christmas lunch. Not one out of the 15 could be bothered to go. That is how lazy this opposition is and why they have no credibility with the homelessness sector. I want to give a big shout-out to Daniel Morrison and the Wungening team, and all the staff at Boorloo Bidee Mia. Thank you for persisting; thank you for not losing confidence and hope when the opposition threw every attack at you. We applaud you and thank you for your efforts. This model is a great success to their leadership and their efforts.

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — PERFORMANCE

453. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I refer to comments by the Minister for Agriculture and Food reported in *The West Australian* of 21 July regarding foot-and-mouth disease and subsequent calls by peak organisation the Western Australian Farmers Federation for the minister to resign, while the Pastoralists and Graziers Association confirmed the minister has not had the confidence of the sector for a very long time. Will the Premier show leadership and restore the confidence of the agricultural sector and regional WA by asking the Minister for Agriculture and Food to resign?

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I have answered this question many times publicly. The Minister for Agriculture and Food used a formulation of words that was clumsy in relation to a significant issue, and she apologised for it. Now, if people have to resign for using clumsy words, member for Roe, you would not be in this Parliament. She made a mistake and she apologised; and that, as far as I am concerned, is the end of the matter. She has a record of achievement as long as your arm in every single portfolio she has been engaged in, including the area of agriculture. The member might recall that when members of the National Party and Liberal Party were ministers for agriculture in the last government, there was a huge fiscal cliff in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, the then department of agriculture, of \$131 million because agriculture got cut each and every year over the term of the last government. We backfilled that on the urging of the Minister for Agriculture and Food. We put in place the \$48 million grains research partnership with the Grains Research and Development Council. We put in \$25 million, because of this minister, to the Western Australian Agricultural Research Collaboration—a huge number of different agricultural research programs across the state that I will not go through, but large numbers with additional funding; and a huge effort into restoring soils and land.

The minister is the first minister to ever embrace carbon farming in Western Australia, which is embraced by industry across the state, and welcomed by everyone. This was not done before this minister arrived in the role. We boosted funding for natural resource management partnerships across the state. Whether it is oats, wine, barrier fencing, dealing with wild dogs—you name it, this minister has driven it. There was \$10 million for the Peel food technology facility in the member for Mandurah and member for Murray–Wellington's electorates. The list goes on and on about initiatives to support farming, support markets, support processing of agricultural products and research in Western Australia, and actually support the people working in the industry, particularly in the public sector.

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD — PERFORMANCE

454. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Can the Premier guarantee the Minister for Agriculture and Food will retain this portfolio and a place in his cabinet until the 2025 state election?

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

The minister has raised a good point. On the one hand, he wants her to resign and now he wants to guarantee her going forward.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is right. I realise it is not often that people in the opposition listen to answers and that they do not think about what they say before they say it, but at least there is a first and this shadow minister has now listened to something that has been said. She has done a wonderful job as agriculture minister. My ministers across the board have done an excellent job in their portfolios. I expect that to continue.

ABORIGINAL TOURISM ACTION PLAN

455. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's efforts to support local Aboriginal businesses and deliver more employment opportunities for Aboriginal communities. Can the minister update the house on the implementation of the Western Australian Aboriginal tourism action plan, also known as the Jina plan, and outline what activities are being delivered for Aboriginal tourism operators, particularly those in the north west of our state?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I thank the member for the question. It is another example of her great advocacy on behalf of her community.

Indeed, the McGowan government wants Indigenous tourism to be the beating heart of our WA tourism strategy. I commend previous Ministers for Tourism who have done a great job putting the Jina plan together, which is a whole-of-government approach to making sure not only that we have a great Indigenous tourism product, but also Aboriginal people and communities benefit from the economic and social outcomes from participating in our tourism industry. Our plan is supported by \$20 million from the Western Australian McGowan government's Australian tourism fund, which is delivered by Tourism WA and will position Western Australia as the premier Aboriginal tourism destination in Australia. I am proud to announce that in June the Djarindjin Aboriginal Corporation officially opened its new Camping with Custodians campground located next to the now fully sealed Broome–Cape Leveque Road on the Dampier Peninsula. The campground is now the sixth of our Camping with Custodians networks and allows visitors to learn about Aboriginal culture and customs while staying on Bardi country with the traditional owners at Djarindjin. There are 37 powered sites, 10 unpowered sites, a range of amenities, including a communal fire pit, and great cultural experiences, like the Southern Cross Cultural Walk at Lullumb, Hunters Creek Tagalong Tours and Bundy's Cultural Tours.

Camping with Custodians is an Australian-first network of high-quality campgrounds owned and run by Aboriginal people, creating income, employment and training opportunities for local communities. In addition to the Camping with Custodian campgrounds, the McGowan government has also delivered more than \$400 000 in project funding to eight Aboriginal tourism operators on the Dampier Peninsula, with operators to receive grants of between \$2 500 and \$156 000 each to improve business capacity and visitors' experience. The funds will be channelled into marketing initiatives, product expansion, and accommodation and facilities upgrades and will capitalise on increased visitor numbers resulting from the fully sealed Broome–Cape Leveque Road. As Minister for Tourism, I and the McGowan government are proud to support these two important initiatives that will allow visitors to experience the world's oldest continuous living culture.

I thank the member for Kimberley for the question, because we want our consumers to have the best available tourism product and we want our consumers to do the right thing—to wander out yonder. I want to commend one particular tourism consumer today, and that is Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who, as we speak, is holidaying in Broome, member for Kimberley. Amongst the sites he has visited is the Sydney Cove Oyster Bar, and he saw *art above the 26th* and undertook a kayak tour with the Broome Adventure Company. We hope he gets up the peninsula and experiences some great camping with Camping with Custodians. It is wonderful to see the Prime Minister of Australia enjoying Western Australia's outstanding premium tourism product.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Liberal Party with the last question.

AT-RISK CHILDREN — CARNARVON

456. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the recent comments of the president of the Shire of Carnarvon, Eddie Smith —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, member for Wanneroo!

Dr D.J. HONEY: — in which he pleaded for the government to clean up Carnarvon, which he said looks like a war zone, with out of control —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members! I am going to ask the Leader of the Liberal Party to start his question again, and I will ask him to start it again as many times as we need to so that we can hear it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I refer to the recent comments of the president of the Shire of Carnarvon, Eddie Smith, in which he pleaded for the government to clean up Carnarvon, which he said looks like a war zone, with out-of-control and ongoing domestic violence and child abuse.

- (1) When will the minister acknowledge that the mega-department that is the Department of Communities is failing children in Carnarvon and across Western Australia?

- (2) Given that the government's Target 120 program is yet to show a meaningful reduction in the number of at-risk children elsewhere, what other initiatives is she undertaking to take care of children in Carnarvon forgotten by her government?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) It amazes me that the member for Cottesloe and Leader of the Liberal Party would ask these questions of us partly because earlier in question time we talked about a very successful program that has been trialled under the Department of Communities and has started to make a real difference to the lives of those young people who are now involved in it.

Dr D.J. Honey: Not kids over 18; I'm talking about kids who are six to 12 and on the streets.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Perhaps the member might listen to the answer.

The SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe, you have asked the question. Please allow the minister to answer.

Ms S.F. McGURK: The member referred to Target 120, and I am glad that he did because it is another program that the Department of Communities is responsible for and that this government has committed to, has funded and has been rolling out in a number of communities across the state—11 to date. In all those communities, there have been very good outcomes for the young people involved. About 50 per cent of the young people have had no interactions with police since being involved in the program, and that is a significant impact considering the cohort involved. There were numerous incidents with the police and numerous interactions with the court system to the extent that they were not detained. Target 120 is a very positive program and I am proud of it. I am also proud that we have been able to extend it to another nine sites, including Carnarvon. We are getting on with two things, one of which is appointing someone in the Department of Communities to begin the work of identifying the young people, contacting their families and seeing whether they want to be involved in the program. It requires a level of engagement to get change, but they are now well practised at that. Eventually, where we can, we will transition to Aboriginal-controlled organisations to do that work. I think it would be no surprise that we are more likely to get good engagement with those young people and families through Aboriginal organisations. That is providing early intervention with young people before they are detained to try to stop them going into the youth justice system. We know that those people have poor outcomes. I am proud of that program.

We have also put resources into Carnarvon. We have a regional office and child protection staff there. I was reminded of a letter I got from someone we have heard about a bit this afternoon, Eddie Smith, the shire president, in February this year in which he thanked me for the relocation of senior child protection staff to Carnarvon. He said —

Dear Minister McGurk

...

Please accept this letter of acknowledgement and thanks for relocating a senior member of the Department of Communities team, Rochelle Binks, Regional Executive Director Mid West Gascoyne, to Carnarvon. The Shire of Carnarvon is delighted with this decision.

...

Again Minister, we express our thanks to you for recognising the need in Carnarvon and for responding to that need in such a positive manner. I would also take this opportunity to please invite you to Carnarvon ...

I acknowledge that there is work to do. There is no doubt about that. Many of the issues that are being confronted in regional WA and, in fact, in parts of the metropolitan area have been many generations in the making, and they will not be turned around despite the hysteria that the opposition is trying to whip up between now and the by-election. They will not be turned around in that time. We are putting in place additional resources. Since coming to office, we have put into our system over 200 more case-carrying child protection workers. In fact, 224 new FTEs are doing case-carrying child protection work on the ground. What did the opposition do about child protection? Can anyone think of what the opposition did about child protection? Anything? Name one thing.

Ms A. Sanderson interjected.

Ms S.F. McGURK: Yes, that is right—it increased the number of Aboriginal kids in care!

In conclusion, can I address the issue about this so-called mega-department. It has about 6 000 people working in it. It is actually a little smaller than the Western Australia Police Force and much smaller than other agencies such as the Departments of Education and Health and the like. It is not a mega-department. You guys need to get out a bit more. It is a department doing very tough work. I take a moment to ask members opposite to think about the people who work in that department. Every time the Leader of the Opposition says that it is a dysfunctional department, every time she criticises their work, every time she talks about them as a mega-department and every time she says that there is widespread racism in the department, she is criticising child protection staff and those on the ground working in the most difficult circumstances. I would like to thank them for their work and applaud them for their efforts.

AT-RISK CHILDREN — CARNARVON

457. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Child Protection:

I have a supplementary question. Has the minister even bothered to visit the streets of Carnarvon to observe the tragic outcomes of her inaction?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members. Given the time and that it is a supplementary question, I ask for a brief answer, please.

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

Yes, I have been to Carnarvon a couple of times. I have visited the child protection staff and community sector organisations there. As I said, this is difficult work. The efforts to build good communities are not served well by a divisive and shallow opposition that is thinking only about the next by-election.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

CLERK ASSISTANT (PROCEDURE) — TEMPORARY STAFF CHANGE*Statement by Speaker*

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.58 pm]: I wish to advise that our Clerk Assistant (Procedure), Liz Kerr, has commenced a three-month position as Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council while Paul Grant is on long service leave. I am also pleased to announce that Suzanne Veletta will step into the position of Clerk Assistant (Procedure) for a three-month period while Liz is working in the Legislative Council.

ATTORNEY GENERAL — PERFORMANCE*Matter of Public Interest*

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) informed the Assembly that she was in receipt within the prescribed time of a letter from the Leader of the Opposition seeking to debate a matter of public interest.

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

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [3.00 pm]: I move —

That this house calls on the Premier to dismiss the Attorney General from cabinet after his continued failure to deliver in the critical role as the highest law officer of WA.

I want to start by responding to the way that the Attorney General answered in question time today the question about the evidence he was providing in the Federal Court and the reflection of the judge of how effective he was as the state's chief law officer. I am not one bit worried about the incident in this Parliament that the Attorney General raised to defend himself, his indiscretions and inability to deliver what was at the time on the taxpayers' dime pretty important evidence, given the Premier's intention to try to tackle Mr Clive Palmer. I am not worried about what happened in this chamber. I did a mea culpa on the spot. For the record, this Attorney General, in this place on *Hansard*, has been avoiding answering questions on this since the moment that judgement was passed. This has been the first opportunity since the Parliament has returned, but I can tell members he has been absolutely nowhere in responding to questions from the media who are asking on behalf of Western Australian taxpayers, as we do today.

Hansard does not reveal sarcasm when we go back through it, but I can assure anybody who is following up on this debate that it is well and truly a part of what I am about to say. A barrister and a solicitor, who was admitted back in 1975, as the chief law officer of the state and is the Attorney General having to ask for a do-over and then still not getting it right, and being assessed by Justice Lee as "confused and confusing" and all over the place can be compared with me, as the Leader of the Opposition, juggling multiple portfolios, responding to a piece of legislation that was not within one of my portfolios and admitting that I got it wrong on the spot. How on earth is that comparative? It is not and it just proves how arrogant and dismissive the Attorney General is, and how members opposite behave as a cabinet and a government, and how they treat this Parliament. It was an appalling response from the Attorney General to a question that I know many people want the answer to. He has refused to provide any comment.

Let me take a little bit of a back step to just before we broke for the winter recess. Everyone headed back to their electorates. What transpired over the following six weeks—really there is no other way to describe it—was remarkable. Stuff-up after stuff-up came to light, minister after minister. We will go into other ministers and their portfolio management, but today we are focusing on the Attorney General and one of the more remarkable events that transpired over the parliamentary recess. It could not be believed unless you read it in black and white. How many column inches are there? It has definitely been written in black and white, again and again. Unfortunately for the Premier, he has been forced to respond and defend this hapless minister again and again. After swinging into action to dream up ways to extend the political spat between the Premier and Mr Palmer—for the record, those

texts were deeply disturbing and I do not need to repeat them on record in this chamber—the Attorney General did the opposite. He is a liability to the Premier and the people of Western Australia and he needs to go. Instead of stepping back, the Attorney General is holding on for grim death. Instead of showing leadership, the Premier is defending the indefensible. Historical loyalty does not cut it when there are so many other competent people on the Premier’s backbench.

I want to quote directly from the judgement from Justice Lee. There is a section especially for the Attorney General —

... Mr Quigley is the Attorney-General of Western Australia. Prior to his election in 2001, he was a barrister and solicitor having been admitted in 1975.

... Regrettably, his evidence was both confused and confusing.

I will skip to paragraph 149 —

During cross-examination, however, Mr Quigley gave contradictory evidence.

It is quite lengthy, so I am not going to read the entirety of it. Paragraph 152 reads —

With respect, Mr Quigley’s second appearance in the witness box just added to the brume of his testimony. Even though his return was at his request, —

That is, the do-over that he requested on the taxpayer dime —

for the purpose of correcting “mistakes” ... Mr Quigley misstated his previous evidence he said he wanted to change.

Paragraph 154 reads, in part —

... Indeed, Mr Quigley was placed in the uncomfortable position of having to concede that part of the account he gave in the radio interview was not “completely and utterly false”—as he had asserted on 9 March—but was, in fact, “completely and utterly true” ...

It is diametrically opposite! That is not confusion; it is a complete contradiction. Paragraph 157 reads —

Counsel for Mr McGowan —

That is, their own counsel —

conceded that “[i]f one were to try logically to reconcile [Mr Quigley’s evidence], you would be utterly defeated”, labelling it as “outright silly” ...

It continues that he —

... considered Mr Quigley’s evidence was not dishonest, but was “all over the shop” ... It suffices to note that Mr Quigley was not a reliable historian of events.

... It follows that I do not consider it is safe to place any reliance upon Mr Quigley’s evidence.

Members of this house, this is our chief law officer and the Attorney General of the state of Western Australia. I repeat —

It follows that I do not consider it is safe to place any reliance upon Mr Quigley’s evidence.

Mr Quigley, the Attorney General, is not a novice when it comes to legal matters. He is not a novice when it comes to legal strategy. He is not a novice when it comes to understanding the issues that we deal with in this house. We have just heard the Premier defending him and other ministers again, but the Premier will not step in —

Mr M. McGowan: No, you just made a mistake. The question was about Alannah.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I have heard the Premier defend —

Mr M. McGowan: You said I just did; that is wrong. You made a mistake.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This is how the Premier and his cabinet choose to treat this. They are arrogant and dismissive. I would love the people of Western Australia to see the silliness and ridiculousness of how the Premier and his cabinet behave in this chamber on a daily basis. It is childish and it is a serious issue. We have nothing left to say about what the Minister for Police put on record today. The Premier should be embarrassed to have him in his cabinet.

I count 10 Labor members of Parliament with law degrees in the Premier’s expansive backbench. A number of them have had experience practising in a court of law. I ask the Premier whether the reflection of him defending the Attorney General, who has been dismissed as an unreliable witness in a case in the Federal Court, instead of giving someone else opportunity to step into a role, puts him in a very awkward position to batten down the hatches and ignore those blunders. It is not the first time the Attorney General has made a mistake. My colleagues will go through some of the others that the Premier has had to defend since Mr Quigley has been the Attorney General.

If the Premier is going to continue to defend the indefensible, I hope he has a good line for all those potential replacements who sit behind him, who will inevitably see this Attorney General make another mistake, because that is what we know will happen and they will not progress through the ranks. There are plenty of them. I think that not being dishonest, which I am sure the Premier will come back to, is not a huge bar when someone walks into a court of law. I would hope that the chief law officer of the state would be honest at the very least. That is the only good thing that Justice Lee could find in his judgement to describe what the Attorney General did in that sad, sorry state of affairs.

I have no doubt the Premier will shift into full flight about Mr Palmer. I just make the point that we are not here to talk about Mr Palmer. We are here to talk about the Attorney General and his failure to live up to what is required to be the chief law officer of the state. The argument today is not about Mr Palmer. We have said again and again—I see that he is back in the courts—that he needs to go and find something else to do with his money. He is a pest and everyone in this chamber and Western Australia agrees—everyone agrees. But we need a competent Attorney General to do his job and make sure we are not wasting Western Australian taxpayers' money. That is why we bring this motion to the chamber today.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [3.10 pm]: I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in this excellent motion. Coming back into Parliament today, it is interesting to observe a government that has ascendant numbers and is in control of the state. We think it would be buoyed, but I have never seen a flatter group of people in my life than the government members sitting on the other side of the chamber. I have never seen a flatter group in my life sitting than those on the other side of the chamber. Why would government members not be flat? Why would they not be flat when the Premier is being put in the position of defending this Attorney General, amongst the many incompetent ministers he has to carry in his cabinet? The position of Attorney General is not just another ministerial position. I mean, of the many things we do in this chamber, one of the most important and lasting is make laws. The chief law officer in this place is the Attorney General. That has to be a person with impeccable credentials who conducts him or herself in an impeccable manner. What we see from this Attorney General is anything but that, and no more so than demonstrated in the evidence that he gave in that defamation trial. We need an Attorney General who is above and beyond reproach, but we have an Attorney General who treated that court glibly. He did what he does in this place; that is, he gave glib answers that did not necessarily reflect the truth or, in fact, what happened. He gives glib answers in this place because he can get away with it, and he tried exactly that in a court of law.

If we look back, we see this Attorney General thinks he is above and beyond the law. We only need to look back to February this year when the Attorney General attended a funeral in the north of the state. There was an enormous effort, an enormous focus, across the whole state to make sure that people wore masks, that people obeyed the mandates. The Premier was again and again on television telling the people of Western Australia that they had to do the right thing. And what did we see? We saw an Attorney General roll up to a funeral in a vulnerable community that was at high risk of serious consequences of a COVID infection, participate in that funeral and not even bother to wear a mask. We heard a subsequent mea culpa later, with it said that the Attorney General was obviously distracted or whatever, but this is —

Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will read the whole lot for the member, if she wants.

