

## PREMIER'S STATEMENT

### *Consideration*

Resumed from 15 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary)** [9.28 am]: I rise to continue my comments that I commenced yesterday just before the adjournment. At the time we adjourned, I had spent a bit of time talking about the fantastic celebrations that we had in my electorate of Mirrabooka for Lunar New Year, particularly the celebrations of the Vietnamese community in welcoming the new year. For them, it is the beginning of the year of the precious cat, rather than the year of the rabbit, which is obviously being celebrated more broadly by many of the cultures that celebrate Lunar New Year.

I now want to talk in more detail about some of the work happening in the electorate and the fantastic things occurring, particularly in schools. Members will know that I often like to talk about the great things happening in the schools of the Mirrabooka electorate. Today, I want to spend a bit of time reflecting on some of the things that we have achieved and that our schools are delivering.

Firstly, I want to spend a bit of time talking about science labs. In November last year I was very excited to officially open the new STEM classroom at Rawlinson Primary School. I was delighted to see some experiments and the learning being done in this fantastic new facility. I was very pleased to meet STEM teacher Mrs Pam Siu and see how she has been able to engage students using these new facilities that are designed to encourage collaboration, experimentation and reflection as part of facilitating learning. I was also delighted to meet some of the then year 6 students at the school and see them working in this new environment and with the equipment in the facility. I was also very happy to have the chance to meet their parents. We were all very excited about this new learning space. There is no doubt that this is a tremendous asset to the Rawlinson Primary School. I have no doubt that these new facilities and the new approach to learning that it supports will make a significant contribution to students' educational outcomes at Rawlinson Primary School. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the principal, Darryl Dedman, and all his staff for their great work. I encourage them to continue to use this new facility and get the most out of it.

I am incredibly proud of the McGowan Labor government's investment in science and STEM facilities in our schools in not only the Mirrabooka electorate, but also right around the state. Last weekend, we marked the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. We reflected on what we need to do collectively to encourage more girls to study STEM subjects at school and university, and hopefully encourage them to also pursue careers in this area. Our agenda of increasing access to science labs and STEM facilities in primary and high schools is an important way for us to be able to achieve that. In my electorate, the McGowan government has already converted classrooms to science labs in Hudson Park, Roseworth, Boyare, North Balga, Dryandra and Koondoola Primary Schools. Funding has also been committed to convert classrooms to science labs at Balga and Warriapendi Primary Schools. We have also committed funding to help schools purchase new equipment. The schools in my electorate to benefit from that are Burbridge School, Gladys Newton School, Marangaroo Primary School and the Roseworth Education Support Centre. Our government is committed to making sure that our students have the skills and knowledge they need to equip them for the jobs of the future. Engaging with and learning about science, technology, engineering and mathematics in first-class facilities in their primary school years is one way to make sure that our young people are prepared for the future of work.

Our government is not just investing in STEM facilities at a range of schools around Western Australia. I have previously spoken in this place about how I am looking forward to seeing the new performing arts centre at the Balga Senior High School take shape. Of course, all new facilities at schools are welcome, but Balga Senior High School has made a long-term commitment to help its students find ways to stay engaged at school and succeed. That is often the first challenge for the people who work at Balga Senior High School. This is about providing students with the opportunity to not just apply themselves to the subjects that are traditionally referred to as the three Rs, but also develop their skills and passions in other areas, which is one way to ensure that students stay engaged in learning. One great example of the kind of work being done at Balga Senior High School is the Proud Noongar Boys. I want to give a special shout-out to the students at Balga Senior High School who are part of the rap group called the Proud Noongar Boys. Last year they won the 2022 Triple J Unearthed High Indigenous Initiative award for their song *Get UP Stand UP Show UP*. It is a song that celebrates the NAIDOC theme from 2022, so people might be familiar with the refrain. The group was put together through a collaboration between students that included Domain Culbong and year 11 student Aries Ngo, the Aboriginal cultural and language program, a local rap artist Joshua "Flewnt" Eggington, students from the school's enterprise music program and vocals coach Samantha Samuels. The collaboration involved a significant number of students in the school. The group was recognised by not only Triple J, but also the City of Stirling at its NAIDOC awards last year when it was named Aboriginal Youth Performers of the Year. I am incredibly proud of the Proud Noongar Boys. I think their music is excellent and I encourage

members to take the time to google them and listen to some of the music that they have produced. Everyone in our community is so proud of them and I cannot wait to see what they do next. I want to particularly give them a shout-out and congratulate them for their work, and also the Balga Senior High School for its support in bringing this program to life.

I want to share another good news story from my electorate of Mirrabooka that relates to the Waddington Primary School in Koondoola. Just recently I had the opportunity to attend, along with the Minister for Education, Tony Buti, the launch of the 12 Buckets program at the Waddington Primary School. The program recently extended its services to Waddington Primary School. It has been a number of years since the program has been able to expand its services. I know that the principal of Waddington Primary School, Jemima Tomlinson, and the whole school community is incredibly excited to offer this additional support to their students. The launch was attended by a number of local councillors from the Cities of Stirling and Wanneroo, as well as a large network of community organisations and supporters that have been part of the 12 Buckets success. It is a mentoring program that relies on volunteer mentors who meet regularly with students who, because of adverse childhood experiences or trauma, may be at greater risk of disruptive behaviour or disengagement, or otherwise at risk educationally. These volunteer mentors work with the students to build a relationship and help them grow in confidence and resilience. They focus on four key areas of development: generosity, mastery, belonging and independence. I was really pleased to have the opportunity at the launch to meet Travis Fitch, who commenced the program in around 2010. He was, essentially, motivated to start the 12 Buckets program because he saw a need in the local community and he wanted to do something that would make a difference to young people in our community. I particularly want to commend him for his foresight. I think that at the time he started the program, he perhaps could not have imagined that it would grow to be the significant support that it is today. All five schools that participate in the 12 Buckets program are in my Mirrabooka electorate: Balga, North Balga, Koondoola and Boyare Primary Schools. Now Waddington Primary School has been added to that list. We are very grateful to have their support and services. With a high number of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds living in my community in Mirrabooka, the 12 Buckets program provides invaluable support to ensure that students remain engaged with learning and have a trusted relationship with an individual who helps them to build their confidence and resilience and to remain engaged with learning during those incredibly important primary school years. I want to take this opportunity to thank the CEO Nicki McKenzie and all her staff and the many volunteers who contribute to this successful program. I know it is highly regarded by the school community in Mirrabooka and it is providing important support to the students who need it most.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** I want to report to the house another exciting development that has occurred since we were last here, and that is that the \$47.9 million redevelopment of the TAFE Balga campus has begun. In December, I was really delighted to be able to attend the turning of the first sod of the North Metropolitan TAFE Balga campus. This is such an important and significant project for the Mirrabooka community and I know that we are all very excited to see it take shape. It is a major redevelopment of that campus, which was built in the 1970s. It will include a new three-storey building that will replace 22 run-down transportable classrooms. This specialist teaching block will be used to deliver training across a wide range of areas, including some critical areas for our economy, such as building and construction, electrical trades, English, and, importantly for my community, adult migrant education. It will have a mix of modern learning spaces, including technology-enabled classrooms and computer labs, and it will have a large future trades training workshop to accommodate smart building and the emerging construction technologies that we know will become so important in the future. The ground floor will have a modern library, a reception, student services and other amenities, and, importantly, it will house the Balga jobs and skills centre, which is an important initiative of the McGowan government to connect the community with free advice on training and employment opportunities. The redevelopment of the Balga TAFE will be a great benefit to the people who live in my electorate, providing a world-class training facility on their doorstep, but it will also provide great benefits to the young people in our community in Western Australia more broadly who are looking to get a trade qualification in some of our most critical industries. It will ensure that young people and those looking to make career transitions can get the skills they need to support our critical industries so that they can grow and thrive and support our economy into the future.

I am a great supporter of the TAFE system and I have spoken here before about its importance. Not only does it provide educational and vocational training outcomes for young people or those seeking career transitions, but it is also an essential component of making sure that our industries have access to the skilled people that they need. For many years, TAFE has been a key mechanism to facilitate people into employment, and jobs remain a key concern. Even in this time of low unemployment rates, jobs and access to skilled, well-paid jobs remains a key concern for the people I represent in Mirrabooka. As I have said, TAFE is very important for not only school leavers who choose not to go to university, but also people who are looking to make a career change or re-enter the workforce after a career break. Often, those people are women who have had a break from the workforce to have children.

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Any measures that make TAFE more accessible and affordable are a really good idea and it is really important to support them. TAFE is not just good for individuals; it is good for industry and our economy.

I was particularly excited by the announcement last year that the McGowan Labor government and the Albanese federal government have signed an agreement to extend the fee-free TAFE courses, and that announcement has been very well received in my electorate of Mirrabooka. These free places will provide opportunities for a significant number of people to be able to access TAFE in 2023. The new Free in '23 initiative will cover course fees for 58 full-time TAFE qualifications and course and resource fees for 56 different skill sets. These are great initiatives that come on top of the extensive work that has already been done to repair the TAFE system. The Minister for Training spent some time in question time yesterday outlining that when the McGowan government was elected in 2017, there was much work to be done to repair the wreckage that the former Liberal–National government had left in our most important TAFE and training system. One thing that we have done is reduce course fees. Again, the people I represent continue to be very grateful and thankful and recognise the significance of this. Reducing course fees for 210 priority courses by up to 72 per cent was a significant step that this government took to help repair the wreckage that had been left and to encourage people back into training after the former Liberal–National government had gutted the TAFE system. They gutted it by increasing course fees by over 500 per cent, and some of those increases occurred in key skill areas in which we need people to enter the workforce to help those industries that have critical shortages.

Annual enrolments in TAFE under the former government's watch fell by 25 000 people. I think this really highlights the significant difference between the work of this government and the opposition. This government is getting on with the hard work of repairing in many cases the damage that has been left by the former Liberal–National government. I know that speakers before me have talked about the work that has been done on budget repair to ensure that we have the funds we need to be able to support the Western Australian economy and community. Indeed, the Liberal–National government left a massive deficit. That hard work of deficit repair has been done by this government. Now our budget figures and our economy are the envy of every other state in Australia and many other people in the world, as I think the member for Collie–Preston explained so clearly yesterday. It is very true in respect of TAFE and training. The former Liberal–National government gutted the system and did not care about the consequences of the decisions it made. Those decisions had consequences for not only everyday working people, but also industry as well. That did not stop the former government from undertaking the kind of wreckage that it embarked on. We are now getting on with the hard work of repairing that and delivering benefits for ordinary, everyday people who want to go to TAFE or send their children to TAFE. They can now afford to do that. The former government had no regard for those outcomes, as well as the significant economic outcomes that I have talked about.

I am really pleased to be part of the Labor McGowan government. I think we are doing an enormous amount of important work across a wide range of areas. In preparing my comments today, it was quite hard to choose what areas I want to focus on, but I want to share with the house some of the great things that have been happening in the Mirrabooka electorate in the time since we were last here. I have seen a number of great celebrations, great advancements in our schools and fantastic announcements to support our TAFE system with its consequent benefits for jobs, skills and young people. These are really great examples of the work we are doing. We are getting on with it. We are not wasting a day. These changes, policy announcements and financial commitments, whether they are for science labs, TAFE or supporting multicultural communities to celebrate, are all having a profound day-to-day effect on the people I represent in the electorate of Mirrabooka.

In conclusion, I want to report back that one thing I do regularly as a local member is doorknock in my community. I like to spend time talking to the people I represent about the issues that matter most to them. I can report that along with the sorts of things I have talked about today such as education, one thing on people's minds is increased cost of living. I report to the house the enormous positive feedback that I have had for the work that the McGowan government has been doing to alleviate that for people in my community. Things like the free rapid antigen tests remain a really important way in which we are giving support to the people who live in the electorate of Mirrabooka, and, indeed, right around the state. The energy credits—the \$400 that was paid to people's power bills last year coming on top of the \$600 that was previously paid—have been incredibly well received. These are things that people understand have had a direct impact on helping them to meet increasing costs.

People understand that the McGowan government did an enormously terrific job of managing the community, society and the economy through the pandemic. They are incredibly confident in and grateful for our capacity to manage through whatever economic circumstances we encounter. That is feedback from the people I speak to every day. If members of the opposition spent more time talking to everyday people about the issues on their minds, they might better reflect in this house the real concerns that people have. There are a number of ways in which it is clear that they do not do that. Instead of taking their advice or their lines from *The West Australian* or peak bodies, if members opposite actually spent their time talking to real people in the communities in which they live, I think they would better reflect in this house the genuine and real concerns of everyday people. That is something I have

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always done as an elected member and I will continue to do that. I want to close by saying that I think that is what all good representatives do, and I think that members of the opposition fail in their duty by not doing that in a way that is then fairly reflected in this place.

With that, I bring my conclusions to an end, other than to say that I wish everyone well for the year ahead. I look forward to a busy year, getting on with the important work of advancing and protecting the interests of everyday Western Australians. Thank you.

**MS L. DALTON (Geraldton)** [9.50 am]: It is my absolutely great pleasure to rise and speak in this place today. I begin by thanking the Premier and cabinet ministers and all my parliamentary colleagues and their staff for coming to visit Geraldton recently for the community cabinet and caucus retreat. The feedback I received from my electorate and my community about this event has been very positive. Residents really appreciated the opportunity to speak openly with their elected government officials. Local organisations and businesses have told me they feel quite buoyed by the level of interest, support and investment being delivered for the Geraldton electorate and the surrounding midwest region that Geraldton services. When I was given the good news that I was to host a community cabinet, I had a mixture of feelings: I was excited but I also had a little bit of anxiety and stress because I really wanted to make sure we put forward our best face for cabinet. I was really pleased that we definitely delivered. The most overwhelming feeling I had was definitely pride. It was wonderful to be able to host cabinet in Geraldton and for cabinet to see all that Geraldton has to offer and hear directly from the fabulous people who live there.