This Attorney General is the person with the primary responsibility for making laws in this state, a senior member in the cabinet, and he says, “Everyone else has to wear masks, but I’ll do what I like when I go along to those things. I won’t obey those laws. I won’t obey that rule.” Subsequently the Attorney General was fined \$1 000. That was an absolute insult to the community because there were all sorts of threats to people in the community to make them follow those rules, but the Attorney General said that he did not have to follow them.

Earlier, we also saw the Attorney General not declare a gift that he had received from a person who had gone before a royal commission in relation to the Crown Casino in Victoria. There was a high probability that that person would be a witness and a participant in a similar action in Western Australia, and that we would see a royal commission in Western Australia, and yet this Attorney General accepted a flight from that individual that was valued considerably above the declaration limit for a minister. The minister failed to declare that in his return, even when he was reminded about it. He failed to declare it in his return on gifts. That was all he had to do. Then, the Premier again had to defend and cover up for this Attorney General by refusing to answer whether the minister had declared gifts under his requirements to cabinet to do so, or declare that he had any potential conflict of interest in relation to this matter. Again, the Premier had to defend this Attorney General, and it is an untenable situation. This, as I have said, is the highest law officer in the state, someone who has to be above and beyond reproach.

Then we come to the issue that the Leader of the Opposition has already discussed, which is his performance in giving evidence on the matter before the Federal Court. Let us go into a little bit of detail, because I want to cover the decision in that matter and the evidence that the Attorney General gave. This was not some idle slip of the tongue. I mean, in the heat of the moment under interjections in this place, some of us may misspeak, some of us may say

things, but this is an Attorney General giving evidence in the Federal Court of Australia, considered evidence, and he does not just make a slight slip of the tongue. This Attorney General is quoted in paragraph 149 of the judgement. It says —

During cross-examination, however, Mr Quigley gave contradictory evidence ... He accepted that what he had said in the interview was indeed to claim that he and Mr McGowan had engaged in a plan, but that the explanation he had given to the public on the radio about those tactics was “completely false” ...

He did not say, “I’m not quite sure. I can’t recall”; he gave an unequivocal statement that was completely false. So this is not some idle slip of the tongue; this is not someone giving an intemperate response in the heat of the moment in debate in the chamber. This is the Attorney General giving considered evidence in a court of law. To conflate that in some way to a member commencing discussion on the wrong bill is disgraceful.

That is a segment of the judgement. Let us go to the evidence that the Attorney General gave in his second hearing. This, I think, is even more disturbing. This was after the Attorney General had gone to the first hearing. He had given evidence in relation to the matter I have just discussed that was completely wrong, even though it was a considered matter. The judgement states —

152 With respect, Mr Quigley’s second appearance in the witness box just added to the brume of his testimony. Even though his return was at his request, for the purpose of correcting “mistakes” ... Mr Quigley misstated his previous evidence he said he wanted to change. When he was first called, he did not give evidence that he first became aware of the risk of registration on the morning of 12 August. Rather, his evidence had been that he became aware “earlier than the evening—like, 3 in the afternoon, after Question Time or something like that” ... on “[e]ither the 12th or 13th” ...

153 Mr Quigley was pressed in cross-examination as to just how long before 11 August he had become aware of the risk of Mr Palmer registering the awards. Mr Quigley repeatedly said he was unable to recall ...

I will not read the whole lot, but let us be very clear. This is the Attorney General going back into court to correct his previous misstatement, but in fact the evidence he then gives contains misstatements. Does the government wonder why we on this side question the suitability of the Attorney General remaining in his position? This is a law officer who has to be above and beyond reproach. Not only did he give incorrect evidence the first time he appeared in court; he also gave incorrect evidence the second time he attended court. This Attorney General does not deserve to stay in his position, and it is time for the Premier to move on and give someone else a chance so that he will not have to be in the position of having to defend the indefensible.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.20 pm]: “Confused and confusing” and “all over the shop”—so says *The West Australian* when talking about the Attorney General and his performance in the now-infamous court case where he had to make a do-over, not only because he had given confusing evidence, but also because the evidence was completely contradictory. That was quite clearly in the judgement that was discussed by the Leader of the Liberal Party. We know that the Attorney General is part of a cabinet that has actually got quite a few tired members who are coming to the end of their political career. We know the Minister for Education and Training has signalled that she will not be coming back, and we understand that the Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food is in the same boat. We also know that the communities and industries that the Minister for Regional Development represents have lost confidence in her and are calling for her to be removed in any case. We know that the Premier is sitting on a cabinet that is now full of people who have had their day in the sun. They have actually seen their best years of performance in this place, and they are now in the long paddock, waiting to go out to pasture in a couple of years. That is where they are at the moment.

The Attorney General, the most senior legal officer in this place, cannot give straight evidence in court. The judge in that case, Justice Lee, spoke about the way the Attorney General flip-flopped around in his evidence, and that in the end he could not say that the Attorney General was a reliable historian. We know that he has not performed well in that circumstance. He is also very confused about some of the priorities he stated in his role as Attorney General; one of those is to be debated very shortly, the Bail Amendment Bill, which was apparently of the utmost priority prior to the election. That was confused, because as soon as the Premier and the Attorney General got together after the election, it became a secondary consideration while we embarked upon the so-called electoral reform that takes away regional voices and representation in this place. There was no confusion there from the Attorney General; he got straight onto that job, after the Premier had said that it was not on the agenda.

We come now to the situation that the Leader of the Liberal Party spoke about—when the Attorney General failed to declare that infamous chopper flight. We on this side ran an argument on the need for sanctions in that regard. The Premier, however, steadfastly stood by the Attorney General and would not listen to our very reasoned arguments as to why someone who does not declare gifts of that nature should be subject to sanction. I think that displays the degree of the Premier’s loyalty to the Attorney General, and perhaps, as has been pointed out by some, that has something to do with when the Premier was himself under threat from an external source—a person called Stephen Smith, who was going to be brought in to take over as the then Leader of the Opposition. I understand, from all reports, that the Attorney General was one of the people who helped the Premier out of that circumstance, and perhaps that

loyalty is being rewarded in buckets at the moment. Certainly, the Attorney General's bumbling of his own records and declarations and his recent inability to provide straight evidence to a court shows that his best days as an Attorney General are perhaps now coming to an end, and that it is now time to move on and select another person for the position.

We know that there are a great many potential candidates; I think the Leader of the Opposition said that there are about 10 suitably qualified members of government who could take on that role. They no doubt feel frustrated about sitting there, wanting to show their talents and to expend their energies. I am certain that they probably would not be confused if they were put on the spot and asked to recall conversations they may have had or incidents that may have happened in the not-too-distant past. Given that, I wonder why people like the member for Mount Lawley—who is unfortunately not here; he is often in this chamber when we are having these sorts of discussions—has not been considered. He could easily be slotted in to take the place of the Attorney General. I am pretty sure I read an article by Joe Spagnolo in *The Sunday Times* about the member for Armadale being an excellent replacement. The member for Armadale is very highly qualified in the law, and I am sure he would be champing at the bit to take on the role of Attorney General if it were offered to him.

There are a couple of others in this chamber. The member for Cockburn has some legal credentials as well; he seems fairly clued up on those sorts of things when he is sitting in the chair. I think also the member for Swan Hills has some experience. There is another member putting her hand up as well, the member for Landsdale! There are a number of members who would be actually quite capable, yet the Premier refuses to consider that it is time to refresh his cabinet, starting with the most demonstrably confused and underperforming member of his cabinet, to the point where he is, on his own admission, embarrassed by his performance in the court. That is understandable; a person of his experience in court matters should be embarrassed to fail to provide reasonable and believable evidence in court. He should be offering his resignation from cabinet, because he is quite clearly not up to it any longer. Instead, we see the Premier hanging on steadfastly.

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is starting to lead to questions about the Premier's own judgement in this regard. Is he really picking the people with the best talent to be in his cabinet, or is he picking those people who have shown loyalty to him and have stood by him in the past so that he now feels obliged to repay the favour? We know the Minister for Police still holds his portfolio, even though we know about the huge problems that exist in areas in the north of our state, with runaway levels of crime that he refuses to acknowledge or address in any sensible way. He is probably not one of the more experienced members, but he is certainly one of the underperforming ones.

The future of the Attorney General is a litmus test for this Premier. Is the Premier going to hang onto him? Is he going to hang onto the tired Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food, who no-one in the industry supports in that role, and who has outraged people in my community? I have never seen such an outpouring of disgust from livestock producers and farmers as I saw to the callous and quite horrendous comment that she made that a disease that will have an \$80 billion impact on agriculture would be okay because it would lead to cheaper milk and meat. That showed a callous disregard for the people she supposedly represents.

It is time for the Premier to shape his cabinet for the future. It is time to discard some of these underperforming and certainly tired ministers, such as the Attorney General, such as the Minister for Education and Training, and such as the Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food.

MR M. MCGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier) [3.29 pm]: Clearly, the government will not be supporting this motion. I will explain a few things to the house and members of the opposition. There was a trial in Sydney back in February and March this year. Both the Attorney General and I were witnesses. The case was brought by Mr Clive Palmer. It is difficult for me to talk about it, because the matters are ongoing, so I will be very judicious in what I have to say. Both the Attorney General and I appeared as witnesses. I did not observe the Attorney General's evidence, and I did not speak to him about it, as is appropriate.

I have never been a witness in a court proceeding before. The process itself was highly stressful, with very practised and very expensive senior counsel asking questions of both the Attorney General and me about events that had occurred 18 months prior. It was a stressful process. I found it a stressful and quite draining process for the two or so days I was in the witness box providing evidence to perhaps hundreds of questions asked by the senior counsel for Mr Clive Palmer about events that had occurred 18 months previously. The Attorney General had to do the same thing.

The Attorney General realised that he had made a mistake in his evidence. He was not subject to charges. It was not a criminal proceeding. No allegations of impropriety were made against the Attorney General. In his recollection of something that had occurred in, I think, August 2020, and about which he had to provide evidence in February 2022, he made a mistake in his evidence. That is what happened. When the Attorney General realised he had made a mistake, our lawyers requested whether the Attorney General could correct the error. That is the extent of it. When

the judge handed down his judgement last week, he said that the Attorney General's evidence on that matter was confusing. That is what was said. There was no suggestion that there was dishonesty or anything deliberate on the part of the Attorney General.

It appears that the standard that the opposition is now suggesting is that every time anyone makes a mistake in what they say, they have to resign. If that is the case, opposition members would have to resign every day. Every time they do a media interview, and every time they come into this Parliament, they say something that is inaccurate or incorrect. We identified a couple of examples of that today with both the opposition leader and the shadow Minister for Health. If you had to resign every time you make a mistake in what you say, no-one could be in public life. No-one could have any job. No-one could be in the media. If you had to resign every time you got something wrong, a fact incorrect or a statistic slightly out, no-one would be able to work in any of these fields. None of us is perfect. None of us has a 100 per cent accurate memory or instant recall at every point in time about every single thing that occurs. I have to do talkback radio, media interviews, speeches and parliamentary proceedings, and whatever else it is, every single day. I do not get everything right. I do not get every single sentence or every single fact absolutely 100 per cent perfect. I freely admit that.

That was a court proceeding. These are parliamentary proceedings. If members opposite want me to fact check everything they say in this Parliament, which is recorded and sits in *Hansard* for posterity, and which the media relies upon in its reporting, we can do that. We can identify scores of errors in things that members opposite have said, and if the standard they wish to set is that they then have to resign, I look forward to the five of them resigning. It is ludicrous. There was no dishonesty. The Attorney General was not subject to any prosecution or any suggestion that there had been any impropriety on his part. Why was he there? He was there to give evidence in a defamation proceeding brought by Clive Palmer, a life member of the National Party. That proceeding was about a \$30 billion claim by Mr Palmer we had defeated by legislation in this house that the Attorney General was instrumental in constructing. That is what the Attorney General was giving evidence about. He should be congratulated for that. That claim that we had been dealing with was a clear and present danger to the state and would still have been ongoing in some circles. The Attorney General went over there to provide evidence on that matter, and he got a fact wrong about something that had occurred 18 months earlier, which he corrected before the court at the first available opportunity. That is what occurred. The judge found that his evidence on the day in question was confusing.

I listen to the speeches of members opposite. I can honestly say that they are regularly very confusing. Some of them really have difficulty with the English language. If that standard was applied to them, none of them would be here. I have multiple examples of that; and, if members opposite interject on me, I will use them. I have multiple examples of silly and inappropriate mistakes that members opposite have made. If members want to continue this in question time, I will use them in coming days.

I want to outline what the motion actually states —

That this house calls on the Premier to dismiss the Attorney General from cabinet after his continued failure to deliver in the critical role as the highest law officer of Western Australia.

It states in his "critical role as the highest law officer of Western Australia". The highest law officer of Western Australia is the Attorney General. I would have thought his critical role was to pass legislation that will improve Western Australia. Remember the last government with Michael Mischin and Christian Porter. The achievements of Michael Mischin could probably be listed on the back of my thumb. Absolutely bugger-all was produced by the last government in the form of legislative achievements to improve Western Australia. If the criticism of members opposite is about the Attorney General's role as the highest law officer of Western Australia, I will give members just a snapshot of what he has done. I will start with what this is all about—the Mineralogy bill. It came to our attention that the state was in grave danger of having to make a payment to the former director of the National Party from Queensland, who was suing us, or pursuing us, for \$30 billion. We constructed laws, and we were advised by Mr Goiran, the Liberal shadow Attorney General, that they would fail. Mr Goiran said they would fail. There is a mistake! Mr Goiran was 100 per cent wrong in what he had to say. According to the standard of members opposite, Mr Goiran should now resign. He said in Parliament that those laws would fail. Therefore, he was wrong; and, according to the standard of the opposition, he must now resign.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: Members opposite did not listen to my argument. I am repeating their argument back to them. Mr Goiran, their man in the upper house, and a member of "The Clan", who participated in calling women all sorts of names, said that the Mineralogy bill would fail. Wrong. The Mineralogy bill succeeded despite Mr Goiran's objections and it protected Western Australia from a \$30 000 million claim.

The Attorney General was also an integral part of our defence of the borders, which saved countless Western Australian lives and countless Western Australian jobs. I might add that Mr Porter, the former Liberal Attorney General, said that our laws would fail in the High Court. Mr Porter was wrong, but he has resigned, so I suppose he fell on his sword. The then Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, told me to my face that they would fail. He also was wrong in what he had to say. The Attorney General was integral in the introduction of the Mineralogy bill and in defending

the borders in 2020, which was probably the most stressful period in public life in Australia since 1945. Certainly, in Western Australia, I cannot remember a more stressful period than those few weeks in July and August 2020 when we had the issues with the borders, the Mineralogy bill and what we had to do to try to save the state. Then we got sued over it by Clive Palmer and we had to go to court in Sydney. The Attorney General made a mistake in his evidence, and members opposite come in here demanding his resignation—my goodness! They should be passing a motion saying thank you for what was done back then to save the state.

Those are two things that the Attorney General has achieved as the highest law officer. Then there is the voluntary assisted dying laws that the Attorney General, the former Minister for Health, the now Minister for Health and other members of the government had a significant role in producing and getting through this Parliament. I remember the Attorney General sitting at the dispatch table and getting that legislation through Parliament against opposition from many people, particularly in the Liberal and National Parties—particularly in the Liberal Party. We got that through this and the other house. That legislation has dramatically improved the last days of life for many, many Western Australians.

If members opposite want to talk about a reform, that is a reform. But here are some others. The Attorney General has increased penalties for meth traffickers; brought in the no body, no parole legislation; joined the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme, improving victim safety and perpetrator accountability; strengthened the powers of the Corruption and Crime Commission to investigate unexplained wealth; toughened laws against dangerous sex offenders; and removed the statute of limitation period for child sex abuse actions. I remember being in this house when Graham Jacobs raised that issue. The Liberal Party said no. Back in 2016, when Graham Jacobs was advocating for the removal of the statute of limitation period for child sex abuse actions, the Liberal and National Parties said, “No, that can’t happen.” Within a couple of years of coming into office, there you are. We have lifted the statute of limitation so that people who were abused as children by another person can pursue that person outside the six-year statute of limitation period. The Liberals and Nationals said no to that. Colin Barnett’s government said, “No, we are not doing that.” We did it. This Attorney General brought in those laws. He also passed legislation for the expungement of convictions for historical gay and lesbian sex offences, as they then were, and provided comfort to some people out of that. He introduced the Custody Notification Service for Aboriginal people in custody. He joined the National Redress Scheme. He criminalised revenge porn and passed tougher legislation on persons linked to terrorism. He launched the homicide funeral assistance scheme to support families in that terrible situation. He passed new laws and tougher penalties for family and domestic violence offenders and ended imprisonment for fine default, which particularly impacted Aboriginal people. He increased the capacity of the Magistrates Court in the regions. He reappointed John McKechnie, QC, as the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. Do members opposite remember why we had to do that? The Liberal Party would not allow him to be reappointed because he had investigated the Liberal Party. That is what happened.

Several members interjected.

Mr M. McGOWAN: That is exactly what happened. We all know what happened. The thing about the Liberal Party is that it does not get the attention it deserves because the media all think it is irrelevant. If the situation were fair, it would be held to account for that. John McKechnie, who had been a corruption fighter par excellence, was blocked from reappointment by a committee with someone on it whom he had investigated. That is what happened. We actually had to pass a law to overcome that travesty that had occurred. If members opposite want to talk about someone who should resign, the people in the upper house who did that should resign. The Attorney General commissioned Western Australia’s first strategy to address sexual violence. He passed laws to allow for democracy in the state’s upper house. There we go! For the first time in 122 years, we actually have a democratic Parliament. We actually believe in democracy. Is that not what we stand for? Is Australia not a beacon of democracy? The Western Australian upper house was the worst example of a rorted system in the entire country and the Attorney General; Minister for Electoral Affairs brought in legislation to enable it to become democratic. That was an incredible reform. He passed legislation to make Western Australia’s anti-consorting laws the toughest in the nation to deal with bikies. He established Elder Rights WA, introduced a bill to allow de facto couples to fairly split their superannuation and introduced the most rigorous and comprehensive charitable trust laws, which are before Parliament, if they have not already been passed. He achieved all those things. The Leader of the Opposition stated in her motion —

... continued failure to deliver in the critical role as the highest law officer of WA.

I have given a snapshot of the Attorney General’s achievements, but it is not the entirety of what he has done in the last five and a half years. It is an incredible list of achievements in law reform in Western Australia, which I think is unsurpassed by any Attorney General in the history of the state. Those achievements dealing with longstanding issues are unsurpassed.

People who might know about these things include, for instance, members of the Western Australian Bar Association, which passed a motion about the Attorney General of Western Australia. This is what the members of that association had to say. I will quote a few parts of that motion. They congratulate him on the following things —

... the diligent and careful way in which he has sought to discharge the functions of the office of Attorney General ...

The Western Australian Bar Association referred to the diligent and careful way in which he has sought to discharge the functions of the office of the Attorney General. I will read another quote. The Western Australian Bar Association congratulates him on his —

... prosecution of necessary, effective and practical reform of the law in Western Australia ...

The motion then states that the members want to elect him “for such time as he may serve in that office, as an ex officio member of the Western Australian Bar Association.” That is what the Western Australian Bar Association had to say about this Attorney General. The association states the motion was “Carried, unanimously, and by the full complement of members of Bar Council”. I am confident that that would not happen for Michael Mischin. If Nick Goiran ever gets to be the Attorney General of Western Australia—I sincerely hope that does not occur, because we can imagine what will happen to voluntary assisted dying and abortion laws, the redress scheme and all those things if he gets that role—I am confident that the Bar Association will not pass such a motion about him. The Western Australian Bar Association is not known as a hot-bed of Labor supporters, but that is what the Western Australian Bar Association had to say about this Attorney General.