We had a very well attended town hall meeting; nearly 200 people came along. A broad representation of the Geraldton community was invited to hear from the Premier and was given the opportunity to ask questions to the various ministers in attendance. This was a wonderful way for everyone to be able to highlight not just the issues but the great opportunities as well. The following day, cabinet met with the CEO and the Mayor of the City of Greater Geraldton. They had the opportunity to bring to the cabinet's attention some of the city's priorities for the future. I spoke with the mayor after that event, which would probably be a surprise to some people in this chamber. He was absolutely glowing about the level of engagement that the Premier and cabinet had with the Geraldton community. He said to me, and he was quoted in the paper saying, how respectful the amount of engagement was that cabinet ministers and the Premier had within the town. He said it was great to see them out in the shops, buying locally and having coffees at cafes, not just tucked away at meetings behind closed doors. They came out and chatted to the community and were able to meet with different groups and individuals. The mayor was also impressed that for any issue or area of interest that was raised with the different ministers, they were already aware of them and well across the brief. I was really pleased to hear that kind of response from our local government. Sometimes we do not have the best relationships with our local government, but the way the cabinet and Premier conducted themselves and made themselves available for the community was definitely a credit to them.

We also invited stakeholders of the tourism, arts and cultural industry along to a lunch on the Monday at which both the Premier and Minister Templeman addressed a large crowd of creatives. People who attended spoke to me afterwards about how happy they were to be able to meet the different members of cabinet, particularly the Premier, and how important it was for them to be able to advocate on behalf of their industries. Creatives, people in the music, arts or cultural industries, in small regional towns do not often get the opportunity to showcase themselves to the government. They were all very pleased to have that opportunity at a lovely light lunch at the Murchison Tavern. I thank all the people who helped with those events, including the catering and coordinating, because we had such fabulous feedback afterwards.

It was really a fabulous couple of days. Ministers were happy to meet with individual groups and community members who I suggested they might like to hear from. These groups included the Friends of Geraldton Gardens, affectionately known as FroGGs; and Women Inspiring Better Business, or we like to call them WIBBs. Minister Carey met with the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation to hear more about short-term Aboriginal accommodation. It will be an absolute asset to Geraldton. It will provide short-term accommodation for Aboriginal people when they are in Geraldton for funerals, sorry business, health or hospital visits. It is a very much needed piece of infrastructure, so we are really welcoming that to get off the ground. One of the ministers met with Desert Blue Connect, which is a group of people in Geraldton who work with women escaping family and domestic violence and do a lot of work around women's health. There were also meetings with headspace. Minister Dawson met with Pollinators, a group of people who do a lot of work in the innovation space. We coordinated an environmental round table with some of the different environmental groups in Geraldton. A wonderful group called the Geraldton Youth Regeneration Organisation—GYRO—is a group of young activists who advocate for climate change. Minister Whitby met with them, which was fabulous, amongst a couple of other groups. The new Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Jackie Jarvis, met with the Mid West Food Industries Alliance. The focus in the midwest is often on rock lobster, but we actually have a lot of farming areas and great producers. Some members may not know that Geraldton is one of the largest producers of cucumbers in Australia.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Cucumbers—very impressive.

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**Ms L. DALTON:** Yes, cucumbers; the minister did not know that. Minister Jarvis got to meet with that group, which was fabulous, to hear more about what it is doing. It is also about packaging some of these food products, like Robbie Garvey who produces a fabulous granola called Red Line Jones granola. Producers are able to package things like cheeses to be part of our tourism initiatives. We know that food trials are kicking off. We see a lot of them in the south west but we feel that we have a lot of fabulous food producers in the midwest who would be able to give the south west a run for its money.

Minister Buti, the new Minister for Education, and I met staff and students at Beachlands Primary School. I also went along with him to meet the staff, students and leaders of Champion Bay Senior High School. Champion Bay Senior High School, formerly known as John Willcock College, which some members might be familiar with, is situated in the suburb of Rangeway, so it has quite a low socio-economic catchment of students. It was fabulous for Minister Buti to go around the school campus to look at some of the infrastructure that has been put in place. He also had the opportunity to meet some young women who are part of the SHINE program, which is funded for at-risk girls, and some boys from Clontarf Academy.

These are just a few of the places that ministers visited on the Monday afternoon. It was so heartening for me to see how interested each of the various ministers were with the different groups, and it demonstrated to me to me how hardworking and genuine our cabinet members really are in their dedication to improving the lives of Western Australians. The cabinet really took a lot of interest in and spent some good time talking to these people and individual groups, from tourism operators to food producers, schools, domestic violence groups and accommodation providers. It was fabulous to see. I really want to thank them again for spending that time in Geraldton and taking the time to really get to know these different community groups and hear what their issues and opportunities might be.

The Premier's opening statement for the 2023 parliamentary sitting resonated with me as a regional member of this house. The Premier reminded me that this government governs for all Western Australians, from the regions to the cities. With that in mind, I would like to comment on what it looks like for the Geraldton electorate in 2023 and list some of the future and past projects that are already having a huge impact on our community. It would be remiss of me if I did not start off by acknowledging the McGowan government's investment of \$350 million to expand the capacity of the Geraldton port, which will boost its export capability by almost 70 per cent. This will inject billions of dollars into the state's economy. What a massive contribution to the economic prosperity of the region it will be! I absolutely love the Geraldton port. When you drive into Geraldton, one of the first things you see is the port. It is an absolutely fabulous contribution to the city and reminds us why we are here. Work has already commenced this month on the construction of a new roundabout to maximise grain movements from the port. The roundabout at the Marine Terrace intersection will improve the flow of traffic entering and leaving the port and improve safety for local road users, pedestrians, cyclists and port customers. This project will help to support more efficient and effective supply chains for the state's important grain export industry. We have seen massive grain records in recent seasons, and we are doing it again this year. I look forward to further infrastructure developments of this very exciting futureproofing project and what they will bring to the people of Geraldton.

It was actually quite timely for all government members to be in Geraldton recently, because as I reminded them, it had been 20 years since the Gallop Labor government commenced work on the Geraldton foreshore. Some people in this place would have been part of that government that commenced the work on the Geraldton foreshore, the southern transport corridor and the deepening of the port. Those investments and that vision completely transformed Geraldton into the vibrant, wonderful place we see today.

I have been able to tick off one of my election commitments already this year—one that was extremely popular—being the \$3.5 million investment by the McGowan government to upgrade the basketball stadium in Geraldton. The contribution from the government was on top of a contribution of \$1.5 million from the Geraldton Amateur Basketball Association. The Premier, Minister Templeman and I were at the opening of the new-look stadium and courts, and they are absolutely fabulous. I would like to take this opportunity to again congratulate Peter Brown, the president of the Geraldton Amateur Basketball Association, and committee members past and present for the many hours of hard work and determination that brought this project to fruition. Early in 2020, former member for the Agricultural Region and my good friend Laurie Graham and I met with Peter and his team to discuss the needs of the association and the way forward. Never before had the GABA received any state support. Most of what was built in the early days was basically with the sweat and tears of members, who physically assisted with much of the building. While I was at the opening, I spoke to Laurie's wife, Heather, who said she remembered being pregnant with one of her children and sitting on the floor of the stadium, sanding back the timber floorboards and putting the holes made by the nails so that it would be a smooth surface. We do not often see that kind of commitment these days to these sorts of projects. To be the only basketball association to completely own its own stadium is a credit to the administrators past and present. Many of us, including me, will remember playing on the bitumen courts as kids, leaving bits of skin from our knees behind. Those days are long gone and the bitumen courts are a thing of

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the past, thank goodness! The commitment from the McGowan government to redevelop our basketball stadium has been hugely popular across the community.

Another project that we have supported is the Shore Leave Festival. In late April to early May 2022, the second annual Shore Leave Festival, which is a vibrant, fun and successful celebration of premium produce, history and culture in Geraldton, was supported by the McGowan government as part of a three-year funding agreement. This event drew thousands of visitors to Geraldton and the midwest, helping to create up to 200 jobs and offering opportunities for local tourism operators. This festival has injected \$2.7 million so far into the local economy. We are really looking forward to the highly anticipated 2023 festival, with long table lunches at the Abrolhos Islands —

**Mr R.H. Cook:** Hooray!

**Ms L. DALTON:** — which are absolutely fabulous. I was lucky enough to go along to two of the long table lunches in the past two years—we had fantastic weather and the food was wonderful—accompanied by the Minister for Fisheries, Minister Don Punch. We hope to see our Minister for Tourism in Geraldton this year for one of those events.

**Mr R.H. Cook:** I am doing the long table.

**Ms L. DALTON:** The minister is coming to the long table lunch!

**Mr R.H. Cook:** As well as the opening.

**Ms L. DALTON:** And the opening—fabulous! It will be an awesome event. There will also be the paddock to plate dinner. Instead of being held on the foreshore as it was for the last couple of years, the dinner this year will be held at the property of one of our producers, Rod O’Bree. That will be fantastic. Rod owns a local butchering business and has done some really fabulous work in regenerative farming.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms L. DALTON:** I need to also talk about the Geraldton Health Campus. There has never been a greater investment in the health budget than the investment under this government, with \$122.7 million to deliver improved health services in the midwest. I am really pleased that the first stage of the works is complete, which was the enabling works. A lot of people have criticised the fact that we spent time on a car park and the entrance of the hospital, but when you look at the plans and see where the new development is going to go, you get a better understanding of why that needed to be completed first. One of the most welcome announcements in 2022 was that the much-awaited expression of interest process was going out for tender. The evaluation of the expressions of interest will identify the company that will lead the main construction works that are already underway. Three major construction companies responded to the expression of interest process. The Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment will significantly improve clinical capacity in emergency and critical care, and inpatient mental health services. It will include a new building and the refurbishment of existing infrastructure, including an expansion of the emergency department, a new intensive care unit with a redeveloped high-dependency unit, and a new integrated mental health service. This significant redevelopment project will ensure that patients continue to receive quality care closer to home. The construction work will also support local regional jobs and the economy.

Just before I finish up, I want to let members know about a visit I made recently to Dongara Marine, which is one of the local boat builders in town. That business was given the opportunity to deliver a first-class learning environment. The \$2 million funding provided will be used to upgrade the *Master Class*, which is a training vessel at Central Regional TAFE. Having been a TAFE lecturer at Central Regional TAFE, I know the importance of investment in learning. This project is exciting, as the maritime industry is vital to Geraldton. This much-improved upgrade will provide skilled local workers with all the training capacities they need. The floating specialist classrooms, which are usually moored in Geraldton Fishing Boat Harbour, have been dry-docked while the ageing vessel is upgraded. This will be a wonderful upgrade to the vessel. The vessel is used to deliver maritime-related training in fishing boat operations, boating services and for marine engine drivers through Central Regional TAFE’s Batavia Coast Maritime Institute. The vessel also supports on-water activities for components of other training programs such as aquaculture, tourism, coastal conservation and land management in the region.

Another project rolling out in Geraldton will help prevent family and domestic violence. We have a number of initiatives that are going to be rolled out in Geraldton, forming part of the McGowan government’s initiative to help stop FDV across Western Australia. I recently attended an event at which Professor Anne Summers was the guest speaker. Anne, a renowned author and feminist, has recently released her groundbreaking report *The choice: Violence or poverty*. Wow! I must admit that the statistics she shared were frightening. In some ways they are more impactful than the terrible stories. For example, in 2016, 275 000 women reported suffering physical or sexual violence from a current partner. Of those respondents, 193 400 lived with their abusive partners at the time of the survey and almost 90 000 said they wanted to separate but were unable to. Violence against women is serious and prevalent. The programs our government has invested in will fund initiatives that will target the drivers of family and domestic violence to enable social and structural change that will create lasting results over time.

Through the University of Western Australia, we have the midwest Aboriginal men's empowerment project, which is based in midwest Geraldton, and Desert Blue Connect will run the midwest early years gender equality project. This project will provide fundamental learnings to children and caregivers against gender stereotypes. The health communication resources are empowering community voice, community respect and equality in the midwest and Geraldton regions. That project will support local communities to use media for social change. A key partnership with the Mid West Aboriginal Media Association, or Radio MAMA, will target different subgroups in Geraldton.

Finally, last year I spoke about the McGowan government investing in renewable energy at three schools that form part of the \$8.8 million school virtual power plant pilot project regional expansion. The school's VPP project is an exciting opportunity to transform WA's schools into smart and flexible VPPs to optimise renewable energy sources. These are exciting, cost-saving initiatives for the schools, and I know that the schools are really pleased to be selected.

I am looking forward to beginning a new year in Parliament and continuing to advocate for the people of Geraldton. I thank the Premier and ministers of the McGowan government for their ongoing support. Thank you.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [10.13 am]: I rise to speak to the Premier's Statement at the beginning of the 2023 parliamentary year. However, before I go any further, I would like to mention our Kimberley emergency response agencies, many of whom have been working around the clock to respond to the worst flooding event our state has ever seen. The destruction in the Kimberley from ex-tropical cyclone Ellie has devastated homes and made them uninhabitable. People have been displaced, business are unable to operate, there have been immeasurable stock losses and vital road infrastructure has been damaged. The vital Fitzroy Crossing Bridge that connects west and east Kimberley has been destroyed by the mighty Martuwarra Fitzroy River. But it is at times of great adversity that Western Australians show their resilience. As the community, stations and local governments take stock of the damage, my colleagues and I stand ready to work with the local, state and commonwealth governments to ensure that everything that can be done is being done in a timely and effective manner.

We are now halfway through the second term of the McGowan government. The government has been in power for six years. From listening to the Premier's Statement and the Premier crowing once again about his responsible management of the economy and this government's focus on the right priorities, it is fair to say that this is a Premier and a government that have little understanding of the daily realities facing Western Australians, and especially families. The Premier has little understanding that under his so-called responsible management of the economy, today many Western Australians will be choosing whether to pay their bills or put food on the table. Unlike the Premier, we in the opposition understand that Western Australians are doing it tough. We understand this because, unlike the Premier and his ministers, we actually take the time to talk and listen to the individuals and families who are doing it tough. We, not the Premier or the government, are the ones listening to the not-for-profit organisations that are dealing with the ever-increasing calls for help in coping with the ever-increasing cost of living. The one question they all raise is: why are things so tough in a state that has the strongest economy in the nation and that has recorded billions in surpluses thanks to the iron ore royalties and the GST fix under the former government? Why, according to Foodbank of Western Australia are over 306 000 households in WA receiving assistance from food relief organisations? Why in the past 12 months did over 208 000 households in WA go hungry due to lack of funds, sometimes skipping meals or going whole days without eating? Why, each week, do more than 20 000 WA children go to school hungry because they did not even eat breakfast? Why are there over 116 000 children in Western Australia living in severely food-insecure households? The reason that people in Western Australia, the economic star performer of any state in this country, are struggling to put food on the table is the rising cost of living.