Firstly, the opposition’s motion is poorly constructed. The motion and the use of the English language is very poorly constructed. Secondly, its argument appears to be that no-one can ever make a mistake in their language whatsoever, which means that members opposite are in a lot of trouble. Thirdly, this is the minister who was integral in saving the state \$30 billion and defeating the Liberal and National Parties’ and Clive Palmer’s challenge to the borders in 2020. Fourthly, this Attorney General has a record of achievement unsurpassed by any Attorney General in the history of Western Australia. The motion needs to be rejected.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Finance) [3.48 pm]: The record and agenda of reform of this Attorney General is probably the greatest in the living memory of people in this Parliament. He has passed over 70 pieces of legislation in his role as Attorney General, Minister for Commerce or Minister for Electoral Affairs. But before I talk a bit more about that—the Premier has already given a bit of that record—I will refer to the case in Sydney that came out of the Iron Ore Processing (Mineralogy Pty. Ltd.) Agreement Amendment Act. It has to be remembered that the Solicitor-General of the state of Western Australia advised the Liberal cabinet to appeal the McHugh decision. What did the Liberal cabinet do? It decided not to appeal that decision, which, of course, left Western Australia open to a massive damages claim. That is why this government had to respond very quickly, that is why the Attorney General had to draft legislation to bring into this Parliament very quickly and that is why this Attorney General and this Parliament passed legislation that ensured that we were protected from the actions of a life member of the National Party. The Liberal cabinet was given advice to appeal the decision of McHugh, and it did not take that action. That is an unbelievable mistake. Any member of the Liberal Party who was around at the time should resign because they left Western Australia open to massive damages from a life member of the National Party.

The Premier mentioned the titles of pieces of legislation that passed this Parliament under the leadership of the Attorney General. Some have been incredibly significant. One of the most significant is the removal of the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. Another was the voluntary assisted dying legislation. Whatever piece of legislation we want to look at, if we look at the entirety of the legislative reform of the Attorney General, they are historic, brave and go beyond what has been enacted in most other Australian jurisdictions. They have changed the law when it comes to equity, justice, commerce, the functioning legal system of Western Australia and protecting Western Australia from massive claims from life members of the National Party who live in Queensland. These are massive reforms. Members opposite are saying that this Attorney General, who has instigated and led those reforms, should be resigning. I have seen a list of proposed legislation in the Attorney General’s portfolios going forward, and I stopped reading after three or four pages. He has a long list of reforms that he still wishes to bring to this Parliament.

Only yesterday the Attorney General went to Collie, which is where I was born and lived for nine years. Mick Murray was not born in Collie, so he is not a real Collie person like I am!

Several members interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Anyway, the Attorney General went to Collie to ensure that the Collie courthouse will remain open so people in Collie, with the advocacy of the local member, can continue to enjoy the services provided by the Collie courthouse. That was only yesterday. He has come back and already got on with his legislative reform that is ongoing and will remain until the end of this term and another term beyond that, and hopefully this government will be powerful beyond that.

The Leader of the Opposition talked about the number of lawyers on this side of the house. She did not talk about many on her side of the house. I do not think there are any sitting on that side of the house. There is only one lawyer in the upper house, so the alternative Attorney General is Nick Goiran. That is something that we really should not have to contemplate. Let us look at Nick Goiran, the alternative Attorney General. A Liberal Party referred to his activity. Nick Goiran is a member of “The Clan”. It kind of rhymes. The review said that his behaviour had been unethical and underhand, there was corruption of the essential mechanisms that guide and are intended

to preserve the integrity of the party, he had a corrosive impact that plagued the party, a selection of inferior quality candidates was based on loyalty rather than ability, he engaged in anti-democratic practices and he acted purely out of self-interest.

I refer to text messages between members of “The Clan”. On 13 March 2017, Nick Goiran texted —

It’s official. I have too much time on my hands. I’m watching an episode of “House Husbands”.

Tomorrow I’m going to find a branch to stack, this is driving me crazy.

He also made some comments about women. How can the Leader of the Opposition have someone in the opposition who may be her Attorney General make comments like this? In 2018 he sent a text saying —

She —

Referring to Hon Sue Ellery —

sounded like she needed a respirator.

On 28 June 2018, again Nick Goiran texted —

If I provided you a photo of my view right now it would make you all unwell. I sit opposite Clohessy & MacTiernan.

That is the opposition’s alternative Attorney General. When is the Leader of the Opposition going to demand that Nick Goiran resigns for making those terrible comments? Of course, he is a member of the Liberal Party. We know that the member for Cottesloe cannot do anything because if he dares criticise Nick Goiran, the person sitting next to him now will be the leader the next day. We know that. He has been absolutely pathetic in his lack of criticism when it comes to “The Clan”. When it comes to sexist comments —

Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski: You’ve got form.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Exactly. The member for Cottesloe has form. I do not think I have the actual quote in front of me but I think when he referred to the Minister for Health during a debate, he said she was more interested in fashion.

Dr D.J. Honey: I had the good sense to apologise immediately.

Dr A.D. BUTI: He did not do so immediately. He said —

... worries more about fashion than she does about doing her job ...

The member says he apologised, but even for those words to come out of his mouth—it was not about the pressure of the moment, so he should not try to argue that—and to have those thoughts in his mind shows what sort of person he really is. No wonder he does not criticise Nick Goiran.

I want to allow the Minister for Health to contribute to the motion before us and our opposition to it. The Leader of the Opposition talked about the standards of the minister. There was a very good article in *The West Australian* dated 24 November 2016 by Daniel Mercer headed “Minister of strained relations”, referring to Hon Mia Davies, stating —

It is an open secret in WA political circles that the 38-year-old has endured strained relations with virtually all of her departmental chiefs.

Such have been the difficulties that one senior mandarin, former Department of Water director-general Maree De Lacey, quit or was moved on from her post, depending on who is asked.

Another case covered in detail in these pages by Paul Murray involved three of the Forest Products Commission’s most senior people, including its chief executive and chairman, resigning en masse.

Besides those two publicised examples, there are also said to be testy relations between the minister and the heads of DSR and the Water Corporation, not that either agency would comment to *Inside State*.

When we talk about resigning, the Leader of the Opposition needs to look in her own backyard. Her alternative Attorney General should be the one resigning, not the reformist Attorney General who continues to reform the legal system in Western Australia.

MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Health) [3.57 pm]: In the short time that we have left on the matter of public importance, let us talk about standards in this place and whether members are fit for office. I take members back to the former government and some of the standards that were acceptable to the former cabinet minister who is now the Leader of the Opposition. Troy Buswell’s standards were acceptable to that former cabinet minister, now Leader of the Opposition. He got in a government car and started drink-driving. He was defended by his colleagues for suffering from mental illness. Hundreds of thousands of people in this state live with mental illness but they do not get in their cars and drink-drive. He was defended over and over by the Leader of the Opposition and members of her government. Talking about standards, a former Minister for Finance, Dean Nalder, took a business partner on a taxpayer-funded trade mission. That was a standard that the former government was prepared to defend and keep in cabinet. Peter Collier made a mistake. He “liked” a particular photograph on Facebook. Would members like

me to explain that photograph? That was a standard that the former government defended. I was in the other place when he “liked” that photograph. It was obscene. He was defended to the hilt by members opposite when they were in government and when the Leader of the Opposition was a senior member of that Parliament.

The member for Cottesloe set a standard when he got up in this place and made a deeply sexist comment. He claimed it was made in the heat of debate. Do members know what that is? It is sexist by reflex. That is what that is. That is where it is—right there. Never once have I heard the Leader of the Opposition, who can stand in here and claim standards of integrity and point the finger at one of our most successful Attorney Generals, call out the grubby standards of her colleagues. She looks down. She has never called out those standards. I have never heard her condemn the misogynistic, sexist, appalling behaviour. It is absolutely hypocritical for her to stand in this place. I remember what kind of appalling government members opposite were. I remember what kind of standards you had—you had none! You defended your mates. You defended drink-driving. You defended misuse of taxpayers’ funding. You defended bad decisions. You constantly defended appalling behaviour on Facebook. You constantly defended it in this place. It is a disgrace.

Division

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

Ayes (5)

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

Mr R.S. Love
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (44)

Mr S.N. Aubrey
Mr G. Baker
Ms L.L. Baker
Dr A.D. Buti
Mr J.N. Carey
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke
Ms C.M. Collins
Mr R.H. Cook
Ms D.G. D’Anna
Mr M.J. Folkard
Ms E.L. Hamilton

Ms M.J. Hammat
Ms J.L. Hanns
Mr T.J. Healy
Mr M. Hughes
Mr W.J. Johnston
Mr H.T. Jones
Mr D.J. Kelly
Ms E.J. Kelsbie
Ms A.E. Kent
Dr J. Krishnan
Mr P. Lilburne

Mr M. McGowan
Ms S.F. McGurk
Mr D.R. Michael
Mr K.J.J. Michel
Mr S.A. Millman
Mr Y. Mubarakai
Ms L.A. Munday
Mrs L.M. O’Malley
Mr S.J. Price
Mr D.T. Punch
Mr J.R. Quigley

Ms M.M. Quirk
Ms A. Sanderson
Mr D.A.E. Scaife
Ms J.J. Shaw
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms S.E. Winton
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.

BUSH FIRES AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.06 pm]: Prior to question time, I was speaking on the Bush Fires Amendment Bill. I had come to that difficult part of the equation when we try to fill in a minute or two, so I strayed a little ahead of myself in my notes. I think I said that the bill will provide for the current fire danger system to lose two of the current indicators. I said one of those was the extreme indicator; in fact, that is not correct. The indicators will become moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic—moderate being green, high being yellow, extreme being orange and red being catastrophic. In fact, the current system has six indicators. They are low to moderate, being green; high, which is blue; very high, which is yellow; severe, which is orange; extreme, which is red; and catastrophic, which is red and black, so there will be some rationalisation of the numbers.

It is very cold in here. I am struggling to keep warm.

The bill is being brought on here in August. I am looking at a press release that was put on the Department of Fire and Emergency Services website on 12 July saying that the new fire danger ratings would launch on 1 September 2022. That is interesting, because that means it will have to progress pretty rapidly through the stages of the houses for that time line to be met. I guess there is an imperative there, because we know there will be an education campaign and people have to become used to the system. I am looking at some of the material that has already been produced, and, having just received a number of rates notices in the last week, they all seem to contain the same sort of information. The information is being put out there in the hope and expectation that this legislation will pass Parliament in good order. I am happy to report to the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services that the opposition is supportive of the legislation. We are not seeking to in any way hold up the bill and we understand that if it is going to be in place in time for people to be educated on the changes, it is necessary to, as quickly as possible, put this bill through the parliamentary process.

I do not think that the bill itself is particularly complex, but briefings and discussions raised a number of issues, which I will put to the minister down the track. Although the changes to the legislation are not great, there will be a whole raft of differences in the way the fire risk will be assessed, including different fire districts and a different

index of measurement. All that will have ramifications for everybody as they learn the new principles. We have been told that money has been provided to the department to educate the community about the changes, and I understand money has also been promised for local governments et cetera, so there will be questions around the quantum and how local governments will access the money.

I think it is instructive to run through the current fire danger rating system very quickly. There were changes in 2021 to the bushfire warning levels, and there are such things as advice, watch and act, and emergency warnings; however, recommendation 13.1 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements recommended that all states expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System to ensure that there is national consistency in the visual display of warnings. Many of us are quite used to the current rating system, although it is not more than 60 years old in its entirety. The catastrophic warning was introduced following the disastrous fires in Victoria. That measure came in because, before that, extreme was the highest level of alert.

When the warning is low to moderate, or green, if a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in those conditions, and homes can provide a level of safety to occupants. We need to be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. Planned burning, which is quite important mitigation burning, can occur in those circumstances.

The old “high” fire danger is a situation in which a fire could most likely be controlled in the circumstances and conditions. Homes can provide a level of safety. Again, we need to be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. Planned burning may occur in those circumstances if it is deemed to be safe and if permits allow.

A very high, or yellow, warning is for hot, dry and possibly windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it might be hard for firefighters to control. Well-prepared homes, actively defended, can provide safety, but people must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in those conditions.

The severe, or orange, category is for very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and be difficult for firefighters to bring under control. Spot fires can start and move quickly. Embers can come from many directions. Homes that are prepared to the highest level, have been constructed to bushfire protection levels—something that we have seen introduced in more recent times—and are actively defended may provide safety. People must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. The only safe place to be is away from bushfire-risk areas.

Then we move on to extreme, which is very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and be difficult for firefighters to bring under control. Spot fires will start and move very quickly. Embers can come from many directions. Homes prepared to the highest level, constructed to bushfire protection levels and actively defended may provide safety. Again, people must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. The only safe place is away from bushfire-risk areas.

The underlying descriptions about risk and actions to be taken in the severe and extreme categories are very similar. We can see why one of those categories was deemed to be redundant in the circumstances.

The final category, catastrophic, is the one I mentioned had been introduced last. These are the worst conditions for a bush or grassfire. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be extremely difficult to control. It will take significant firefighting resources and cooler conditions to bring it under control. Spot fires will start well ahead of the main fire and cause rapid spread of the fire. Embers will come from many directions. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. The only safe place to be is away from bushfire-risk areas.

That is what we saw with the very fierce fires that hit Victoria and Western Australia, in places like Yarloop and Wooroloo. We had similar circumstances in my own electorate around Woodridge, just north of Yanchep, where very difficult conditions led to evacuations. Thankfully, not a lot of property was damaged—despite potential for a lot to be—and no-one was really injured in that circumstance.

The bill will simplify these matters. It will move to the four-level system of moderate, or green, in which people plan and prepare; high, or yellow, be ready to act; extreme, or orange, take action now to protect life and property; and catastrophic, or red, leave bushfire-risk areas for survival. They are well understood. I think people would understand exactly what the green, yellow, orange or amber, and red circumstances mean. If people see red, it is probably time for them to be planning for their survival at that point.

I ask the minister whether he can explain—in his contribution or in the wrap-up—what consideration has been given to any downstream fire plans that might exist. For instance, I know schools close in certain circumstances, and there are circumstances in which Western Power would employ different work practices. Can the minister explain what work is being done to ensure that those plans will be altered, or if they are affected by these changes, that that is well known? I understand the underlying measurements have changed and adapted, and many more metrics are now being looked at. How will that be communicated, and what effect will that have on some of the fire plans that people have already put in place? We know that even householders have been asked to have a fire plan in place, especially if they live in a high-risk area. How will we ensure that people understand what it means for their plan not only at the very unsophisticated, I suppose, individual household level, but also in larger organisations? Especially, for something like a school, it will have ramifications for parents, who might have to go home and look after their children or find somewhere else for the children to go, and it will have ramifications for transport operators and teachers et cetera.

Last summer, regional WA was once again hit with some of these severe fires. In Margaret River in December 2021, 8 000 hectares of bushland and national park burned. There were horrendous bushfires across regional WA in early February. In the great southern in Denmark, in Bridgetown and in the wheatbelt, near Narrogin, Shackleton, Bruce Rock and Corrigin, there were some very fierce fires. I believe the member for Central Wheatbelt, the Leader of the Opposition, would like to make a contribution at some point on some of these issues because her electorate was quite badly affected by the fires in Bruce Rock and Corrigin. I mentioned earlier the Wooroloo fire in the Perth hills that destroyed 86 homes. It had an impact on bushland in my electorate from spot fires and the like, but, thankfully, it did not necessarily come right into it. There have been big fires out in the pastoral areas, too. Of course, we are not to forget the pastoral areas, where fires can be very difficult to control because there are neither the personnel nor the equipment, and grassfires can get to a vast scale. We know that there are real issues in many parts of the state. I mentioned during question time that that was leading to the Western Australian Local Government Association having a rethink about the appropriateness of local governments being as deeply involved in fire control management and bush fire brigades, because under the Bush Fires Act, bush fire brigades often come under their control. That is not necessarily always the case; in some areas that is not the case. However, generally, local governments have quite a considerable involvement with that. Of course, as some of the funding mechanisms are through capital grants and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, there is probably an argument that there needs to be a rethink about the structure of the arrangements as that funding source has changed.

There are questions about the implementation costs for the department and local government, the advertising campaign et cetera. In country areas in Western Australia, and even in some of the outer urban areas, the bushfire signs with the arrow indicating the degree of fire risk on any particular day will have to be changed. The community will need to understand what that means. How much will that cost? When is it expected to be completed? How much will be recovered? I understand that some commonwealth funding will assist with that, so the minister might explain exactly where all that will come from. Again, there are the implementation plans and policies of other government departments, especially the Department of Education and Western Power.

On the time frame, it seems that we are discussing this matter at the very last possible opportunity. I wonder about the timing. Why was the bill not introduced earlier? Was it not prepared? Were some underlying discussions going on at a federal level? If the minister could outline some of the reasons for the timing, that would be much appreciated. I do not expect a full scientific explanation, but could the minister provide an explanation of the difference between the fire danger index and the fire behaviour index—the FDI and the FBI—so that we can understand what it means and how it will impact on activities that local governments currently provide permits for, whether that be paddock burns or any other activities that they have control of, including harvest bans? I know that harvest bans are theoretically the preserve of local government, but because a lot of them are based on the fire danger index, there will necessarily have to be change to some of those measurements as well, so the community and farmers will need to understand what that means.

When the bill was read in, the video showed the minister reading a statement something along the lines of —

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

That appeared on the video, yet I am reliably informed that it no longer appears in *Hansard*. Perhaps the minister could explain whether there is a difference of opinion about whether this bill is uniform legislation; and, if so, how he intends to address that matter, because the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review will no doubt be interested to look at the bill if it is indeed deemed to be uniform legislation. I understand that it is basically up to the minister to declare, but it seems that there was a declaration on the video, but that is not the case in the corrected *Hansard*. Could the minister make some comment about what is happening there and whether there has been a change of view? It seems to be unusual that the two would be so different.

I think that has pretty well outlined most of the concerns that we would like the minister to address in his response. We are not opposed to the change. In fact, we are supportive of the change and the need to have a review of the science of these matters. We are very supportive that an understanding of fire behaviour has been developed. We know, because there is evidence of it, that the summers seem to be hotter and drier and the winds seem to be blowing harder, so there is a risk. Of course, people in electorates such as mine are moving to and living in areas where traditionally they would not have been at such risk. People have moved back into farming areas and in some cases they have revegetated a lot of cleared farm land and unwittingly contributed to the risk of bushfire in those areas. I am talking about the peri-urban areas of my electorate in the hills of Perth where the conditions at times make it very difficult to gain access to undertake control measures to ensure that proper firebreaks et cetera are in place and that there are proper escape routes out of the areas at risk of fire. I have raised with this minister and previous ministers that my great concern is that we have allowed development in areas for which there was less concern and less knowledge about bushfire mitigation and that has led to the situation in which areas of rural residential development have very few escape routes, with perhaps only one road in or a sandy track on which someone could

become bogged and a disaster could occur. I have highlighted the risk of some areas, such as the rural subdivisions in Gingin. It has been brought to my attention by residents that they are not happy with the level of egress from the residential subdivisions in case of such an emergency. In other areas of the electorate, people have been building in what are now considered to be very high risk areas and at great risk. Some of the mitigation needs to be looked at in the older established areas to ensure that measures are put in place so that if there is not a safe escape route, there are at least safe points that people can get to. I have great concerns about some of the residential developments in my area. In fact, I have recently had correspondence from people in the member for Central Wheatbelt's district about an informal bush road, which it was thought would provide escape out of the subdivision, being blocked off. I might take that up with the Minister for Environment at some stage because I think that has occurred on some land under his control. That means that people who thought they had a safe bolthole in the past cannot safely escape.

Those issues have emerged as climate change and hotter conditions kick-in and there are greater risks, but it also outlines the fact that people are now living in areas they once did not. Instead of people living in traditional towns, they are now living in rural residential areas and rural areas that once had one farm and 2 000 acres of cleared grassland with lots of safeguards for the people who lived there now have dozens if not hundreds of houses and are heavily vegetated after 20-odd years or more of occupation. I am concerned about those issues.

As this is an opportunity to talk generally about bushfire and fire mitigation issues, I wish to raise the opposition's concerns about our lack of access to emergency services buildings, personnel and volunteers. This matter was highlighted recently by my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, who, as I said, is the shadow Minister for Emergency Services. He has made several attempts to not just visit bushfire facilities, but to speak to fire and rescue and marine rescue volunteers and professionals. All those people fall under the remit of DFES, which is the organisation in charge of this legislation. I use this opportunity to raise this matter. A press release dated 9 August issued by Hon Martin Aldridge and the Leader of the Opposition states —

Opposition Leader Mia Davies said multiple attempts to meet with emergency service personnel or visit Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) facilities in Dongara, Geraldton and Esperance had been blocked since the start of 2022.

“This is a State Government refusing to allow the Opposition to meet volunteers on site, while at the same time enforcing a draconian code of conduct stopping volunteers from speaking to their local Member of Parliament,” Ms Davies said.

“Silencing our critically important emergency service volunteers from raising real concerns around disaster response, funding for equipment, or access to training is a long way from the gold standard transparency this Government promised.”

Correspondence from the Emergency Services Minister this week confirmed future access for Opposition MPs to DFES facilities would not be granted, stating:

Unfortunately, we will not be accommodating visits to DFES facilities by the Opposition in the absence of a pressing operational requirement.

Shadow Minister for Emergency Services Martin Aldridge said it was highly unusual for any government to take such a partisan and heavy-handed approach to our vital emergency services.

“Blacklisting Opposition MPs from meeting with DFES personnel, visiting new facilities, or hearing firsthand accounts about responding to events like Cyclone Seroja would have been unheard of prior to this Labor Government,” Mr Aldridge said.

“Meanwhile, Government backbenchers have seemingly unfettered access, regularly posting photos on social media with the same volunteers and staff we are barred from visiting.

“It's a blatant double-standard which reflects poorly on the Emergency Services Minister and the State Government and must be reconsidered,” Mr Aldridge said.

The move follows the introduction of a new code of conduct for emergency service volunteers and staff in 2020, preventing communication with State and Federal MPs.

That is the situation. This issue was picked up and reported on by the ABC in May 2022 in a report that states —

Opposition politicians are being denied meetings with Western Australian's frontline volunteers by a policy that regulates emergency service workers' interactions with parliamentarians —

In a similar vein, there are quotes from Minister Dawson referring to refusals to allow such visits. In this report the minister said he had facilitated meetings for the opposition in the past. He stated —

“Recent examples include a briefing for the Opposition from the Deputy Commissioner on the South West fires, an organised visit to the Incident Control Centre in the Wheatbelt during a period of unprecedented number of active Level 3 Emergency events and a meeting with the District Recovery Coordinator earlier this month ...

He acknowledged that he allowed those visits on a couple of occasions, however the opportunity for opposition members to interact directly with volunteers, who are in fact the constituents of those members of Parliament, is being denied. We believe that that is inappropriate. We highlighted that in this place, as the minister will recall, in 2020. The then member for Warren–Blackwood and I outlined the situation when the policy was introduced when the former member for Cockburn was Minister for Emergency Services. At that time, we said that volunteers, by virtue of having to sign up to the DFES code of conduct, had found themselves barred from talking to federal and state parliamentarians. In part, the code says that DFES personnel must not contact or communicate with any federal or state member of Parliament regarding departmental business or invite or allow them onto any DFES premises unless authorised. They cannot talk to anyone unless they are authorised. We approached the minister for authorisation because we did not want to make life difficult for the volunteers. When I speak to people about this matter in social media posts and in other conversations, they say, “We don’t mind; we’ll just talk to you.” But if they do that, they will fall foul of their code of conduct. We will not encourage people to do that if it is going to get them into trouble, because we have seen what has happened when volunteers come forward and speak to parliamentarians.

I think the minister should consider how disrespectful it is to the people who elect us. It is not only disrespectful to members of Parliament—we have thick skins and we can probably survive a little bit of insult—but it is insulting to the people who elect us. They do not understand that we are not allowed to visit them in the local marine rescue building or volunteer fire rescue shed. It does not seem to be an issue for volunteer bush fire brigades that are still controlled by local government, but it will potentially become an issue, and it will be more so if the state government takes control over this matter. In response, then Minister Fran Logan refused to accept that there was any issue. Therefore, I would like the minister representing the Minister for Emergency Services, as he was the minister previously, to explain the process that is followed when an opposition member requests access to a DFES facility. Does the minister seek advice from the commissioner and then accept that advice? On what basis is the denial outlined?

I go back to what was actually said in the correspondence to the shadow minister, which was that the government would unfortunately not be accommodating visits to Department of Fire and Emergency Services facilities by the opposition in the absence of pressing operational requirements. Basically, for the length of term of this government, under the current model, I as the member for Moore—with numerous volunteer fire and rescue services, SES centres and volunteer marine rescue services in my area—cannot actually go and visit any of them or I will not be allowed to visit any of them unless there is a pressing operational requirement. I find that quite bizarre. I would like to know what process took place to arrive at that particular statement, and upon whose advice it was given. If it is purely a political decision or if it is a decision that has been offered up by a department, can the government please outline exactly where that pressure is coming from? I think it is quite unprecedented. I can visit schools and health facilities in my electorate, but I am barred from going to facilities where people routinely expect me to go as their local representative. They do not understand why we are not at the opening of a facility or centre, as in the case of cyclone Seroja, to talk to the people who have come in. We do not want to interfere with the operation of the centres, but it is an important part of being a representative of an area to be able to actually communicate with people in the area.

As I say, it is not just me; there are tens of thousands of people in the electorate of Moore who vote, and like it or not, some of us are returned by popular acclamation, and people want us to represent them. In that circumstance, I think it would be very instructive if the government could explain just what the process was for it to arrive at this blanket ban for members of Parliament who are not members of government to actually visit some of the facilities under the control of DFES and to talk to volunteers. I do not think talking to volunteers is particularly dangerous; I do not think we represent some sort of existential threat to the operations of DFES. I think it is entirely appropriate. I speak as a member who represents an electorate, a very large area of which was very badly damaged by cyclone Seroja. There are other areas where people have been threatened with bushfires. I do not know what would happen if I were to go to the Red Cross centre, for example, if there were a fire. Would I have to get the minister’s approval to talk and give comfort to constituents who are sheltering in a basketball court or whatever? Whose lines am I crossing in those circumstances? I really want to know, because I think it is actually fundamentally disrespectful to the people of my electorate and disrespectful to democracy, and I do not see any reason for it, apart from a political one. I cannot honestly imagine what threat the government thinks I would pose by going to talk to volunteer SES people or marine rescue personnel about the issues they face. The government must have some reason for this, but I would really like to know what it is.

With that, I will wind up my contribution. I believe there are members on the government side who wish to speak, so I will allow that to happen, but I caution that there will be a couple of other members from our side who will want to make contributions on particular aspects of this bill, especially as it might pertain to their own electorates or experiences. Thank you.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Finance) [4.44 pm]: I am contributing to this debate because in respect of bushfires, the fact is that I live in a bushfire-prone area, and I witnessed the 6 February 2011 Kelmscott–Roleystone bushfires. I want to recall those events because it brings into sharp focus the devastating effects of bushfires, which is why this government is serious about all aspects of managing and trying to prevent bushfires. That is part of the reason this bill is before the house.

In the early morning of 6 February 2011—I remember the date well, because it is my wife’s birthday—we headed off to the beach from where we live in Mt Nasura. At that time, we lived probably about 3.5 kilometres from where the fire started; we now live about two kilometres away from where it started. We went to South Beach, near Fremantle. It was quite a windy day, and it was unusual because there was still quite a strong easterly wind blowing; even at the beach, we could feel the easterly on our back. We then returned, and as we got to Cockburn, I heard a fire engine behind me and then, looking towards the hills, I could see black smoke. At that stage, it looked like it was coming from Champion Lakes, but then we got closer to our home and there was a lot more smoke. We went down to Kelmscott, and it looked like a war zone; there were helicopters, police cars, fire engines et cetera. I do not think that any of the houses that were lost in the Kelmscott–Roleystone bushfires were actually in Roleystone; I think they were all in Kelmscott or Clifton Hills. They are not in my electorate, but in the electorate of Darling Range. The member for Darling Range represents a large area that is bushfire-prone, and he will also be making a contribution to this debate.

In the end, either 71 or 72 homes were destroyed and a further 39 were damaged. At that time, it was the biggest loss of property in any bushfire in Western Australian history. Of course, it has since been surpassed over the last couple of years. The fire started as the result of sparks from an angle grinder. It was a very windy day, as I said, with an easterly wind blowing. The fire basically jumped Brookton Highway, went up the escarpment and started to destroy homes. In many respects, thank goodness it was an easterly wind for most of that day. If it had been replaced by a westerly, which often happens with the late sea breeze in the Kelmscott–Armadale area, the fire would have gone up to Roleystone, which, I am sure, would have led to loss of life. There is restricted access out of Roleystone, so thank goodness the fire was coming down the hill, so people were able to leave.

The final report on the bushfires revealed that 28 per cent of residents in Kelmscott–Roleystone left their homes just in time, many with just the clothes on their back. The fire started in Kelmscott–Roleystone, jumped Brookton Highway, went up the escarpment and also the other way to Clifton Hills. Clifton Hills is a built-up residential area that backs onto bushland. There did not seem to be any rhyme or reason for why some homes were destroyed; it is thought that sparks got into air-conditioning units, which is why some homes in Clifton Hills were destroyed. It has to be said that the City of Armadale, led by the then mayor, Linton Reynolds, was fantastic. Linton Reynolds showed absolutely brilliant leadership. People congregated in the Armadale Recreation Centre, some of them with just the clothes on their back. Some people were unable to verify for a few days whether their homes had been destroyed. I think the fire happened on the Sunday and I was able to go on a tour on the Tuesday or Wednesday. I was elected only in October 2010, so the fire was not even six months after I had been elected. I was able to go with emergency services personnel to some of the affected areas and to check up on one of the teachers at Armadale Primary School, Ms Clark, who had taught my kids. She did not know whether she still had a home. I was thankfully able to report to her that her home was still standing, but the fire had got to the back door. It was dark and we could see where the ashes were. Another person was told that their house on, I think, Robinson Road was okay and their neighbour’s house was destroyed. Unfortunately, for that person, it was the other way around. When they got back, thinking their house would be standing, they found that it had been destroyed.

The member for Darling Range will speak shortly. He will also mention Sergio Tucci, who sadly passed away of cancer only a few weeks ago. Sergio was an outstanding individual who was a coach at the Kelmscott Roos Soccer Club. He coached my youngest son in soccer. His home was featured in the news that night, one of the first homes to go up very quickly. It was completely destroyed. Another prominent resident in the area, Frank Duffy, had his home destroyed. Last February, there was a 10-year reunion of some of the people who were impacted by the bushfire.

The then candidate for Darling Range is the great new member for Darling Range. I have to keep repeating this: is it not great to have such a positive member for Darling Range in this house after what we had in the last term? It is just so good. He is my neighbouring colleague.

Mr R.S. Love: Which former member for Darling Range are you referring to?

Dr A.D. BUTI: The last one.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, the last member for Darling Range.

Anyway, the member for Darling Range at the time was Tony Simpson, who I get on very well with, but he went missing a bit. To be fair to Tony, at the time he and Don Randall helped provide food to residents, but he did not advocate for some of the locals later. I think most people on our side would consider Tony Simpson a nice fella. Anyway, I will get back to what I was talking about.

As I said, parts of Clifton Hills were destroyed by the bushfires. The professional firefighters and the volunteer firefighters did an amazing job. We have to remember that there was also a bushfire the day before or a day later at Red Hill, so they were fighting on a number of fronts. They were really exhausted and extended but did a superb job, and, as I said, the City of Armadale, led by the mayor, did a sterling job. People who live in Roleystone, Kelmscott, Mt Nasura and in the electorate of Darling Range live on a daily basis with the possibility of bushfires. We try not to think about that all the time, but in summer it can become more difficult. It is great to have a government

and a minister, the current minister and the former minister, who has the carriage of the bill in this house, who are very, very serious about putting in the legislative framework and the services to try to reduce not only the number of bushfires, but also the impact when we have bushfires. We cannot always do that.

I think the member for Murray–Wellington will be speaking soon. Is Yarloop in the member’s electorate?

Mrs R.M.J. Clarke: Yes.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yarloop was destroyed in 2016. That is where my mother grew up. A lot of her history was destroyed. The school she went to was destroyed, the church that she and my dad were married in was destroyed and the hospital that my elder sister was born in was destroyed. But the family home, which was on the highway, was not destroyed. Bushfires can have a major impact on individuals, families and communities. I congratulate Minister Dawson and also Minister Whitby before him, who has carriage of this bill in this house, for bringing this bill to us. I look forward to the contribution of other members who will speak very shortly, particularly those who are in bushfire-prone areas.

MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach) [4.55 pm]: I rise to speak to the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. Unlike most of the people here, I have a level 2 incident burning in my electorate as we speak. The fire itself may have finalised, but the incident is ongoing. I will explain a bit about that. I will not talk to the particularisation of the bill, as I am certain that any flaws will be identified during the consideration in detail stage and that the minister will be able to address any issues of concern.

What people do not know is that my humble little electorate has one of the only registered mines, which is basically a quarry at the end of the freeway, still inside the metropolitan area. It is actually covered under the Mining Act. In recent times, a company has been using the area to deposit refuse from demolished houses. It is transported over and then broken up. The bricks and recyclable materials are removed from what is delivered on site, and the rest is then broken up and put on a large stockpile. This stockpile is about 10 metres high and 50 to 60 metres long. People in this room may not understand, but fire is caused by the presence of three things: a fuel source, heat and oxygen. With those three things, a chemical reaction will cause a fire. Fires are caused by usually one of two reasons: spontaneous combustion or being deliberately lit. What we think has happened is that the heat within that pile has ignited and set off a fire. It is a level 2 incident. It required a multiagency response and is burning within 900 yards of my home as we speak. I believe the actual fire itself has been put out, but I will talk to that a bit later.

Attacking this fire have been officers from the professional unit at Butler and the professional unit at Joondalup, plus the two local volunteer bush fire brigades—that is, four organisational structures involved in attacking this fire. I believe each organisation put at least 15 to 20 staff through over the past two to three weeks to try to put out this fire. What has been of concern to me and constituents around my electorate is the toxicity of the smoke. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has taken air samples in the precinct surrounding the fire and I am glad to report to the house that it is non-toxic. It still has values of smoke, and anyone who has chest issues, asthma or something similar should always be very aware of any smoke happening. There is no toxicity about it, which is very reassuring. I believe that testing is ongoing.

This particular location has had similar fires in the past. In November last year, a similar stockpile ignited, and it took three months to put it out. At one particular time they tried smothering it with foam. The only way to attack this fire is to break up the piles. The construction company that has been managing the site has been very amenable. I would like to recognise the work that it has done. It has been using front-end loaders and excavators to try to put out this fire. We are talking about a fire inside the metropolitan area that has been burning for a fortnight. It has been significant. There have been fatigue issues with the volunteers because of the number of hours they have put in. I have to recognise Captain Darren Bennett and the Quinns Rocks Bush Fire Brigade for the brilliant work that it has been doing over the past 10 days. People often do not realise that when we have a big fire, a lot of smaller organisational units come in. A group known as the Wanneroo auxiliary fire brigade has also been helping by providing tankers. The fire is a significant distance from the nearest fire hydrant. Therefore, the only way to get water to extinguish or take the heat out of the fire is by trucking it in. That is all done by volunteers.

When the fire first started, a significant amount of firefighting foam was used to contain it. I was reassured that PFAS is no longer used in that environment, which is great, but a heap of foam was dumped on that fire. However, the fire burnt with such intensity that that did not work. Even the vast amount of rain we have had over the last couple of weeks has not helped to extinguish the fire. There is still a hotspot there, and they are breaking it up, but the more they break it up, the more heat is released, and that lessens the potential to put the fire out. The fire is still being controlled and contained. My understanding is that it has not yet reached the point of extinguishment, but I have not had any further information in the past 24 hours, so that might have occurred.

I have been absolutely awestruck by the heroic efforts of our volunteers and professional firefighters and the way they have been working together to put out this level 2 incident. They have been monitoring the fire for 24 hours a day since it broke out. Remember the cold front that came across last Monday morning? We got 40 millimetres of rain up our way during that time. They were using an excavator and two front-end loaders to attack this pile of refuse, and even after all that rain, eight-metre high flames were still coming out of this refuse. That is interesting.

I received a magnificent briefing from the incident management team. I must commend the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services for his efforts in arranging that meeting. I was very assured about the competence and capabilities that were being put towards that fire. That was very comforting, even though, as I said, I live about 900 metres away from the fire. The smoke that was coming from the fire, depending on the breeze, was of concern to numerous constituents of mine, but, again, DWER has been doing a brilliant job in monitoring the fire and keeping everyone advised. I would like to commend all those who have been involved in this incident. The fire itself may be out, but the testing of the surrounding environment is ongoing. I am assured that the results of that testing will be known in the very near future.

As I said, my contribution will be brief. With that, I thank the house for its time.

MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington) [5.04 pm]: The purpose of the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022 is to instigate the nationally agreed and consistent Australian Fire Danger Rating System and corresponding fire behaviour index thresholds.

Volunteer bush fire brigades in Murray–Wellington have had to deal with catastrophic bushfires, from the fires in Dwellingup and surrounds in the 1960s, to the devastating Waroona–Yarloop fire in January 2016. Only this last summer, we had severe fires in the south west, and also in Nambelup, right next door to the newly established Bushfire Centre of Excellence. Across Murray–Wellington, I have a significant number of brigades, both volunteer bush fire brigades and volunteer fire and rescue brigades, plus State Emergency Service units. These brigades run bushfire readiness community sessions prior to the summer fire season. This is to ensure that households can prepare their properties and houses to be clear of bushfire risk and create a bushfire plan using the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' My Bushfire Plan app or a hard copy folder supplied by DFES at these meetings. The app also has up-to-date information and a link to Emergency WA that shows all incidents across Western Australia. Households are highly encouraged to spend time creating a plan in the event that a fire breaks out in or near their town.

Preston Beach, which is high risk, and which can be evacuated by only one 10-kilometre road out or along the beach, came close to being wiped out in 2016. People in Preston Beach therefore take bushfire planning very seriously. We have a bushfire ready coordinator and street coordinators to ensure that over the high-risk summer months, holidaymakers have bushfire plans in their homes, and that permanent residents are ready in times of emergency. These types of community engagement run by bushfire volunteers and DFES are vital in keeping our communities safe and fire ready.

The Shire of Murray has one SES unit, and five brigades, namely Pinjarra, South Yunderup–Ravenswood, Dwellingup, North Dandalup, and Coolup. Pinjarra Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service recently celebrated 50 years of service to the region, with many of the original vollies present at the recent celebrations. The Shire of Murray was also successful in obtaining the New Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Nambelup.