Last week, we saw the Reserve Bank of Australia raise its cash rate by 25 basis points to 3.35 per cent, its highest level in over a decade, with lenders passing on the average variable home loan interest rate, which will be at 5.59 per cent. This will mean that after nine increases, a family with a \$500 000 mortgage will need to find an additional \$12 000 to cover their mortgage costs. Yet, despite most economists predicting this increase and indicating there will be further increases to come, here in Western Australia we have the Premier flagging another 2.5 per cent increase in this year's household fees and charges, or an extra \$150 for the average household. With Perth having one of the highest CPI increases of all capital cities—up 8.3 per cent over the year to December—it will only get worse for many Western Australians.

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has calculated that as at 2020, 12.8 per cent of Western Australians are living in poverty. This has grown from just 8.7 per cent in 2014. The last report from the Western Australian Council of Social Service also illustrates that many on low incomes are just barely scraping by, even more so than in previous years. Why is this happening in a state that has record surpluses? The opposition has put forward a number of options for this government to consider, include freezing fees and charges or extending the electricity credit for this year.

I have also put forward a solution to commit \$300 million for the not-for-profit charity sector to ensure that support goes to those who need it most. This sector plays an incredibly valuable role and it clearly needs more support

from this government. Valuing the community services sector and the supports it provides to the most vulnerable in our community must be a priority of the McGowan government, yet the silence from this government in its response to this crisis has been deafening.

These issues are being exacerbated by the lack of social housing throughout the state, including new housing that was part of this government's election promise, the Common Ground facility. It clearly shows us that this government has been asleep at the wheel. We have less social housing now than we did when the McGowan government came to office. There is less social housing than there was four years ago. In November 2022, WA had 43 380 social housing houses, which is 379 fewer than the number of houses in 2018 of 43 759. That is 379 fewer, despite a significant population increase over that period. I note the government has recently purchased the Murray Hotel in West Perth. The people of Western Australia can only hope this will progress at a faster rate than its previous projects.

As I mentioned earlier, unlike the Premier and his ministers, we in the opposition take the time to talk and listen to individuals, families and small business owners throughout this state. The one issue they constantly raise with us is safety—safety from antisocial behaviour, vandalism, theft, break-ins, assault and domestic violence. We will continue to hold the McGowan government to account in law and order because something is going seriously wrong. Crime and antisocial behaviour rates continue to surge throughout this state. Violent crime has increased by 17 per cent under this government and family-related violence is up 34 per cent on the five-year average. People in Halls Creek, Carnarvon, Laverton and other towns across regional WA have been pleading to the McGowan government for help in dealing with increases in youth crime and their pleas have once again fallen on deaf ears. The last time the Premier visited Carnarvon was to ensure that he was part of the good news story of the fantastic event of WA police rescuing young Cleo; it appears he is less keen to visit if it is not a good news story.

On Australia Day we had riots in Yagan Square and brawls on the Rockingham foreshore and in Murray Street Mall and Northbridge, yet we do not have enough police to help and protect families, businesses and individuals. More than ever before, WA police officers are turning their backs on the profession that they once loved. There have been over 460 resignations in the past year, which has included 128 resignations in November alone. This is the highest number in the force's 189-year history, yet the Premier and the minister continue to put their heads in the sand over this crisis in our police force and instead run yet more spin, denounce the facts and inflate the numbers in their overseas recruitment campaign.

Reports of family-related violence have risen over 30 per cent since the McGowan government came to office. In fact, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, WA has the highest rate of reported family and domestic violence-related assault offences against females across the states, with 1 254 assaults per 100 000 females reported to police in 2021. In WA, 1 158 adult women were hospitalised with injuries relating to family and domestic violence, with First Nations women accounting for 68 per cent of all hospitalisations, the highest since 2005 at 72.1 per cent. According to the latest data, there were 4 678 breaches of a restraining order reported to WA police in 2020–21. In addition to the physical and emotional trauma, family and domestic violence is resulting in women and children needing to leave their homes. Of the 15 486 women supported by specialist homelessness services in WA, 51.5 per cent were related to domestic violence. These are damning statistics and while we all need to do more to put an end to domestic violence, the McGowan government needs to address the very significant issue that many refugees are having to cut services and turn away these women and families as they simply cannot keep pace with demand, which has outstripped the support provided by government.

Beyond the home, women's safety and their perception of safety in the broader community remains a concern. According to the latest *Women's report card*, 45 per cent of women and 40 per cent of men reported feeling concerned about being a victim of physical assault in a public place.

How does this happen under a government that states it is tough on crime and does not condone antisocial behaviour? We have seen this time and again from this government, especially when dealing with our most vulnerable in areas such as child protection. Revelations that the government agency in charge of looking after the state's most vulnerable young people lost track of five children, aged between 13 and 15 years, in its care for between six days and three weeks last year are shocking to say the least. This portfolio has been completely mismanaged by the McGowan government and it has put our most vulnerable at even greater risk. This government needs to address how overworked and under-resourced our child protection workers are with caseloads regularly exceeding the exceptional limit of 18, instead of raiding their homes.

We have heard time and again from the Premier about how it is due to his strong financial management that our health system is the best funded in the nation. In fact, in this year's statement the Premier noted that our continued and increased investment in our health sector will ensure that we continue to deliver a health system that meets the needs of all Western Australians and is fit-for-purpose for generations to come. Unfortunately, it seems the Premier is the only one who believes it.



**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 16 February 2023]

p373c-402a

Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Lara Dalton; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Simon Millman

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As I mentioned earlier, unlike the Premier and his ministers, we in the opposition take the time to talk and listen to individuals, families and small business owners throughout the state, and they are not buying the Premier's take on our health system. The one thing we hear about is that the Premier just does not get health. It is clear through the countless metrics and reports, the endless media commentary and reports from our frontline workers and patients that the McGowan government has clearly failed in this key area of delivering health services for Western Australians. A report by the Australian Medical Association, *Australian public hospitals in logjam*, critically highlighted that seven out of 10 of the worst-performing emergency departments in public hospitals nationally were here in Western Australia. Just think about it: 70 per cent of the worst performing EDs are here in WA.

Last year, WA ambulances spent more than 60 000 hours stuck outside hospitals. They are the worst annual ramping figures ever reported in this state. When this government first came to office, ramping was under 10 000 hours. That is a truly shocking measure of the McGowan government's mismanagement of the WA health system. It is important to remember that for every one of these hours recorded, Western Australian patients were laid up in an ambulance or hospital corridor because there was no capacity in the hospital to admit them. Instead of accepting responsibility for its failures and addressing the problem by dealing with bed block and improving the flow of patients, the McGowan government continues to revert to its usual strategy of diverting and deflecting blame. We saw this over a week ago with another talkfest with the Prime Minister, who decided that health was a major priority, yet they all walked away, promising very little. The McGowan government has no interest in addressing the issues facing our health system.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** We saw the Auditor General's report highlighting the issue of long-stay patients in our hospital system. The report highlighted some of the very troubling home truths about the government's management of long-stay patients. According to the Auditor General, Caroline Spencer, the management of long-stay patients in public hospitals highlighted concerns around the absence of reliable data and a determined focus on continuous improvement. She said —

... WA Health will struggle to recognise and adequately improve underlying systemic issues and make well-evidenced value for money investments.