Managing bushfire across our state is a huge task; therefore, the McGowan government has established the Bushfire Centre of Excellence to help make our communities safer. The McGowan government invested \$33.16 million for the Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Nambelup to bring together the best research and training in bushfire management. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence is an education hub at which bushfire management personnel can come together for training and learning. A dedicated team is also examining bushfire knowledge and research, and the traditional fire practices of Aboriginal Australians.

The centre is the first of its kind in Australia. It is located in the Shire of Murray's Peel Business Park, about one hour's drive south of Perth. Plans for a Bushfire Centre of Excellence in Western Australia began after the Special Inquiry into the January 2016 Waroona Fire, which resulted in the Ferguson report. The report recommended that the Western Australian state government create a rural fire function, or rural fire division, to enhance the capability for rural fire management and bushfire risk management. It also recommended that this function would establish a centre for fire management.

In 2017, the concept of a Bushfire Centre of Excellence was discussed at the bushfire mitigation summit and the inaugural Western Australian prescribed burning forum. It was agreed that creating and capturing learnings through a centre of excellence would build bushfire capability for the future. In 2018, the state government announced a rural fire reform package in response to the Ferguson report recommendations. Changes included the establishment of a rural fire division within the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, as well as the establishment of a Bushfire Centre of Excellence. Following the announcement, DFES consulted with more than 200 stakeholders through workshops, presentations and forums. This informed the Bushfire Centre of Excellence's key functions, service delivery and guiding principles. In March 2019, the Shire of Murray was selected as the preferred centre location. The decision was made following an extensive request-for-proposal process through which local governments across the state could formally express their interest.

The Shire of Waroona has a volunteer fire and rescue service in town, and volunteer bush fire brigades in West Waroona, Preston Beach and Lake Clifton. Recently, it was great to see Captain Steve Thomas from the Preston Beach Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade appointed as chief fire officer for the Shire of Waroona. Congratulations, Steve. The

Shire of Harvey includes the Harvey, Cookernup, Yarloop, Brunswick and Roelands brigades. Sadly, Yarloop lost its fire shed in 2016 in the devastating Waroona and Yarloop fires. The McGowan government ensured that Yarloop recovered, with a rebuild of its fire shed and community centre, and a new train station. There is still ongoing investment into Yarloop, with the railway museum site currently under construction.

Cookernup and Yarloop joined forces not only during but also after the 2016 fires to form the affectionately named “Cookerloops”. It was such a great sign of two towns coming together to share their burden, strength and resilience. Since the fires in Yarloop, the McGowan government has invested heavily in bushfire mitigation in the region, including a \$900 000 fire station for the Yarloop Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, a new \$868 000 facility for the Waroona West Bush Fire Brigade, and \$120 000 for the Shire of Harvey to treat bushfire risks. The McGowan government also spent an additional \$800 000 on the Yarloop bushfire clean-up and put \$1.75 million towards the new Yarloop community centre. The McGowan government and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services have an asset investment plan, which includes funding for facility modifications across the state for career and volunteer fire stations. On 30 December 2020, funding was approved for the provision of a new tunic room, enhanced breathing apparatus, cleaning facilities and security fencing for the Brunswick Junction Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service. On 24 August 2021, the \$320 130 construction contract for these works was awarded, with a practical completion date of 4 March this year, along with \$50 000 for a new shed for training purposes.

The McGowan Labor government has invested heavily, with a \$22 million investment to boost the enhanced prescribed burning program in the south west, \$80 million in the Rural Fire Division to enhance bushfire management across the state, \$15 million for the bushfire risk management plan program to help local governments identify and manage their bushfire risks, and more than \$50 million towards the bushfire mitigation activity fund across WA. It has also established a ministerial volunteer advisory forum. There have been upgrades at the Pinjarra Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and the Brunswick Junction Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and a massive \$530 000 upgrade to the Harvey Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service. These upgrades have been well received by not just the volunteers, but also the wider community. There has also been an investment of \$50 000 for the construction of a hardstand and roadworks for the Lake Clifton Herron Residents Association and fire brigade, \$210 000 for upgrades at the Waroona Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services and \$2 million to provide water tanks to volunteer bush fire brigades across regional WA, and the provision of flood rescue boats to the Australind State Emergency Service. All of this is imperative for the support of our emergency services, in particular bush fire brigades and fire and rescue brigades.

Climate change is influencing the frequency and severity of dangerous bushfire conditions in Australia and other regions of the world, including through influencing temperature, environmental moisture, weather patterns and fuel conditions. There have been significant changes observed in recent decades towards more dangerous bushfire conditions for various regions of Australia. The current rating system in Western Australia is based on science that is over 60 years old and does not contemplate this evolution towards the more dangerous bushfire conditions that we are experiencing at an increasing rate. The new Australian Fire Danger Rating System will not only utilise modern scientific models to provide greater accuracy in terms of predicting the way in which a fire is likely to behave, but also be easier to understand for government agencies, businesses, industries, and, of course, the wider public. The Australian Fire Danger Rating System is a key component in addressing the lessons we have learnt in recent years. In particular, we know that consistent, straightforward messaging is key for the safety of our communities, because, after all, fire does not recognise state and territory borders. The Australian Fire Danger Rating System aims to improve public safety and reduce the impact of bushfires in four important ways. The government will ensure that Western Australia is a true contemporary of all other states and territories in the implementation of this new rating system. Western Australia will be better prepared for the threat of bushfires by being an active participant in this modernised system, which draws on over 60 years of scientific advances in the field. This will be the first time that all state and territory governments will use a single unified Australian fire danger rating system. I commend this legislation to the house.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife): The very well timed member for Roe.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe) [5.14 pm]: Thank you, Acting Speaker; that is much appreciated. I want to make a brief contribution tonight. Firstly, as the member for Moore has highlighted, we will be supporting the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. I think that is logical. It has come out of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

As was stated earlier, the six categories in the Australian Fire Danger Rating System will be reduced to four. Severe and high categories will be removed, and activities covered under these categories will be prohibited under these ratings. Importantly, it will not be possible for prescribed burning and permits to burn to be granted unless the rating is moderate. I think that is very important in the context of some of the activities that happen in Western Australia, which, as we know, is very bushfire prone. These permits to burn and for prescribed burning are important elements of controlling fires over the summertime or controlling the fuel load, but then there are also permits to burn for our agricultural community who look to burn stubble, timber and the like. It is important that this element is taken seriously.

One of my main questions for the minister is how this will impact the harvest vehicle movement bans. We have a very large state. It is quite interesting that at different times of the harvest period, we can have, say, temperatures of 40 degrees up around Geraldton, Northampton and the like and 21 degrees down on the south coast in Esperance. We have large variability in our agricultural areas. That point of clarity would be appreciated from the minister. Another question for the minister is: how has the Department of Fire and Emergency Services consulted with volunteer brigades and local governments? That leads me into concerns that we have previously raised in this Parliament, which the member for Moore mentioned. We are now getting feedback from our local governments and bush fire brigades. The work health and safety legislation that this government brought in—the Work Health and Safety Act 2020—is really causing some serious grief out there in the regions. I think we now have volunteers bailing out hand over fist because they do not understand and are worried about this government’s legislation and the effect it will have, and that is now flowing on to our CEOs and local governments. This government has created a scenario whereby there is a lack of clarity. We have different local governments going in different directions. Now we are waiting on the Western Australian Local Government Association to come out with its position. That is going to be difficult for WALGA, because it has some CEOs saying, “I am regarded as the PCBU—the person conducting a business undertaking—and if something happens at one of those fires, if one of our volunteers falls off the back of a truck, I could potentially be held responsible.” That is the sort of disquiet we are now seeing in our regional areas, and it is quite concerning. I have people coming up to me time after time saying, “I just want to go and put the fire out, but now I’m worried about the implications of doing that.”

I remember the Katanning fire a couple of years ago. I was out at the Darkan Sheepfest. I turned the corner at the Kojonup turn-off on the Albany Highway and there was a massive black cloud of smoke. I can assure members that when you are driving into those fires, it is quite frightening. All you want to do is put out that fire for your neighbours for those people affected. In my case, it was people in my neighbourhood only a few kilometres from my farm. That fire actually got to the outskirts of Katanning. It was just fantastic to see how our neighbouring brigades all came in and helped. They were all there at 5.30 the next morning. They were there helping, ready to make sure it did not escape again on the Sunday morning. It was a fantastic effort.

I now see a real concern that has evolved over the last couple of years with work health and safety legislation, and, as I said, the disquiet that it is causing between our local governments, our volunteers, our CEOs and anyone else involved in the industry. I have been talking to the likes of the Wagin shire, which wrote a letter to the Minister for Emergency Services the other week, and copied me into it. It pointed out that local bush fire brigades attending fires in their volunteer capacity extinguished the vast majority of fires without imposing on the resources of the state. If they do need to impose on the resources of the state or get Department of Fire and Emergency Services to come into the mixture, that is when they will take responsibility. They have concerns over the Work Health and Safety Act and the responsibility of their CEO. The shire wrote a letter to Minister Stephen Dawson proposing an amendment that could be along the following lines: that unless a local government CEO specifically issues directions that are deemed to prejudice the health and safety of volunteer firefighters in an emergency, the CEO will not be subject to a penalty as a result of actions taken in good faith by volunteer firefighters whilst attending to the urgency of a bushfire situation. To me that is a logical thing that the minister could certainly look at to potentially amend the situation there. That is something I want to point out. Many of our local governments have had a great relationship with the volunteer bush fire brigades, but, as I said earlier, now we are getting to the point at which our volunteers are starting to disappear because of this government’s legislation, loading it back onto a local level.

I did a grievance to the minister, who will remember it, back on 11 November 2021 about our volunteer firefighters and to the minister’s credit, he gave a very comprehensive explanation. My question was played on *WA Country Hour*, and the minister’s answer was also played. It provided quite a bit of clarity for many of the volunteers in the regions. But as I pointed out at the time, even Commissioner Darren Klemm said that DFES was concerned that there was potential for volunteers to be criminally liable for breaching the WHS legislation. This requirement is likely to cause anxiety for emergency services volunteers, with potential negative implications for recruitment and retention. Even the department’s own commissioner expressed concerns early, and I guess if he needed reassurance, what do our volunteers need? They just want to go and put out the fire; they just want to go down the road and put the fire out. They do not want to have to think about all those other implications. We know everyone has to act in a safe manner and do the best they can, but they certainly do not want to be loaded up with the implications. The CEOs of our local governments now also appear to demonstrate that they do not want to be loaded up either. That is going to be have to be addressed by the minister and the Minister for Emergency Services, and by Western Australian Local Government Association, which has differing opinions.

The other thing that was brought up to me by the president of Wagin shire is: What happens if a local government is prepared to continue on in the current form and then there is a fire on the boundary of two shires and the other local government has said it is not interested and it is handing all responsibility to the state? What happens when that fire runs through the boundary of those two local governments? Who is responsible? How does that work? These are the questions that are out there at the moment.

As the member for Central Wheatbelt in front of me knows, as do the members for Moore and Cottesloe, we were all out there after those Narrogin, Wickopin and Bruce Rock fires. I had fires in my electorate through Jerramungup,

Bremer Bay and Lake Grace this summer. It was quite frightening. It was frightening to see the devastation that occurred during and after those fires and the effect they had on families and communities. There were articles in the *Farm Weekly* about the likes of Steven Bolt and his family from Corrigin. The member for Central Wheatbelt will be talking about families in her electorate shortly. The after-effects and the years and years of damage to those families and communities are quite disturbing. I wanted to point that out.

As I said, the member for Moore has pointed out that we are in favour of this legislation as far as the Australian Fire Danger Rating System goes, but the member for Central Wheatbelt, who will be speaking straight after me, wants to point out a few other things about how we are being affected in our regional communities. I hope the minister takes this on board as well, because this is happening at the moment out there in local government and bushfire volunteer land, and it is a real concern from my perspective.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition) [5.27 pm]: Thank you, Mr Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to make a brief contribution on this Bush Fire Amendment Bill 2022. As previous speakers from the opposition have noted, the opposition supports the legislation. I want to provide a perspective of why it is so important that we get these classifications right. As the member for Roe touched on, there were significant fire events in the electorates of Central Wheatbelt and Roe this year and that clean-up continues. It is very important that we get right the detail of the legislation and how the categorisation of the new model is arrived at, so that we have these new categories of moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic, as well as the signals that sends about how the rest of the framework works together. From my perspective, the politics on this are that we need to make sure that our communities are safe. There is the very complex issue of how that then interacts with local governments and some of the other decisions that they make, and then how that impacts our volunteer emergency services and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. It is a complex area; no-one pretends otherwise.

I think the public wants to know that we have a joined-up way of thinking about these things before and after an event of the nature that we have seen. I am talking about the Corrigin bushfire and the Shackleton fire complex. It constituted Corrigin, Bruce Rock and then right down to Narrogin and Wickiepin and through that eastern wheatbelt, which is where that experience was. I am speaking as a local member in this case, and there are some issues I want to raise that I have raised with the Minister for Emergency Services as well. That fire, what is known as the Shackleton fire complex, burned through about 45 000 hectares of land, and at one point was around 35 kilometres long. We have different categorisations in here, but the only word I can use for the day that fire got away is that it was catastrophic. The people on the ground reported that they had never faced conditions so horrific. There had been a string of 40-plus days. We had a howling easterly and the wind was swirling. We had the remnants of the most significant harvest that the state had ever seen. There was thick stubble cover. I was not there, but from all accounts from the people who faced that situation, it was terrifying. Enormous credit goes to the professionalism of everyone involved that no deaths occurred as a result of this event. Some very experienced people on the fireground said that they were the most scared they had ever been. An inferno was fuelled by the wind, the heat and the harvest. Four homes were destroyed. We are talking about the Central Wheatbelt, so there are no big metropolises, although the community of Corrigin was under direct threat. Unfortunately, with communications going down, it was very difficult for anyone to provide a warning about the fire. We have talked in this chamber about the reliability of mobile telecommunications and how that can be improved, particularly during an emergency. Four homes were destroyed. These were people's houses that they lived in. A total of 44 non-residential properties, including sheds and outbuildings, were destroyed, and 30 properties were damaged, which required clean-up. Over 1 000 livestock had to be killed or were destroyed as a result of that event. The member for Roe is quite right; the damage that occurred as a result of the fire was obviously horrific, but the scar left on farmers or neighbours who had to destroy those animals will stay with them for a long time. It was quite traumatic and is still very traumatic.

Enormous credit goes to the local governments for their coordination and involvement post that fire. We put an enormous amount of pressure on our CEOs in local governments when the "emergency", the immediacy, is handed back to them to do the recovery. In this case, the CEOs were the only ones really providing that coordination whilst a recovery officer was put in place. The CEO of the Wheatbelt Development Commission is now assisting to provide coordination and support, which is very welcome. There is an issue with that immediate handover. Quite often the people who are responsible for that recovery are also dealing with their own trauma and clean-up and trying to manage that situation. I give full credit to everyone who was involved at the time and those who are continuing to make sure that things are moving along.

I turn to one of the issues that has fallen out of this event. There are still many to be decided. I do not propose to go into the details because we still need to have discussions about how some things relating to this fire will be resolved. It is very clear to me—it was raised directly with me by constituents in the community—that after a fire goes through, an emergency funding package is made available, and there is usually coordination. This occurred with Seroja and fires such as those that occurred in Yarloop and Wooroloo, where some sort of assessment was made about the damage that occurred and the asbestos that was left behind. As members could imagine, almost everything in the wheatbelt is built out of asbestos. It is non-friable for the most part but once a fire goes through, it needs to be assessed, managed and removed for the safety of the community. If people are insured, their insurance will obviously take care of that.

A number of people who were impacted by the fire were self-insured but they lost a full house or a property that they utilised to house workers who work on their property. They are often unable to meet the costs. In some cases, they were quoted \$250 000 for the removal of the damaged property. There is not a huge number of them; we are not talking about a significant number of people who have been impacted. They do not have access to that kind of funding. Removal of the asbestos is required. The local governments and others go through and carry out an assessment. They tell people what they need to remove. The local government is aware of it, so it is compelled to make sure that that is adhered to through environmental regulations, which is right. The fallout of this is that a number of people simply cannot and do not have the resources to manage the removal of the asbestos and are facing big fines. I pose the following question to the minister: is there a capacity for those who have been unable to recover funding through insurance for the emergency package funding to be applied to assist them in removing the damaged asbestos from their properties?

During conversations with my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge, our shadow Minister for Emergency Services, he pointed out that there is a difference in the way that asbestos has been dealt with in different emergencies. I mentioned Seroja and Wooroloo. He was quite close to those incidents. He pointed out to me that in the case of the Wooroloo fire—I am happy to be corrected—the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation engaged contractors to remediate sites that had been contaminated, certifying back to the owner that the site had been cleared and cleaned to acceptable standards. The advice provided by the Shire of Mundaring is that the actual cost was between \$80 000 and \$100 000. In relation to cyclone Seroja, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation seems to take a different approach, providing only nominal assistance to those who were uninsured. It would seem that that is also the same for the Shackleton fire complex bushfire.

In light of the fact that it has been raised directly with me and in trying to get a better understanding of how we do this better across the state to make sure that we do not leave people trying to piece their way through quite complex legislation, regulations and requirements at a time of trauma, I am trying to get some clarity, firstly, about how I can get some immediate relief for my constituents who have been through a pretty difficult time and, secondly, how we have that discussion around a consistent approach with the clean-up. I acknowledge that every emergency is different, so it cannot always be a case of horses for courses. We need some consistency, particularly when we talk to some of the CEOs in the immediate moments after an emergency has passed. For instance, Natalie Manton, the CEO at the Shire of Corrigin, was straight on the phone to the Shire of Esperance in those really early days trying to get some guidance about the first things she needed to do before there was a coordinated response. I am not being critical—emergencies are difficult, messy and complex; I am simply reflecting upon some of the discussions that we have had with both local governments and constituents who have been impacted. I am looking forward to getting a response from the minister to that formal letter.

I reiterate that people are faced with such devastating situations after such an impact. Anyone who was out on the fireground after that fire went through would know that it is a very different picture out there at the moment. Obviously, it is green as we have had a lot of rain. We do not have to dig too far to see and hear the scars that have been left from that very recent trauma. Any member who has been through an emergency with their constituents will also understand, that it is very, very difficult for communities to regroup. We need to try to make that easier, be reasonable and provide that framework. I come right back to the start in relation to this legislation and say that we should be supportive of anything we can do to set that framework so we have some consistency to allow them to make those decisions around harvest burns, traffic movement and other decisions that need to be made on these really challenging days across the state. I look forward to continuing to work to make sure that we can keep our community safe.

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [5.40 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution, noting that other members also would like to contribute to this important Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. The bill was brought about by a tragic set of circumstances and reflects recommendations made in the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements report of 28 October 2020. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements was established on 20 February 2020 in response to the extreme bushfire season of 2019–20 that resulted in devastating loss of life, property and wildlife, and environmental destruction across the nation. Everyone should recall the haunting images in the news, and one that has stuck in my mind was when about 1 400 tourists and residents were congregated on the beach in the fire-ravaged town of Mallacoota in eastern Victoria. Mallacoota is positioned on the south-east corner of mainland Australia, and if people are surrounded by fire, there is nowhere else to go but the ocean or to fly out, but the smoke haze makes flying difficult. There were lots of people there in various states of preparedness when they were evacuated, some with pets, including rabbits! Of course, the Navy successfully evacuated those people using MV *Sycamore*, an aviation training vessel, and HMAS *Choules*, a very capable landing ship, dock, which can of course receive amphibious and landing craft and is helicopter capable. HMAS *Choules* is named after Claude Stanley Choules, who passed away on 5 May 2011 at the age of 110. At the time, Claude was the third-oldest verified military veteran in the world and the oldest known living man in Australia.

The Choules name lives on in Kelmscott with his son, Adrian, and daughter-in-law, Lesley, continuing to contribute to the community and advocate for the natural environment. Lesley is a good friend of my mother; they used to collaborate on animal welfare issues. Their own children and grandchildren also contribute in the area. Their forthcoming contribution is with the Kelmscott Agricultural Show on 14 and 15 October 2022—a show not to be missed!

I go back to the report. Its foreword states —

The fires started in Australia's hottest and driest year on record, with much of the country that burnt already impacted by drought. The Forest Fire Danger Index was the highest since national records began.

We heard harrowing personal accounts of devastation and loss. Over 24 million hectares were burnt. Many Australians were impacted, directly or indirectly, by the fires. Tragically, 33 people died and extensive smoke coverage across much of eastern Australia may have caused many more deaths.

I think there has been a recent report about the effect of that smoke on people, even to this day. The report continues —

Over 3,000 homes were destroyed. Estimates of the national financial impacts are over \$10 billion.

...

The season commenced in July 2019 and was not declared over until 31 March 2020. The tremendous professionalism of Australia's firefighters and emergency services personnel, both career and volunteer, demonstrated true Australian spirit in responding to the bushfires.

Of course, Darling Range includes areas that are extremely prone to bushfire, and in recent years we have experienced devastation, although we would not think so with the wet and cold conditions out there at the moment. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and our volunteers know that we have another challenging fire season ahead and are recruiting new volunteers, training existing brigade members and conducting mitigation activities as the weather allows. They will also be involved in educating residents on the steps they need to take to reduce their risk and to consider the actions that they will take in the event of certain fire danger ratings and on the outbreak of fire. Minister Dawson came to Byford recently to attend a sundowner to help me thank the volunteers in the area, including emergency service volunteers. I also acknowledge the bush fire brigades and volunteer fire and rescue service in the area and wish them well for their preparation and training, fighting fires when the need arises. On behalf of the community, I thank all members of the brigades, from drivers, radio operators, planners, managers and caterers, as well as the people whose boots go on the fireground, for putting their lives and livelihoods at risk—they take time off work, with the risk of injury to keep the rest of us safe. Thank you to the women and men of the Roleystone Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, and the bush fire brigades in Roleystone–Karragullen, Bedforddale, Byford, Jarrahdale, Keysbrook, Serpentine, Mundijong and Oakford, as well as the City of Armadale and Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale for the support they give those volunteers and the brigades. I also recognise the local government fire officers, the DFES officers embedded in the brigades and the district managers for leading the provisioning and management of our brave and dedicated volunteers.

I earlier alluded to the innate behaviour of the brigades to prepare for the fire season. In our area we have a recent reminder of the importance of a professional and well-managed emergency response system, which is something I have spoken about before and the member for Armadale about earlier today—the Kelmscott fires in 2011. At that time, it was the single biggest loss of houses in Western Australia in a single bushfire event, with 72 homes destroyed and 37 homes damaged. My parents and sisters lived in separate houses on Buckingham Road, where houses either side of them were razed to the ground. It was almost as though alternate houses were affected. I and the community are acutely aware of the dangers of a bushfire in the electorate.

I also take this opportunity to pay my respects to Sergio Tucci, who passed away peacefully on 11 July 2022 at the age of 51 as the result of a blood cancer. Serge was an active and loved member of the Kelmscott Roos Soccer Club as a player and coach, and his son, Michael, continues in his papa's steps. I had the privilege of sharing some words with Serge on 19 June at the Kelmscott Roos fundraiser in his honour, unaware of how unwell he was. He was very stoic and wanted to see his son play for the last time. Sergio and his family lost their home in the Kelmscott fires in 2011, and Serge used his bricklaying skills to rebuild the family home. I also want to acknowledge the former president of the Kelmscott Roos, Mr Dennis Warwick, who delivered a very difficult and heartfelt eulogy for Serge, complete with one minute's applause and a referee whistle! It was a variation, but was very well received by the family and other mourners. On behalf of the member for Armadale and myself, our deepest condolences to Sergio's wife, Angela, their daughter, Talia, and son, Michael, and the wider Tucci family and friends. Rest in peace, Sergio.

As mentioned earlier, this bill forms part of the Western Australian government's response to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements. Recommendation 13.1 of the Royal Commission urged governments to expedite the development and implementation of the Australian Fire Danger Rating System and to ensure that there was a national consistency in the visual display of the AFDRS and action to be taken in response to each rating. Recommendation 13.2 states —

State and territory governments should deliver education to ensure that the public understands the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System ratings, the potential danger attached to each rating, and the action that should be taken in response to each rating.

On 30 November 2021, this government responded to those recommendations in the affirmative, noting that Western Australia was on track to implement the system by 1 September this year.

The purpose of the bill is to instate the nationally agreed, consistent AFDRS and corresponding fire behaviour index thresholds. The current rating system employed in WA is over 60 years old and does not contemplate the evolution of bushfires or more dangerous bushfire conditions that we have seen in WA and across the country, which seem to be more severe and more frequent due to climate change. The new system will utilise modern scientific models to not only provide greater accuracy in predicting the way in which a fire is likely to behave, but also make them easier to understand for government agencies, business, industry and the wider public.

The four ratings are: moderate, under which the action is to plan and prepare; high, under which people should be ready to act; extreme, under which people need to take action now to protect their life and property; and, catastrophic, under which people need to act for their survival and leave the bushfire-risk area. From 1 September this year, the public will start to see the new fire danger ratings online and in the local community through an extensive community engagement and education campaign. It is also important to note that the fire danger rating system is a measure of the difficulty of controlling or suppressing fires once they have started and not the likelihood of a fire starting; therefore, it is about what will happen once a fire has started.

The government will ensure that Western Australia is a true contemporary of all other states and territories in the implementation of this new rating system. I threw in some Navy references earlier and will now draw attention to fundamental interoperability in the Navy—that is, the requirement for consistent and simple communication methods. Navy assets and personnel are required to use the same codes, language, terminology and systems to ensure that they can talk to each other and pass on instructions without ambiguity. It is no different in emergency management. The seemingly more frequent deployment of personnel and equipment across state borders and the movement of Australia's population, mostly because they come here to live here in WA where there is the best managed economy in Australia, necessitates a consistent and well understood fire danger rating system.

I thank the Minister for Emergency Services and his representative in this place, the former Minister for Emergency Services, for introducing this amendment bill and I commend this bill to the house.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.51 pm]: At the outset, I thank the Whip and members opposite for the indulgence in letting me speak at this time. As has been indicated, the opposition supports the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. The bill will legislate for simple changes to reduce the current six ratings for bushfire to four: moderate, high, extreme and catastrophic. More importantly, the methodology behind estimating the likelihood of a fire will be modernised, going from two fuel types, being grasslands and woodlands, to eight categories and covering the state. Members will see that the website has a vastly more sophisticated forecasting system that looks at soil type, weather conditions and the like. There will be much better prediction, as indicated by the member for Darling Range, for the severity of bushfires.

I have been given the indulgence to speak, so I will not go through a lot of the detail because it has been covered well by other members. But one issue I want to raise, which has been recognised by the Minister for Emergency Services, is that existing signage will need to be changed. There is a considerable number of signs and the sooner that that can be done, the better, because it will lead to confusion among people in terms of the level of risk. However, I want to use this opportunity to thank members opposite and, collectively, this Parliament for the excellent bushfire management regime that has been a bipartisan policy in this state for a considerable time. I said to the former member for Cockburn in this chamber and privately that we in Western Australia are the people best protected from bushfires in Australia because of our bipartisan approach to managing bushfire risk and, in particular, the controlled burning program. It is a highly scientific program and is utterly pivotal to the protection of our communities. Although there have been severe and significant bushfires in Western Australia, we have had nothing approaching the severity of fires on the east coast, including last summer. That is entirely due to the outstanding work done through the fire and emergency services in conjunction with professional and volunteer firefighters who maintain that program. It is an onerous program to maintain.

In the few minutes that I have, I want us to consider the fires that occurred on the east coast. When we look at the amount of fuel in forest fires that are pointed to in the papers that discuss this new methodology, we see that although forests represent a small percentage of Australia's total area, they represent a high percentage of the areas in which people live. If there are more than eight tonnes a hectare of litter on the ground in a forest, a fire will become literally unstoppable. It will not be stopped. It will be impossible to stop it. An ordinary jarrah forest drops about a tonne of litter a hectare a year on the forest floor. A karri forest drops about twice that rate of litter on the forest floor. That means that regular burning is critical in those forests if we want to control those fires. The minister knows it is not just about burning the forest; it is an extremely sophisticated program whereby the forest is burnt in diagonal strips across the prevailing winds—that is, the north-westerly and south-westerly winds, which are the strong winds that drive the most dangerous bushfires.

I was talking to a considerable expert in this area in New South Wales and Victoria who said that in a number of forests in which there were catastrophic fires, there had been more than 100 tonnes of litter a hectare on the forest floor. For those in this chamber who are old enough—I see a couple at least—who remember the 1 000-watt bar heaters that were used to heat classrooms, the energy flux from those fires on the east coast in older forests where burning had not been carried out is equivalent to 100 000 of those heaters a linear metre. That fire literally will

combust things 100 metres front of it. Although burns had been carried out a few hundred metres around those towns and other areas, because the bulk of the forest had massive quantities of timber and litter on the ground, those fires could not be stopped. It was literally physically humanly impossible to stop those fires. So, minister, I congratulate your government for continuing the good practices in forest management. This bill is part of adopting uniform legislation, but I encourage that none of us in this place ever forget that the reason Western Australia has not had the horrendous level of fires that have occurred on the east coast is due to this outstanding bipartisan policy that is supported by your government.

MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston) [5.57 pm]: I also rise today to support the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022. I start by, firstly, noting that the purpose of the bill is to make sure that there is a nationally consistent Australian Fire Danger Rating System. I will not go through that again because other members have outlined that system today. I am very pleased to see that. Obviously, the impact of that will be improved public safety and reduced impacts and risks around bushfire right across Australia. It is important that we take a national approach to this issue because, sadly, whether we live on the west or the east coast of Australia, we have been and will continue to be impacted by bushfires in future. I also note that this is the first time that all state and territory governments will use a single system. As I said, it is certainly incredibly important that the whole of Australia is brought into line.

I start by reflecting on the fires that I heard spoken about when I was young and growing up in Yarloop. My grandparents always used to talk about the Dwellingup fires. I am not sure whether anybody in the chamber is old enough to remember them—probably not—but the impact that the Dwellingup fires had on the south west community is legendary. My grandparents spoke about the Dwellingup fires with dread. It astounds me to link back to fire in a number of touchpoints in my lifetime. My grandparents ran the Yarloop general store and lost their general store in a fire—not a bushfire—so it is interesting that they were terrified by bushfires and then lost their business in a fire themselves.

Tragically, the Yarloop fire that occurred in 2016 was incredibly impactful on the south west communities of Waroona and Yarloop. I want to reflect on that in terms of the community and the people who dealt with, and continue to deal with, bushfires. The 2016 bushfire impacted incredibly upon my family and my childhood community, and sadly other people will absolutely concur with what I am about to say about the impacts on those communities. The Yarloop fire was started by lightning strikes at Lane Poole Reserve on 5 January 2016. The fire lasted from 5 January to 22 January. It burnt 70 000 hectares and, very sadly, two lives were lost. There were also 181 buildings destroyed, 166 of them in Yarloop.

In the lead-up to the fire, I was in Busselton on my annual holiday at Amblin Caravan Park. I remember sitting on the beach and looking back to where the bushfire was occurring. I had family still living in Yarloop, and they were texting to say that there was a fire and that it was spreading towards Yarloop, but that everything was okay at the moment. However, the smoke grew and I became increasingly concerned. I messaged my auntie and uncle, who live on a property to the east of Yarloop, in the hills. At that stage, they said that everything was looking okay.

That changed on 7 January, when they began to see smoke getting closer and ash falling from the sky onto their property. At the time, they were unaware that the fire was getting closer to the outskirts of Yarloop. The town water supply was impacted because the electricity supply was cut off, so close to the day of impact of the fires, local Yarloop residents were without water or electricity, which had a significant impact on the response. My auntie and uncle were quite concerned that the fire had drawn very close to their property. Were it not for a water bomber that circled back and dropped water over their property, I am sure and they are sure that their property would have been lost in the fire.

Images of Yarloop appeared on 8 January, which was the day that I woke up to the news that my childhood town had been irreparably impacted on by a bushfire. The images showed empty spaces in places where I knew buildings had previously been. There was rubble and smouldering ash. The losses included the hospital where I was born, and where my father and grandfather had been born. The whole hospital complex was lost to the fire. Every house I ever lived in in Yarloop was also lost in that fire, including the house that we transported down South Western Highway to Station Road. The Yarloop Hall, where my grandparents courted, was also lost. A lot of people in the community had attended dances in that hall over the many, many years of Yarloop's heyday as the hub of the social calendar in Waroona and Yarloop. However, its facade was saved, and I am very pleased to say that it has been rebuilt as the Yarloop Community Resource Centre, as it is today. I thank Julie-Ann, who works at the resource centre, for all the work she did to make sure that the community of Yarloop was supported through this really difficult time.

This might not be news to the member for Forrestfield, but the Yarloop Hotel was an incredibly important place to my dad. As kids, my brother and I sat in the back of our cream Holden Kingswood in the car park of the Yarloop Hotel. We had a mattress in the back of the Kingswood so dad could go in and “see a man about a dog”! We were lucky enough to share a lemonade and a packet of Twisties back in the day while we waited for dad to negotiate the terms of the purchase of the dog. We never actually got the dog, I must say! But dad certainly enjoyed his negotiations at the Yarloop Hotel.

That is not to make light of this situation. It took eight minutes for the town that was so special to me, my dad and my grandparents to be razed to the ground. There were 161 buildings lost in eight minutes. The people who experienced the fire said that all they could see and hear was the roar of an incredible fireball going over their heads.

It passed from the foothills to the coast within eight minutes. I cannot imagine what that would have been like for the people who were there at the time, but I know that an incredible man called Jim Britza from the Harvey Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service was very instrumental in keeping a lot of people safe at the Yarloop oval. I will not go into the details around that, but I know the people of Yarloop are incredibly grateful for his work in keeping them safe.

As I said, the loss of Yarloop was devastating on a personal level. My dad was devastated. I remember calling him and saying, “How are you feeling?” He said, “It’s like I’ve lost a child.” I can only agree that that would be the feeling someone would have in that situation. My nanna was 98 at the time, and in a nursing home in Waroona. They were all ready to evacuate, but they were not sure whether the whole town of Waroona would need to evacuate at that time. The decision was made by my family to not show my nanna the news footage of what had happened to Yarloop. We did not want her to see anything in the paper, either. They had generators for electricity, and things were pretty limited, so keeping that news from her was reasonably easy, but we just knew what the impact would be on her of losing everything she had ever known. She had been brought to Yarloop by her father, who came there to work at the Bunnings mill. They moved there from Menzies in 1919, when my nanna was a baby. I cannot remember the exact story, but I think there was mention of a horse and wheelbarrow bringing all their belongings from Menzies to Yarloop. As a 98-year-old, she did not know anything other than her community, and she had been very involved in the community for years, so we decided that we really did not want her to see any of it until we could take her back to Yarloop and show her, in person, the devastation of what had happened to the community. My aunties Cheryl and Marie took my nanna back through Yarloop to see the devastation, and I think it is probably something that she never really got over. She passed away at the age of 100, and that certainly stayed with her as one of the great sadnesses of her life.

The experiences of people around Yarloop and Waroona were nothing short of harrowing. I can only be incredibly grateful that I was not there. I respect and admire everyone who was there that night who helped and participated in keeping other people safe. As a community, they are incredibly resilient and have really tried to rebuild Yarloop, literally from the ashes. I wish them all the best in the years going forward. I can only imagine what the smell of smoke would do to them every time there is the hint of a bushfire, or the sound of water bombers or helicopters, or even notifications of extreme fire danger. When you talk to people who have lived through that, it is incredibly sobering.

I want to draw attention to the fact that this government knows how incredibly important it is to keep our community safe. I want to start by saying that this government has made a record investment in the emergency services in Western Australia. I want to touch on two points. Firstly, we have made some incredible funding and equipment available to improve PPE for firefighters and the appliances that firefighters tackle fires in. I also want to mention the Koolinup Emergency Services Centre, which is located in Collie. This is an initiative of the McGowan government’s Collie Futures fund. Collie was chosen to serve as a level 3 incident control centre partly because of its location in relation to other areas in the south west. In the high fire season, if appliances are located in Collie, firefighters are already two hours closer to a fire in somewhere like Margaret River than they are if they try to deploy from the city. That is an incredible asset that this government has invested in. I know the people who work there are very proud of what they are doing and their role in the fire portfolio.

I would also like to mention the fact that Frontline Fire and Rescue Equipment is involved in manufacturing a large number of fire appliances within Western Australia. It received some money from the Collie Futures fund to set up a satellite manufacturing facility in Collie. It has been open for about 12 months now. I asked to have a look at the facility as the local member. I went through the facility a couple of weeks ago. I have to say I am incredibly impressed with the manufacturing that is happening in the Collie location. The light manufacturing is occurring in a new warehouse in Collie, as part of the initiatives to employ people in Collie as we diversify our economy away from coal. It has employed 11 full-time people in that particular centre, which is incredible. When I spoke to the manager, they said Frontline is looking to employ up to five extra people to meet the contract to supply the government with appliances because the demand for what it is doing is so great. It was really great to walk in there. There were two ex-students of mine: one is a qualified tradesperson and one is a first-year apprentice. The McGowan government’s investment in the fire and emergency services area is significant and impactful right across the regions in Western Australia. I am told that it is manufacturing broadacre tankers and I believe that there is a very distinct possibility that the manufacturing process of the recent Hithergreen Bush Fire Brigade tankers started in Collie, which is fabulous.

I want to mention some volunteers, who are probably the backbone of regional communities, for their contribution to keeping communities safe. In June, Minister Dawson, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Darren Klemm and I travelled to Beelerup. For those who do not know, Beelerup is a very small locality just outside of Donnybrook. We went there to celebrate four long-serving members at the Beelerup fire station. They were all men, so I can say servicemen. The four members were celebrating a combined 235 years of service to Western Australia. They are four very longstanding members of the Beelerup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and it was incredible to meet with them back in June. Colin Sharp, who is a volunteer firefighter, received a 65-year service medal and certificate. He is the longest-serving member of Beelerup. There was some conjecture about that and it astounds me to think that there was somebody in the brigade who was very close to that. His son Chris Sharp is also a member of the same brigade.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms J.L. HANNS: Bruce Hearman received a 60-year service certificate and medal. His brother Peter Hearman and local legend Tom Sheehan were recognised for 55 years of service. I think that is an incredible testament to the dedication of volunteers keeping their communities safe across regional Western Australia. I would like to thank Colin, Bruce, Peter and Tom very much for their service and efforts. I know that they have families who support them to volunteer and spend time keeping their community safe.

I would also like to very quickly mention the fact that the WA Fire and Emergency Services Awards opened earlier this year and I nominated three individuals and organisations in my electorate. I nominated the Gelorup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade for the firefighting team achievement award and I must say that I am slightly nervous about this. Gelorup are awesome, but they are up against Broome. I am friends with the member for Kimberley and I am not sure how that friendship will end! The member for Roe has also nominated a team. They are the three finalists: Broome, Gelorup and Wagin. It is a battle of the regions for the firefighting team achievement award. I want to place it on record, despite who wins on the evening, that I think Gelorup should absolutely win!