Despite blaming many of the underlying issues in the health system on this cohort of patients, the government actually has no idea of the scale of the problem or how much it is costing. Unlike the McGowan government, the previous Liberal-National government had a strong history of delivering real projects, real services and real value in health services for Western Australians. Thanks to the vision of that Liberal-National government, Western Australians have a new children's hospital, Fiona Stanley Hospital and Midland Health Campus. In the regions, there is Busselton Health Campus, Kalgoorlie Health Campus, Albany Health Campus, Esperance Health Campus, Carnarvon Health Campus, Exmouth Health Service and Onslow Health Service. We invested in the North West and Southern Inland Health Initiatives to improve health and aged-care facilities in towns across Western Australia. But under this government, what have we seen? What has been delivered? Where are the medi-hotels and the urgent care clinics? What is happening with the promised women's and babies' hospital, a \$1.8 billion project, with works to begin in 2023? It is rather concerning to hear that this hospital may be at least a decade away, with new works at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women beginning, suggesting that this may be another go-slow project of the McGowan government.

Geraldton Health Campus is another example. It is extraordinary that after six years, the redevelopment plans for Geraldton Health Campus are still at the expressions-of-interest stage. Upgrades to our health system promised by the McGowan government during the 2017 election campaign will be outdated by the time they are actually completed. We have known for many years now that Labor cannot build anything on time or on budget, but it is an especially bitter pill for the people of the midwest who have been waiting for these essential hospital upgrades for six years. Labor had offered only a cut-price upgrade and it has not even been able to deliver that after six years in power. It is only because of our shadow minister in the other place that we are now seeing an inquiry into waitlists for child health services. About 6 000 patients are on the waitlist to see a paediatrician. There is a nine to 15-month wait to see a speech pathologist according to the August figures and, as of December, there were 40 FTE positions vacant in the child health nurses space, a situation that is leading to further acuity issues down the line.

The Premier keeps telling us that health is his priority, but the facts prove that he is all talk and no action. When it comes to health, his government is just sitting on its hands. The people of Western Australia deserve better.

*Amendment to Question*

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is why I wish to move the following amendment —

That the following words be added after "noted" —

and that this house calls for the McGowan Labor government to rectify the damage six years of neglect is inflicting on the health system

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [10.34 am]: I rise to support the amendment moved by my colleague the Leader of the Liberal Party. This government has entered its seventh year in office, yet it is failing in almost every one of its important responsibilities. Some of those failures have become apparent to the community already and others will become apparent to the community as time goes on, but no failure is more apparent than the failure of this government to deliver a proper health system for the public of Western Australia. The government's mismanagement is leading to failures across the whole system. The primary reason for that growing problem is that the Labor government places a higher priority on spin than it does on the realities that Western Australians have to deal with.

I will begin my brief contribution by reminding members of the former Liberal–National government's outstanding record on health. This is an uncomfortable thing for members opposite. As a government that is six years in and is heading into its seventh year, essentially it can claim nothing as an improvement in our health system, just a deterioration. In the eight years of the previous Liberal–National government, it completely transformed our health system, delivering major reforms and a major improvement in the delivery of health services to the public of Western Australia. During the previous coalition government's term, the health budget doubled from \$4.4 billion in 2008–09 to \$8.8 billion in 2016–17, whereas there has been an increase of only 27 per cent under this government in the six years that it has been in power. Those figures are readily available through the budget. They are the numbers that sit behind it.

If we look at the achievements of the previous government in providing those services, we see that almost 500 000 people came into the state over that period, yet all those people had not only a health service that met those needs, but also a dramatically improved health service. The Liberal–National coalition government made an unprecedented investment in our health system. I will go through some of the achievements under the previous government and contrast it with the absolute inaction of the McGowan Labor government. These are the facts. What was the track record of the previous Liberal–National coalition government? We have Fiona Stanley Hospital, a major new tertiary hospital with 643 beds; the 143-bed state rehabilitation service, which opened in October 2014; the \$1.2 billion 298-bed Perth Children's Hospital, an outstanding new facility that was substantially completed under the previous government and was built to replace the 250-bed Princess Margaret Hospital for Children as the state's paediatric tertiary hospital; the \$230 million Joondalup Health Campus expansion, which was completed in 2013 and increased the number of public beds from 280 to 498; the \$31 million 30-bed mental health unit at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, which opened in June 2015; and the \$360 million 307-bed Midland Public Hospital, which opened in November as a public–private partnership with St John of God. What an absolutely outstanding hospital campus that is. In the regions, we have the \$170.4 million Albany Health Campus, which opened in May 2013; the \$120.4 million Busselton Health Campus, which opened in March 2015; and the almost \$60 million redevelopment of Kalgoorlie Hospital, which was completed in August 2015. Construction of the new \$207 million Karratha Health Campus also commenced under the previous Liberal–National coalition government, and we have the \$31.3 million redevelopment of Esperance Health Campus, the \$26.8 million redevelopment of Carnarvon Health Campus and the almost \$42 million redevelopment of Onslow Health Service. Those were the achievements of the National–Liberal government in its eight-year term. Here we are, three-quarters through that time with this government, and what are the achievements of this government? There are no achievements; rather, there has been a massive deterioration in our health service under this government.

We also had plans for further investment in rural hospitals and other medical services, including a well-developed \$138.5 million plan to expand and upgrade Geraldton Health Campus. Unlike Labor, we regard the regions as important and we believe that people who live in the regions should have the same quality of health service that people in the metropolitan areas enjoy. What happened under Labor? That plan was effectively halved to a \$73.3 million upgrade. Where does that project sit now? We are still waiting for that project to commence six years in. I heard the member for Geraldton boasting about the achievements of this government. I did not hear her talk about the need for that hospital upgrade. Why has that upgrade not started? Why are the people of Geraldton not already enjoying an improved facility, because we know that they dearly need it? In essence, a large percentage of maternity patients in Geraldton have to travel to Perth, particularly if there are issues during a birth. In 2016, there were 1 789 more doctors in WA than in 2008, which equates to a 52 per cent increase in doctors over that period. What has this government done to increase doctor numbers and that percentage? Back then, WA nurses and doctors were the best paid in Australia and now we have an ongoing and acrimonious pay dispute between nurses and midwives and the state government.

As members can tell, the Liberal–National coalition government had a proud record of delivering improved health services to the public of Western Australia, and now we have a Labor government that is fixated on spin and announcements, but not delivering those critical health services to the public of Western Australia. If we look at health funding in this state, we see that by the time we reached 2021, the public health mess created by the government could not be papered over by spin because it was having such a dramatic impact on the community. Despite the benefit of COVID in fact reducing the workload on our hospitals with them being quieter than normal, Labor was

forced by necessity to increase funding for health, notwithstanding its spin that everything was okay. Everything was okay but there was suddenly a dramatic increase in funding.