I will say a little bit about the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade. It has around 30 volunteers and its captain, Glenys Malatesta, is an absolute legend. I think she was nominated as the unofficial mayor of Gelorup and I think the ABC featured her recently. Over the last 12 months, people from the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade have assisted with the Bridgetown–Hester timber mill fire, the Collie lightning strikes that occurred this year, the Mandurah–Nambelup fire, and fires in Margaret River, Perth, Busselton and North Boyanup. They spread themselves all over the place. Whenever they are required, they get in their appliances and they are off helping not just their community, but also communities all over Western Australia.

Brigade members are also regular volunteers for community events like food truck nights and local market days. They help pack up, set up and assist with parking and crowd control in their local community. They display good humour and I want to recount a story that I put into the submission to the WAFES Awards. I am sure this will get them across the line! When they were called to get a young child's cat out of a tree, there was discussion between the members who attended about whether to use the ladder or the high-pressure hose. Thankfully, and much to the relief of the cat, they selected the ladder as the preferred method of extraction from the tree and the cat was very safely returned to its owner.

Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade's commitment to its community also extends to community education programs. Just before the fire season commences each year, it holds a community safety program at the station. In 2021, it included the Bunbury State Emergency Service, the Bunbury marine service, DFES Bunbury staff, Capel shire emergency management staff and other local brigades. Over 300 people attended, including local residents and residents from Bunbury, Dalyellup and Dardanup. The brigade advises local residents on how to properly prepare their property for fire season. Its volunteers also go out to individual home owners and landowners to give them targeted advice on how to prepare their firebreaks and prune their trees. This is incredible commitment from absolutely legendary local volunteers who give up their time to help keep their community safe.

I was very pleased to hear that the Gelorup Bush Fire Brigade was awarded more than \$1 million to undertake major upgrades to its station, which will further improve on the grand plans it has for its community. For a bush fire brigade in a small country town, Gelorup volunteers punch well above their weight and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them and all the very dedicated volunteers in my electorate of Collie–Preston. I thank them very much for their support for our community.

I want to go back and again touch on the experiences of people in Yarloop and Waroona and why this particular bill is very important to make sure that we have a national approach to fire danger warnings. As I said, I was in Busselton in 2016 and I saw the smoke and things happening, and the impact of the fire itself in Yarloop. We packed up our caravan in the January of that year, as I had long service leave from the Department of Education. My family and I travelled across to the eastern states, back to one of our favourite places that is not in Western Australia, Apollo Bay, and we travelled the Great Ocean Road. Coincidentally, the Great Ocean Road had already suffered its own bushfires that year and was closed for a time during the period of December–January 2016. It was only when I was reading through the information about the Bush Fires Amendment Bill that I really reflected on the possibility of us being in Apollo Bay, Lorne or Wye River when those fires occurred. If there was a different warning system, it would be really problematic for tourists and visitors to a region or a state.

Reflecting on my experiences, I can absolutely see the merit of a nationally consistent approach, all with the aim of being able to respond to bushfire dangers in a timely fashion to make sure that all our communities are kept safe. I commend this bill to the house.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [6.21 pm]: As is customary for bills such as the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022, we have heard from many members who have country electorates for which emergency management and bushfire control are particularly important. I will make some observations as a member whose electorate is on the urban fringe, but more of that later.

I have had a long-term interest in emergency management. I was fortunate enough to be parliamentary secretary to the minister who introduced the emergency services levy, and we travelled throughout the state talking to volunteers

and career firefighters about the impact the levy would have on resourcing the valuable work that they do. I was then shadow minister for eight years and in that capacity I travelled throughout the state talking to firefighters, the State Emergency Service, Marine Rescue Western Australia and so on. So this is an issue that is close to my heart.

During the course of those discussions and consultations, I also had to absorb the recommendations of both the Keelty report and the Ferguson report and I listened to the representations from the United Firefighters Union and various volunteer organisations. Those reports tell us that clear communication is essential so that everyone understands what the terms mean and can respond in a similar fashion when those particular terms are used. Consistency is incredibly important, and the need for consistent messaging was certainly stressed and emphasised in reports such as the Ferguson and Keelty reports. There also needs to be consistency across state borders. Given that in recent times we have quite often sent firefighters to other states to assist, and vice versa, we all need to be operating in a similar fashion.

Although the scope of this bill is reasonably narrow, it does have much broader implications, and it is important that we all communicate in a consistent way. That said, media hyperbole is never very helpful in this regard. Using the term “catastrophic” in the news bulletin may somewhat diminish or devalue the term, but that is another issue. I just make the point that things tend to escalate in the media. The use of “catastrophic” as a technical term, which is what we will be enacting through this bill, is different from the way that a layperson might use the word. I make that as a general observation.

I want to talk a bit about building resilience in our community. In view of events in the eastern states—the persistent flooding and the bushfire crises that have been prominent there in recent years—I have been reflecting on how we can make our communities more resilient, rather than just responding after the disasters have occurred. There are other financial implications with how we respond to emergencies. For example, I do not know whether it has improved in recent years, but residents in towns like Port Hedland find it very hard to get flood insurance, and I imagine similar stories are coming out of the eastern states. How can we ensure people can make prudent arrangements for their own households and properties when insurance is not readily available?

I am pleased to say that the insurance industry is proceeding down the prevention line, realising that it is cheaper to invest in measures to mitigate the damage. For example, I have had discussions with insurers that were partnering with the Queensland government to invest in levies for places that are particularly vulnerable to flooding. Of course, floods that were described as hundred-year events are suddenly happening on a much more routine basis. This is part of the climate change challenge that we face that relates to not only bushfires but also inundation through floods. I have also visited the delegation of the World Bank in Jakarta, where they were funding projects to minimise flooding.

We need to think a bit more holistically about mitigation, and that was one of the issues we raised there. We also need to think about these challenges and where we deploy our personnel. I tend to think that having only four career stations in regional Western Australia—Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie—is not enough. It may well be that we should think about having career personnel who have more of an SES focus in some of the towns up north. It is fantastic that we have about 20 000 volunteers who assist, but if we are going to meet the challenges, which seem to be arising more regularly, then we need to think about how we deploy our personnel.

In terms of communication, there has always been a bit of an issue about the likelihood of people who live in suburbia being the victims of a bushfire. Some people in suburbia hear the messages on television and on radio, or through Facebook, and assume that it is about the bush and people who live in Toodyay or Margaret River, and it does not apply to them. There may well need to be some refining of the messages for people who live in the outer suburbs, for example. I do not think people in suburbia absorb the messages and prepare as enthusiastically or as completely as people in regional areas who are surrounded by bush.

It also needs to be remembered that a third of our community was born overseas, and half of our community has one parent who was born overseas. I recall being told by someone who lived in Banjup, or somewhere in the southern suburbs, that they had criticised one of their neighbours who spoke Vietnamese, because when there was a doorknock and they were asked to evacuate, they did not do so, and how un-Australian this was. The bottom line is that those residents might not have readily understood what their obligations were, or the urgency of the situation. I have always thought that in those situations, a little card with community languages on it should be handed out to tell people, in a language that is accessible to them, what they should do if they are required to evacuate. That has always been something that has occurred to me for people who are not consumers of mainstream media. Certainly the communications from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services have improved markedly in the last few years.

The other issue that I want to talk to is the emergency services levy. That is very much about equipping our career and volunteer facilities with state-of-the-art appliances. However, more and more people are now paying the maximum rate of levy; therefore, it is arguable that we should set aside a bit more money for fire mitigation. It is also inequitable, because people who live near a career fire station pay a higher rate of ESL than people in the regions, who pay little, if no, ESL but get the benefit of bushfire mitigation that previously was funded out of the former Department of Environment but is now funded out of the ESL. We also need to be mindful that we do not use the increased ESL funds as an excuse to reduce the government’s general appropriation. There is a lot to be done in the mitigation area. I consider that the ESL should be used for mitigation.

The last matter that I want to raise has been the subject of my representations to three ministers, so it does not fill me with any sort of pride or satisfaction that it remains unresolved. I want to relay briefly what I would describe as a Kafkaesque situation. It relates to some young first home buyers, Melissa and Vaughan. They had bought a block of land in my electorate, which, as I said earlier, is in the peri-urban fringe. They put in a planning application, and through a minor technical glitch at the council, it was sent back to them and they were asked to make a couple of amendments. By the time their application got back to the council, the new rules for bushfire attack level assessments had come into force. That meant another expenditure for Melissa and Vaughan of between \$30 000 and \$50 000, and bearing in mind that they are young first home buyers, that was out of their range.

Their block was on an otherwise settled suburban street. However, it was perpendicular to a commercial lot that was on a main arterial road and had been earmarked for future commercial development. However, because that block had not been cleared, the couple were not able to build. As I said, they now face the added burden of having to make quite extensive improvements. While they were waiting for their land to be settled and contemplating what they would do, they were also paying rent for other premises, and they were paying land tax, which the Treasurer has little discretion to remove in any event. As I said, it has a Kafkaesque veneer to it.

We soldiered on. There was extensive correspondence, and various meetings. We managed to secure the services of volunteers, and a bulldozer, to clear the adjacent land. I stress that it was not Melissa and Vaughan's land; it was the neighbouring commercial site. We approached the council with that proposal and asked what attitude it would take if the land was cleared more than was necessary to influence the BAL, and the council came back and said that it would agree to that and would reduce the BAL only if the owners of the commercial site agreed to a permanent easement over the property to enable ongoing maintenance and clearing in future years. This is bearing in mind that it was likely that the commercial premises would be developed in the not-too-distant future. As I wrote in my letter to the council —

Whilst such a suggestion is an attempt to resolve the matter, it is arguable that it goes beyond the powers which a Council can exercise under the *Bushfire Act 1954* and regulations as well as State Planning Policy ...

I then cite those powers —

Under those laws and policy the bushfire control officer can do a number of things including:-

- Issue of clearing permit;
- Postponement of burning;
- Issue of permit for burning;
- Issue of directions to clear fire breaks;
- Take water, remove fences to assist in the extinguishment of a bushfire; &
- Issue notices to clear land.

In addition to those powers the *State Planning policy 3.7* contemplates that a local government body may impose a condition on a land owner.

In other words, nowhere in the *Bushfire Act* is the imposition of a permanent easement on land authorised. Moreover under *State Planning policy 3.7*, the imposition of conditions is permitted for a landowner/applicant not on neighbouring properties.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: As I suggested to the council at the time, the imposition of a permanent easement on the land at 355 Alexander Drive, which is the commercial site, may not be something that the council or even the Department of Fire and Emergency Services can lawfully impose.

That letter was written in May 2019. Melissa and Vaughan were extremely patient, but, despite that, life moves on, and they wanted to get on with things, so they regretfully had to sell the block, no doubt at a much reduced price. The irony is that the commercial development, which was effectively the land that needed to be approved, has since been the subject of a development application to council and has been approved. If Melissa and Vaughan had the resources to wait a few years, they would have been in a better position, but with the land tax and rent and no end in sight, despite the very good efforts of many people, they were unable to build on that site. I raise this matter in the sense that the bushfire attack level was a relatively new system. I think the people who were making the assessments were risk-averse and maybe a little too conservative in their assessment. I actually agree with the whole system and I voted for it in this place, but the property was within 20 metres of a main road, within seven kilometres of Malaga Fire Station, fewer than six kilometres from Wangara Fire Station, 11 kilometres from Duncraig Fire Station, 15 kilometres from Joondalup and Osborne Park Fire Stations, and 14 kilometres from Kiara Fire Station. It is not as though this property was in the middle of nowhere. It had access to a speedy response from fire appliances from all those stations. It was next to a major arterial road—Alexander Drive—but, despite that, the highest assessment was put on the property. This is particularly frustrating because I was told in 2017 that

the Department of Fire and Emergency Services was doing work with the CSIRO to develop a technological solution that would enable a much more precise assessment of bushfire risk on a much smaller scale, which would probably have meant that that particular block may well not have been the subject of this rather broadbrush assessment.

To conclude, as I said, I certainly commend this bill to the house. I consider that there needs to be a refinement of the way we look at bushfire risk and the application of bushfire assessments for building. It is trite to say that the cheapest property is in the peri-urban fringe, but this is where this very crisis arose. We are, of course, subject to much pressure by the building industry to build homes for first home buyers like Vaughan and Melissa, and the cheapest land tends to be on the fringe of the metropolitan area. I would welcome any progression and expedition of what has been a long-term collaboration with the CSIRO to progress, with due expedition, a more sophisticated and refined bushfire assessment process.

MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker) [6.42 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to the debate on the Bush Fires Amendment Bill 2022, and I certainly fully support it. The bill itself contains a number of minor amendments to the Bush Fires Act, but practically and in reality, they are significant changes. We have heard this evening a little bit about the importance of communication. I think that simplifying the fire index and the terminology that is used is a very positive step forward in dealing with what, in my words, would be complacency when it comes to the risk of fire.

I was personally saddened listening to the member for Collie–Preston talk about what happened at Yarloop, but to go and actually physically see it as well was quite devastating. I remember that in 2016, I was on holiday in Kalbarri and everything blew up very quickly. The fire, as the member said, was started by lightning strikes in an area that we would not have thought would have created anywhere near the devastation that it did. The fire jumped the highway and razed Yarloop in a short time. I remember some of the commentary by, I think, Phil Penny, who was the chief bushfire control officer at the time. He demanded resources because of the issue of water supply. As a result of the fire going through the town, it could not be accessed for quite a while, but people could go down the South Western Highway through Yarloop and see that people’s houses—your house—were just not there.

I grew up in Harvey and spent a lot of my time playing sport in Yarloop, so a lot of the places there are quite close to my heart. I worked at Wagerup for a good 10 or 11 years with the member for Collie–Preston’s dad. I would say that some of it was pretty close personally. Like Col, I certainly enjoyed Yarloop Hotel! Quite often we stopped in there on the way home from work and had a couple of beers and played a lot of sport at the back of the tavern, so we were always at the back of the hotel and the shops. When the town opened up and we could get through to look at it—they were letting only residents in there for a while—I saw the devastation and the things that were gone. That was really surprising. It was the first place that I had been to that was severely impacted by bushfire where buildings had been lost to that degree. I was with Senator Glenn Sterle and a gentleman who was visiting by the name of Didier Pontzele, who works for the Belgian War Graves Service. Previously, we had been to the Western Front in Belgium, Ypres and Menin Gate with a group of Darling Range Sports College students. Didier was tied up with all that. He was visiting us and we went to Yarloop for Anzac Day in 2016. That was quite a surreal and sad moment. The whole town came out for that. It was wonderful to see the resilience of the people of Yarloop. It is one of those places, like any country small town, where the people who live there love it and the people who drive through it wonder why people live there.

Ms J.L. Hanns: I actually met Didier on the Western Front in Belgium. There we go.

Mr S.J. PRICE: He is a lovely man and does an amazing job. For members who do not know about the Belgian War Graves Service, it is funded by the commonwealth and is still finding bodies of Australian soldiers on the Western Front. The bodies are exhumed and put in one of the many, many graveyards that are around the area. It is fabulous work that still goes on today. It is amazing that farmers tilling their fields will come across a body. It is horrendous to think about, but a process is in place to collect them and honour them, which is wonderful.

I make this contribution as an ex–volunteer bush fire fighter. I used to be the captain of the West Dardanup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade down in Dardie for a while and I was the deputy chief fire control officer down there for a little bit as well. I had a bit to do with bushfires, but, subsequent to that, when I went to work for the Australian Workers’ Union, I was responsible for looking after all the Department of Environment and Conservation guys and girls at the time—the conservation workers—who did all the prescribed burning and firefighting work. They looked after all the crown land and forests and everything that we have. I had a lot to do with them. It is interesting that we continue to learn about dealing with fire behaviour, and certainly climate change is having a significant impact on the behaviour we are seeing on all sorts of weather patterns these days. In particular, the fires are certainly getting much larger than they used to be and are taking longer to control.

As I mentioned before, I come from Harvey. Harvey was pretty much a forestry town when I was growing up. That was a big part of the town. People either worked in forestry or at the abattoirs—one of the two. Unfortunately, quite often people would be killed. The dad of someone you went to school with would be killed dropping a tree for the forestry operation or whatever, so you grew up knowing the danger of the bush.

Back in the late 1990s, early 2000s, CSIRO ran a big research project called Project Vesta, which was about trying to understand the behaviour of bushfires. The researchers went to locations with certain types of fuel loadings; for

example, we have different fuel loadings in the jarrah forest versus the Swan coastal plain versus the karri forests down south. The researchers went to different areas and lit fires and monitored them and recorded the behaviour and tried to make changes to the way we deal with bushfires. Project Vesta did a section of the forest in Harvey. Interestingly, when I was preparing for this debate, I saw a press release that came out from the CSIRO on 2 November 2007 that states —

The findings of Australia's most extensive study to date of the behaviour of high-intensity bushfires in eucalypt forests—Project Vesta—provides valuable new tools and information for fire managers across Australia.

Officially released today in Perth by the Western Australian Environment and Climate Change Minister, Mr David Templeman ...

One of the key things that came out of Project Vesta was the term “dead man zone”. If members have seen a picture of a fire, they will know that it is like a teardrop. It has a small front and big flanks and then it goes into a tail. Project Vesta identified one of the biggest risks to firefighters. They come off the flanks to attack the head and they do not go in front of the fire, but if there is a wind change, the flank becomes the head fire. That is a longer distance, so it becomes more volatile and risky. The project came up with methods of avoiding the dead man zone. It was a very important change to the way people handle fire and suppress fire, especially bushfires, in different topography with different types of fuel loading.

Unfortunately, part of my other experience when I was looking after the Department of Environment and Conservation firefighters was with a fire in Albany called the Black Cat Creek fire. That was on 12 October 2012, which is nearly 10 years ago. That fire was in a particularly tricky place in Kalgan. It was said that the area potentially had not been burned for 50 or 60-odd years. The weather conditions on the day were a bit tricky and it was in a difficult place high up on a hill. The unfortunate end result was that some vehicles and some DEC people got caught in a burn-over, and one in particular got burnt quite severely. Her name was Wendy Bearfoot. I met Wendy. I actually signed her up to the union. I started looking after the DEC guys in about 2007 or 2008. Albany was somewhere I liked to use to go all the time. There was Wendy; she was great. “Peno”, Tim—a few of the guys had been there for a while and had a good experience with dealing with fire in the area. They were all caught up in the fire. Four people were injured that day, unfortunately. Wendy got severely burnt, and about three weeks later she ended up dying from her injuries. Unfortunately, they got caught in the dead man zone and the emergency equipment on the trucks at that time was not really good enough. From that, the investigation determined that we need to put a lot more safety equipment into the vehicles that we operate with our DEC and volunteer bush fire brigade guys to give them the best possible chance of survival should they get caught in a situation like that. These were experienced firefighters who got caught in a burn-over. They knew a weather change was coming. They knew the terrain they were in. They had a plan. Unfortunately, the wind changed before they could execute the plan, and they got caught. But if they had had the equipment that we are now providing all our volunteer and career firefighters and our Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions people, they would have survived.

The positive part of the story is that after Wendy got killed, a review was undertaken that identified all the additional equipment that needs to be put onto the vehicles. Today, in our caucus meeting, we heard a conversation about—we are not supposed to talk about what happens in caucus—new fire equipment, a light tanker, at the Karnup volunteer fire brigade. They have sprays, curtains, filters, air cleaners and all the stuff that they have identified that the machines need. It has taken 10 years to get there, but to hear that all this equipment is now being used and instigated as part of what we do is wonderful. It is a credit to everyone in the department who followed through in making sure that we do all this. It is an unfortunate situation. We do not have it happen very often, but as long as we learn and improve things when mistakes happen, we continue to do good stuff.