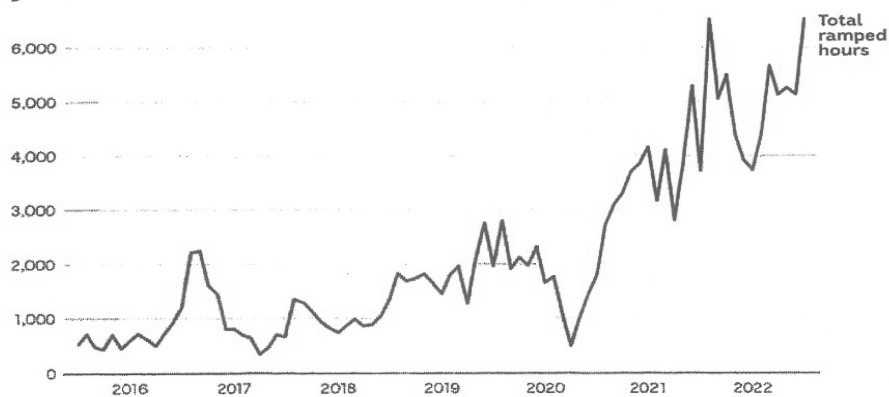
The focus of the 2020–21 Treasurer’s address, if you like, was the massive \$1.9 billion boost in spending in health and mental health. Again, there was a glossy announcement from the government that it would put that money into the health system. It painted the picture of an increase in funding. As I pointed out in some detail a couple of years ago, the government was simply catching up to the normal trajectory of spend—in fact, it was not quite catching up—that we expect in the hospital system. I cannot understand why the government cannot work this out. If we look at the normal trajectory of health spending, it increases at a rate of around four per cent per annum; that has been the increase over the years. This government put its foot on the throat—in fact, at the start of its first term, it boasted that it had cut expenditure. It closed beds and did not open beds in new hospitals because it was being so prudent, and all that did was cause harm and hardship to the people of Western Australia.

Despite the considerably good health system that this government inherited, we have the farce of ambulance ramping. Under this government, we have the ludicrous situation in which ambulances are parked outside hospitals because patients simply cannot get a bed in a hospital in a timely manner. The government has somehow conflated that as a failure of St John Ambulance to do its job properly. One of the most shameful bits of spin I have seen from a government was when this government blamed an outstanding service for its own failure. The reason that those patients could not get in was bed block. The former Minister for Health described 1 030 hours of ambulance ramping as an absolute crisis. What we have seen under this government? We have seen ambulance ramping up to around 7 000 hours. I think it averaged over 5 000 hours last year, which is five times what the former health minister regarded as a crisis. I want to display a graph—under standing order 86, I will seek to have this incorporated into *Hansard*—of how ambulance ramping has changed under this Labor government. What member in this place can look at that, put their hand on their heart and say that this government is doing the right thing by the public of Western Australia? It is an absolute indictment of the failure of this government. Why? It is because hospitals are simply not capable of taking patients when they arrive.

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

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

**WA's ambulance ramping figures have steadily worsened over the last few years**



Source: St John Ambulance WA / Get the data

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** When patients get into a hospital—there have been numerous reports about this—they are often left sitting in a corridor, sometimes for more than a day. They have gone to hospital seriously ill—people do not call an ambulance unless they are seriously ill—yet some patients sit in a hospital corridor for up to a day. Again, we have heard all sorts of conflated reasons from the health minister of the day, which is continued by the government, that that is due to ambulance cleaning and other protocols when, in fact, it was nothing of the sort. It was simply an inability to get patients into hospitals because hospitals were not capable of receiving patients and providing the service they should have received.

Money is now going into the system. I say to the government side that I do not believe that the solution to every problem is money. I do not believe that the government necessarily has to spend all the time. In my previous life in industry, it was rarely a popular contention to go to your manager and say, “I want to solve this problem by spending more money.” We had to show inefficiencies. That is fine; if the government says that it will not increase

expenditure on health, what is it doing to improve inefficiencies in the hospital system? There are certainly inefficiencies, and that is not an indictment of the people who work in the system. As members on this side have made clear, we have the greatest respect for the nurses, midwives, doctors and other professionals who work in our hospitals. It is simply that there are inefficiencies in every organisation that can be improved. What specific programs has this government got to improve the efficiencies of that service? All we see is spin and accusations against the ambulance service. Of course, we know what underpins that; it is a political tact to get more union membership by making it a government service. We know that that is the motivation.

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

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** There has been no discussion; I have not heard one announcement in this place, either by the former or current Minister for Health, about what the government is doing to improve efficiencies in the hospital service. If the government is not doing that, it will have to put more money in. Those are the things that the government needs to do. The so-called additional money that the government has put into the health service will simply allow it to catch up to where it should have been. Instead of putting its foot on the throat of improving the health service when it first came to office and boasting about what a great job it was doing, it should have expanded that service. We should have another major tertiary hospital and another major women's and children's hospital in this state. I would be fascinated to hear an explanation from members on the other side about when we will see the new women's and babies' hospital. That was a great announcement. I had an idle moment and was looking at the leaders' debate between Zak Kirkup and the Premier before the last state election, and at when the Premier said that would be completed. We have nothing—crickets. There has been no delivery of that new critically needed facility.

Has the government looked at other opportunities? This is only a suggestion as something for the Minister for Health to consider. It would need to be investigated. The Fremantle Hospital emergency department was closed by our government. That was because the new hospitals were opening and we believed that emergency department was no longer needed. It is now clear that our hospital emergency departments are overwhelmed. Should people who live south of the river be given the advantage of an emergency department at Fremantle Hospital? That is the sort of thing the government should be considering to try to ease this crisis, rather than blaming the ambulance service and trying to spin its way out of it.

We also need to look at the elective surgery waitlist. In April 2017, 20 038 people were on the elective surgery waitlist. If we go forward to January this year, we see the waitlist is at almost 28 000 people; it had 27 885 people. That is a massive increase in waiting time for elective surgery. The term "elective surgery" rolls off the tongue, as though we are talking about people who want to have surgery as a bit of frippery or idleness. But we are talking about surgery that will change people's lives. As I have pointed out in this place previously, many of the people who need hip operations or other serious operations are utterly housebound because they cannot get their elective surgery done. Under this government, they are waiting longer than they should have to. This surgery will enable them to enjoy the last years of their life in reasonable health. The minister can try to try to spin her way out of it, but there has been a 40 per cent increase in the wait time. As I have mentioned in this place previously, other states have similar issues, but they are doing something about it.

Acting Speaker, I do not think I can have an extension, can I?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** No.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you. That may be good news to some! The problem is that there is just so much to cover. It is the gift of having too much.

First of all, we can look at what this government did during COVID. We had the politics of panic by the Premier over COVID, catastrophising it, talking about India —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** If members recollect, the Premier described India as the epicentre of death and disease. Look up the reference.

**Ms C.M. Rowe** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, given that your time is limited, you might want to keep to this jurisdiction. Thank you.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you very much for your good advice, Acting Speaker.

The Premier catastrophised COVID in every direction, even to the extent of stopping people from coming into the state. Stopping people from coming into the state for twenty-first birthday parties and other parties was fine, but this government stopped over 100 doctors from coming into the state. I have an article from *The Guardian* online dated Monday, 17 January 2022 and headed “One hundred doctors locked out of Western Australia weeks before state reopens”. That is what this government did. Locking out people who wanted to come into this state for parties is fine, but the fact that this government locked out doctors and other medical professionals is a direct contributor to the health problems that we have right now. We do not have enough doctors and nurses in this state.

I refer to a report from Australian Associated Press that Queensland will be recruiting 830 junior doctors this year. If we compare that with Western Australia, Western Australia should be recruiting around 420 new doctors this year. I will be interested to see how many doctors will be recruited.

**Ms A. Sanderson:** Junior doctors or new doctors?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Junior doctors are new doctors. The minister can get them from anywhere she likes. We need doctors in this state; I do not care, minister. That is what the Queensland government is going to do. What will this government do? How many doctors will this government recruit into this state?