Coming back to the bill, this change is a simple and smart change. There are some questions about the application of it, but I think it is very clear. There are some great volunteer firefighters in the City of Kalamunda. The City of Kalamunda has one of the highest fire danger ratings. My advice to people is: leave early. Pack up. Have a plan. Leave early because if you think you are going to have time to do something when it is happening, you will not.

I live in Wattle Grove, which is in the foothills of Kalamunda, so I am not at the top of the hill, but that area of the city has a dense tree canopy; the whole of Forrestfield, Kalamunda and High Wycombe have a beautiful amount of trees. It is a very old, established place, so the fire risk in that area is quite significant. The City of Kalamunda has been quite diligent in the last couple of years in ensuring that everyone abides by the hazard reduction requirements in the area, which has been great. There has been only one fire of any significance in the last couple of years, which started at the foot of Lesmurdie Falls and raced up the hill to Kalamunda—very fast. If there had not been the aerial support that we now have to contain that fire, properties would certainly have been lost very quickly. Once again, it is about ensuring that we provide the most adequate equipment for all our volunteers. It is important that we have proper plans and processes in place. The aerial support we have now is absolutely brilliant.

When I was a volunteer firefighter, we were starting to get aerial support. I think we had maybe four bombers in the state. There were two in Perth and I think one in Manjimup and maybe another one down south. Depending where the fire went, they all went. If we had more than one fire going at one stage, it was very difficult. Now we have the

supertanker, the big helicopter—whatever that is called—the small helicopters and the water bombers. We have a lot of aerial support for the people on the ground who are at the face of it all. We have to continue to make sure we do that, and one of the biggest thing we have to make sure of is that the firefighters do not have to worry about residents.

If people are in their way, there are people who need to be evacuated or they have to take care of something additional, it takes them away from what they should be doing. Everyone who lives in those sorts of areas needs to make sure that they have a plan. They need to make sure that everyone in their family knows the plan and they need to activate it early, because once the road is closed or the fire is upon them, it is very hard to get out amongst everything. Avoiding that situation is the best possible outcome.

The other part to this, of course, is ensuring that everyone is aware of the changes. Making sure that there is a good education program for this is extremely important. Having a clear understanding about what the changes in language will mean or the changes in the four ratings will have as an impact, for example, on vehicle movement, is very important, because fires do not happen by themselves. No-one intentionally goes out to light a fire. Most people do not intentionally go out to light a fire. Predominantly, they are an accidental outcome that people do not think about or did not intend to happen. As long as we can mitigate the number of times that happens, that is a good step forward.

More and more people are living in places where they never used to. The risk of accidental ignition happens as a natural result of population spread. It is important that we educate people. Everyone has gone for their little tree change. People are coming out of the city and are going to live in regional areas. They may not have a good understanding of the risks associated with living in those particular areas, especially as our weather patterns change. As mentioned earlier, we manage fire risk very well in WA. Our Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions guys are the best at what they do when it comes to prescribed burning and making sure that we have the appropriate matrix of fire fuel loadings across the high-risk areas in WA. Unfortunately, for those people who do not like the smoke coming across the city, bush smoke is a much better smell than house smoke. A structural fire is worse for them. We need to do what we can to ensure that people are aware as much as possible about the requirements when it comes to these changes. On that, I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms C.M. Rowe**.

House adjourned at 7.02 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

HEALTH — LEGIONELLA

386. Ms L. Mettam to the Minister for Health:

- (1) How many Legionella cases have been recorded in Western Australia (by hospital) in each of the following years:
- (a) 2019–2020;
 - (b) 2020–2021; and
 - (c) 2021–to date?
- (2) For each of the above years, how many of the cases:
- (a) Were suspected or confirmed to be contracted at the hospital; and
 - (b) Resulted in death?
- (3) For each of the above years, how many patients have received treatment for suspected or confirmed contamination of Legionella?

Ms A. Sanderson replied:

- (1) (a) 2019–2020;

Legionella pneumophila notifications by health service of diagnosing clinician and financial year, WA, 1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020

Health Service	2019/20
Albany Health Campus	1
Bunbury Hospital	2
Donnybrook Medical Services	1
Exmouth Hospital	1
Fiona Stanley Hospital	4
Geraldton Regional Hospital	1
Hollywood Private Hospital	1
Joondalup Health Campus*	3
Moora Hospital	1
Peel Health Campus	1
Rockingham Hospital	1
Royal Perth Hospital	2
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital	1
Forensic Pathology**	1
Total	21
Source: Data extracted from the WA Notifiable Infectious Disease Database (WANIDD) using date of specimen	

Notes: The health service affiliated with the requesting clinician indicates where the case attended for management. *Data does not distinguish between public and private hospital. **Legionella notifications recorded against Forensic Pathology may subsequently be allocated to another hospital site.

- (b) 2020–2021;

Legionella pneumophila notifications by health service of diagnosing clinician and financial year, WA, 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2021

Health Service	2020/21
Broome Hospital	1
Bunbury Hospital	2
Fiona Stanley Hospital	2

Geraldton Regional Hospital	1
Joondalup Health Campus*	4
Peel Health Campus	1
Rockingham Hospital	1
Royal Perth Hospital	1
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital	3
Forensic Pathology**	1
SJOG Hospital – Midland*	2
Total	19
Source: Data extracted from the WA Notifiable Infectious Disease Database (WANIDD) using date of specimen	

Notes: The health service affiliated with the requesting clinician indicates where the case attended for management. *Data does not distinguish between public and private hospital. **Legionella notifications recorded against Forensic Pathology may subsequently be allocated to another hospital site.

(c) 2021–to date?

Legionella pneumophila notifications by health service of diagnosing clinician and financial year, WA, 1 July 2021 – 28 March 2022

Health Service	2021/To Date
Broome Hospital	1
Bunbury Hospital	1
Joondalup Health Campus*	2
Jupiter Health	1
Kalgoorlie Health Campus	1
Kununurra Hospital	1
Perth Children’s Hospital	1
Royal Perth Hospital	1
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital	1
Forensic Pathology**	2
SJOG Hospital – Midland*	2
Total	14
Source: Data extracted from the WA Notifiable Infectious Disease Database (WANIDD) using date of specimen	

Notes: The health service affiliated with the requesting clinician indicates where the case attended for management. *Data does not distinguish between public and private hospital. **Legionella notifications recorded against Forensic Pathology may subsequently be allocated to another hospital site.

(2) Data sourced from the Health Service Providers.

- (a) 2019–20 One.
 2020–21 Nil.
 2021–22 (July–December 2021) One.

(b) For patients considered in response to 2a: One patient from 2021–22 (July–December 2021).

(3) Data have been sourced from Hospital Morbidity Data Collection, and may not be directly relatable to data sourced from the WA Notifiable Infectious Disease Database.

	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22 to date (Jul–Dec 2021)
Total	25	31	17

A count of the number of separations where the primary reason for being in hospital is due to confirmed or suspected Legionella has been provided. This may include a patient more than once if they have had multiple inpatient stays with a principal diagnosis of Legionella.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — REGULATION AND SUPPORT

532. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Has the Department of Local Government reviewed how it gathers, records and reports information to maintain an up to date Local Government sector risk assessment, and if not, why not?
- (2) If Yes to (1),:
 - (a) When was the review completed;
 - (b) Who conducted the review; and
 - (c) Will the Minister table a copy of the review, and if not, why not?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a)–(b) The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) engaged RiskWest in March 2020 to develop a risk assessment matrix and assist with the development of risk profiles for local government, including a risk profiling/ assessment methodology. RiskWest completed the work to establish the risk profiling tool in November 2021.
- (c) A report summarising the results of the risk assessment work conducted in late 2021.

[See tabled paper no [1317](#).]

The full risk profiling database contains sensitive and personal data about individual councils, and is therefore not suitable for tabling. However, the DLGSC is available to provide the member with a confidential briefing on this work, if required.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — REGULATION AND SUPPORT

533. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Has the Department targeted its regulation and support activities to areas of highest risk with regard to the potential benefits to improved outcomes across the Local Government sector, and if not, why not?
- (2) If Yes to (1),:
 - (a) How has the department done this;
 - (b) What are the areas of highest risk;
 - (c) What are the identified potential benefits; and
 - (d) What are the improved outcomes?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) formally adopted a Local Government Risk Assessment Policy on 22 December 2021. This sets DLGSC’s approach to monitoring and compliance, which targets its resources towards local governments that present the highest risk.

DLGSC monitors and proactively engages with at-risk local governments to ensure they meet their compliance obligations under the Act as a mechanism to set the standard for good governance across the sector.

As part of DLGSC’s targeted regulatory approach, a divisional team meets on a regular basis to discuss and implement early intervention tactics depending on the level of non-compliance and/or risk profile of a local government.

DLGSC has also been proactive in preventative and educational measures to manage risks within local governments. In support of its improved regulatory approach, over the last twelve months the DLGSC has delivered a range of education and information programs. This has included educational approaches including multi agency site visit briefings by the DLGSC and other public sector integrity bodies, such as the Public Sector Commission, the Corruption and Crime Commission and Office of the Auditor General.

Further, the Government’s proposed local government reforms have been developed to provide a greater range of early intervention powers, and address current limitations of the *Local Government Act 1995*. These reforms, including the establishment of a Local Government

Inspector and Monitors, have been designed to provide a greater range of tools to address issues within local governments, and improve and clarify intervention powers. These reforms will further improve the regulation and support of local government in Western Australia.

- (b) While the areas of highest risk vary from council to council, current trends relate to governance, leadership, financial management, and organisational culture.
- (c)–(d) The benefits and improved outcomes of DLGSC’s targeted regulatory approach include:
 - earlier detection of issues in local governments and the application of early intervention action to prevent issues from escalating and/or reoccurring;
 - setting sector-wide standards for what is expected of local governments; and
 - better capacity building for local governments to better enable them to meet their obligations under the *Local Government Act 1995* for the good government of their districts.

These benefits, particularly time and cost savings for ratepayers through earlier intervention and resolution of issues within local governments, is also a core focus of the State Government’s proposed package of local government reforms.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — REGULATION AND SUPPORT

534. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) Has the department clearly defined its Local Government regulation and support objectives, deliverables and targets, and if not, why not?
- (2) If Yes to (1):
 - (a) How has the department done this;
 - (b) What are the defined regulations;
 - (c) What are the support objectives;
 - (d) What are the deliverables; and
 - (e) What are the targets?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (1)–(2) The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) has clearly defined its local government regulation and support objectives, deliverables and targets in the Local Government Portfolio Plan on a Page (Local Government Plan) that was developed in consultation with sector stakeholders and launched to the sector in November 2021. The Plan is publicly available on the DLGSC website at: <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/department/publications/publication/local-government-portfolio>

The Local Government Plan sets the direction of the DLGSC in the short, medium and long term. It outlines three strategic priorities, which are supported by 22 actions. The strategic priority objectives are:

Deliver a streamlined and contemporary legislative framework by reforming the *Local Government Act 1995* and other relevant legislation.

Develop the supporting environment and provide local governments with the tools to build a transparent, robust and innovative sector.

Deliver on current commitments of existing projects and programs of reform.

The 22 actions range across policy areas, and some actions will sequentially follow others. For instance, future changes to the reporting framework established through the MyCouncil website will not occur until work to improve financial reporting under the State Government’s local government reform package is completed and operational.

In accordance with its support objectives, the DLGSC has increased in-person visits to local councils, with the aim of providing advice, building capability and strengthening networks between DLGSC and the sector.

DLGSC has also led the introduction of combined agency briefings, in which senior representatives from the Corruption and Crime Commission, Office of the Auditor General, Public Sector Commission, State Records Office and the department provide presentations to councils on important conduct and integrity matters. These briefings provided a unique opportunity for State agencies to deliver information, advice and support to council members.

It is important that DLGSC is able to prioritise regulation and support activities according to the specific context of risks and emergent issues within the local government sector. However, certain functions administered or supported by DLGSC – such as the Local Government Standards Panel – may have discrete objectives, targets, or metrics which are reported in annual reports.

While DLGSC has been focusing its current and short-term regulation and support functions, the McGowan Government's proposed package of local government reforms will significantly transform the system of local government support and oversight in Western Australia.

The establishment of the proposed Local Government Inspector, and the range of associated early intervention tools and mechanisms, will restructure the oversight and enforcement of the *Local Government Act 1995* and its regulations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT — REGULATION AND SUPPORT

535. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) What robust performance monitoring measures has the department introduced since April 2021?
- (2) When were those measures introduced?
- (3) How were these measures communicated to staff, local governments and other key stakeholders?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (1)–(2) The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) has clearly defined its local government regulation and support objectives, deliverables and targets in the Local Government Portfolio Plan on a Page (Local Government Plan) that was developed in consultation with sector stakeholders and launched to the sector in November 2021. The Plan is publicly available on the DLGSC website at: <https://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/department/publications/publication/local-government-portfolio>

The Local Government Plan sets the direction of the department in the short, medium and long term. It outlines three strategic priorities, which are supported by 22 actions.

The 22 actions range across policy areas, and some actions will sequentially follow others. For instance, future changes to the reporting framework established through the MyCouncil website will not occur until work to improve financial reporting under the State Government's local government reform package is completed and operational.

It is important that DLGSC is able to prioritise activities according to the specific context of risks and emergent issues within the local government sector. However, certain functions administered or supported by DLGSC – such as the Local Government Standards Panel – may have discrete objective, targets, or metrics which are reported in annual reports.

While DLGSC has been focusing its current and short-term regulation and support functions, the McGowan Government's proposed package of local government reforms will significantly transform the system of local government support and oversight in Western Australia.

- (3) The DLGSC communicates with local governments regularly with 39 LG Alerts (email notification for local governments in respect to specific subject matters) distributed since April 2021. Five editions of the Local Matters newsletter and twelve news articles relevant to performance monitoring of local governments have been published on the DLGSC website within the same timeframe.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT — REFORM

536. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the government's intention to release a green bill for local government reform, and ask:

- (a) When does the Minister expect to release the green bill;
- (b) What is the purpose of the green bill;
- (c) Will there be any public input to the green bill before it is released; and
- (d) Will the green bill encompass the various reform proposed in the Local Government Reforms report?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (a)–(d) On 10 November 2021, the State Government announced a significant package of reforms to the system of local government in Western Australia. A detailed list of more than forty reform proposals, grouped in six themes, was open for public comment from 10 November 2021 to 25 February 2022.

This consultation has informed the Government's work to progress this legislation, which the Government intends to introduce as soon as practicable.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT — REFORM

537. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Local Government:

I refer to the "Local Government Reforms – Summary of Proposed Reforms" released by the Minister, and ask:

- (a) What was the extent of public input into the report; and
- (b) By what means was public input into the report attained?

Mr J.N. Carey replied:

- (a)–(b) This document was developed for the purpose of undertaking public consultation on the McGowan Government’s proposed local government reforms. The document was designed to assist any interested party to make comments on reform proposals.

The package of reforms proposed for the local government sector was developed last year, based on a significant body of prior work and consultation, including the findings of:

- The Local Government Act Review (conducted by DLGSC between 2017–2020);
- The Local Government Panel Final Report (2020);
- The City of Perth Inquiry Report (2020);
- The Select Committee into Local Government Report (2020); and
- Direct engagement with the local government sector and the community.

The package of reform proposals was open for public comment from 10 November 2021 to 25 February 2022. Over 200 submissions were received, and have been reviewed and considered.

The final package of reform proposals was released on 3 July 2022.

An expanded document, as well as further background and a Questions and Answers document on the proposed Local Government Inspector and Monitors, are available on Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries website. Public submissions have also been published on this website, if the author of the submission has consented.

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES**539. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Energy:**

I refer to power supply interruptions on Western Power’s network during 2020–21, and ask:

- (a) With respect to the CBD area:
- (i) How many customers had interruptions of fewer than 30 minutes;
 - (ii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 30 to 59 minutes;
 - (iii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 60 to 119 minutes; and
 - (iv) How many customers had interruptions lasting 120 minutes or more;
- (b) For the Perth metropolitan area excluding the CBD:
- (i) How many customers had interruptions of fewer than 60 minutes;
 - (ii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 60 to 159 minutes; and
 - (iii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 160 minutes or more;
- (c) For Western Power’s rural customers:
- (i) How many customers had interruptions of fewer than 60 minutes;
 - (ii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 60 to 120 minutes;
 - (iii) How many customers had interruptions lasting 120 to 289 minutes; and
 - (iv) How many customers had interruptions lasting 290 to 600 minutes;
- (d) For Western Power’s Perth customers, including the CBD:
- (i) How many customers had 1 to 4 interruptions; and
 - (ii) How many customers had 5 to 8 interruptions; and
- (e) For Western Power’s rural customers:
- (i) How many customers had 1 to 5 interruptions;
 - (ii) How many customers had 6 to 10 interruptions; and
 - (iii) How many customers had 10 to 15 interruptions?

Mr W.J. Johnston replied:

- (a) (i) 987
(ii) 182
(iii) 63
(iv) 658

- (b) (i) 370,220
- (ii) 301,089
- (iii) 238,967
- (c) (i) 208,843
- (ii) 118,860
- (iii) 146,630
- (iv) 86,908
- (d) (i) 532,103
- (ii) 42,318
- (e) (i) 227,289
- (ii) 43,087
- (iii) 11,603

AQWEST — PAYMENTS

540. Dr D.J. Honey to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the Aqwest annual report for 2020–21 which shows, for the past two years, 2019–20 and 2020–21, profit before tax of \$3,782,293 and \$2,579,258 respectively, income tax payments of \$1,274,918 and \$1,184,168, and dividend payments of \$2,613,508 and \$2,110,186, and ask:

- (a) Can the Minister ascertain from Aqwest why its accounts show it paid more in income tax and dividends than the profit generated in the past two years;
- (b) Can the Minister ascertain from Aqwest an explanation as to why its income tax payments are more than 30% of its bottom line profit meaning it is paying more tax than corporate tax rate requires;
- (c) If the tax and dividend payments are not correct, will the Minister take action to have Treasury refund any erroneous over payment, and if not, why not; and
- (d) Why is Aqwest receiving operating subsidies when it is a profitable business without an obvious need for financial assistance?

Mr D.J. Kelly replied:

- (a) Aqwest's profit before tax does not correlate with dividend or tax payments due to:

The current year's dividend payments based on the prior year's operating profit; and

As reported in Aqwest's annual report for 2021, Notes 8.8.1 c), there is a timing difference between the income tax expense reported, and income tax calculated on the profit before tax. The timing difference is predominantly caused due to the difference between accounting depreciation rates and tax rates.

- (b) As per above (a), there is a timing difference between the income tax expense and the calculated tax expense based on the statutory rate of 26% (2021). Aqwest is eligible for the base rate entity tax rate (26% in 2021) compared to the company tax rate due to the turnover being less than \$50 million in 2019.
- (c) Not applicable.
- (d) Operating subsidies are paid to Aqwest in accordance with the Water Corporations Act 1995 whereby in Part 3 Div 1 s30 – the Corporation is to act on commercial principles. These payments reimburse Water Corporations for the costs of carrying out activities directed by Government which they would not elect to do on a commercial basis.

As outlined in Appendix 8 of Budget Paper No. 3 of the 2022–23 Budget, currently operating subsidies are paid for the provision of concessions to pensioners and seniors.