As I said at the start of my presentation, this government has utterly failed to deliver an effective health service in the state of Western Australia. It has run down the health service. It boasted at the start of its term about cutting expenditure for hospitals, and it is now in a desperate catch-up. The public of Western Australia is paying the price for this government’s absolute failure at properly managing health in this state.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition)** [10.55 am]: I would like to contribute to this excellent amendment to the question that the Premier’s Statement be noted —

and that this house calls for the McGowan Labor government to rectify the damage six years of neglect is inflicting on the health system

The member for Cottesloe has outlined many of the circumstances that highlight that neglect. That includes the record number of hours of ambulance ramping at hospitals, mainly in the Perth metropolitan area, although there have been issues in some of the regions. The member for Vasse has done an excellent job over the last two years in critiquing the government and holding it to account for its failures and for the enormous amount of ambulance ramping that has occurred over the last six years. While the member for Vasse has been doing an excellent job generally, Hon Martin Aldridge, a member for Agricultural Region, has also been raising issues pertaining to regional health services. One of those issues is the situation in the midwest. It is interesting that the Minister for Health was in the midwest a week or two ago, along with many cabinet members. I did not score an invitation to any of the events. I understand that there were a number of interactions with local governments in my electorate as well.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** You should have gone up on the bus from Dongara.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I could have. It was a public bus, probably.

Those local governments included the City of Greater Geraldton, which I actually represent, along with the member for Geraldton. Most of the geographic footprint of the City of Greater Geraldton is in my electorate, a fact that many in government do not seem to appreciate. Part of that is the town of Mullewa. I note an article in the *Mullewa Mail*, which has been reprinted in part on the City of Greater Geraldton’s social media site. I will read a bit from this post. It is dated 14 February and is headed “‘Iron-clad’ commitment from Minister on Mullewa Hospital upgrade”. That is thanks to the tireless efforts of Councillor Critch and Councillor Clune, who corralled the minister into having a discussion about Mullewa. It appears that that meeting took place in Geraldton, not Mullewa. It is a pity it was not in Mullewa, because the minister might then have had a better understanding of Mullewa. The caption under the photo in that article states that the minister was there with Sandra Carr, MLA. That is described incorrectly, so my apologies. It should be Hon Sandra Carr, MLC. The member for Geraldton is also in that photograph.

We know that the Mullewa Hospital project has still not commenced. That project has been sitting in the state budget for the entirety of this Labor government’s term. In fact, it was part of a program that had been initiated by the previous government and a project had been announced for the delivery of an upgraded facility at Mullewa that would be fit-for-purpose for the community. That project has languished ever since. I will read from the article about this ironclad commitment that has been given by the Minister for Health —

Minister Sanderson acknowledged the delay in delivering the project —

That is nice. She at least admits that there has been a delay —

and offered an ‘iron-clad’ commitment that the Mullewa Hospital project will go ahead.

The Mullewa Hospital upgrade will provide essential services as pledged when the upgrade was announced.

It goes on to state —

While no commencement date could be provided, —

It is an ironclad guarantee, but with no commencement date —

the Minister shared that works would commence at the completion of the Geraldton Regional Hospital upgrade, which currently services the entire Midwest.

The Minister was hopeful works will commence on the Geraldton Regional Hospital upgrade later this calendar year...

The Mullewa community now has an ironclad guarantee that they have to wait until the Geraldton hospital is built before this minister is even going to commence the project. By the most optimistic time lines, it will be some time in 2026 or 2027 before Geraldton hospital is complete, which will be the next term of government. We will wait for another election cycle before a minister—it probably will not be this minister because she might move to a different office of some sort by then—will commence the project. Will that ironclad guarantee hold water under a new minister? We do not know. No minister can bind another minister when going into office. In fact, Mullewa sits with no guarantees and no hospital upgrades after six years of neglect from this government. That is one example of the neglect. That is not to mention the delay to the Geraldton hospital, which Hon Martin Aldridge has been bringing to public attention for many years now.

Why is all that important in regional areas? As I pointed out in some statistics, there is a great disparity in outcomes between regional people and metropolitan people in crime and, as it happens, health. I understand that the average life expectancy for men in very remote areas of the state is 14 years less than those in the metropolitan area. For women, it is 19 years less. I have no doubt that those figures are skewed because we know that there are appalling health outcomes for some Aboriginal people. Of course, many of those remote areas have significant populations of Aboriginal people. We know that the more remote you go, the worse outcomes will be, but all regional residents do not have the opportunities that exist in metropolitan areas for access to healthcare. They do not have to be very remote for that to occur. I had a constituent from the town of Toodyay who could not access out-of-hospital care after a life-saving operation because no care was provided there. There was no Silverchain service to do dressings et cetera. She had to be transported to Northam every time that sort of attention was needed. That means that they had to find a car and a driver to get them to Northam to have that treatment. Toodyay is an hour out of Perth. It is not necessary that someone has to be at the far end of the regional spectrum to have these issues.

I have other constituents who share a postcode with metropolitan parts. For instance, the Lower Chittering area has had a problem with service delivery for many years: residents there are in the Bullsbrook postcode, so the WA Country Health Service will not service them, yet they are outside the metropolitan area so the metropolitan health service will not service them. In fact, they get no service. It is similar in Morangup, which shares its postcode with Gidgegannup, and happens to be in the Perth metropolitan area. Those types of little boundary issues could easily be rectified with a bit of effort, and indeed they should be.

When the McGowan government first commenced in 2017, one of its first acts was to slice off most royalties for regions projects on the books that were expected to be delivered. One of those was the Turquoise Health initiative, which would have provided the type of care that I just outlined for people in places like Toodyay, Gingin and Chittering. The lack of that sort of care is very evident to local communities. I was approached by what is known as the lower coast community association, which comprises people in rural residential areas such as Woodridge, Sovereign Hill and Redfield Park and the towns of Guilderton and Seabird in the southern part of the Shire of Gingin. Their number one issue is the lack of health service availability to them. Absolutely no health infrastructure whatsoever, physical or service, is based in their area. Going back a while, a local resident, a retired doctor, provided some service out of the Seabird fire shed, but I think that has now ceased due to the effluxion of time and his advancing years. Those people get no service whatsoever.

Looking right across regional WA, we see a continuation of these types of problems. The member for North West Central has outlined the need for hospitals in Paraburdoo and Meekatharra in her electorate. There is an urgent need for investment. We know that it is not just in physical infrastructure; as I said, it is also about services, including mental health services. This government has announced a program—I highlighted this the other day when talking about crime—with licensed gun owners requiring mental health checks. I think that will expose that those people have no health services to access to do those checks. Perhaps it will point out to government the dire need for those mental health services.

I would not hesitate to say that the highest cause of death for certain demographics in some communities I represent is in fact suicide. Mental health issues are very much to the fore in regional communities. We know that historically there has been a dearth of opportunity for the delivery of those services, but it has got worse lately, especially for some of my residents who report to me their concerns about access to mental health services. Access is more

difficult than was the case in the past. People who live in the smaller communities in the midwest find it very difficult to access those types of services. Again, the further you go away from a larger centre, the less likely you are to have any meaningful access to mental health services whatsoever.

We know that people suffer trauma and mental distress at a greater rate in regional areas, as evidenced by the high suicide levels. Suicide is such an issue in regional areas that a coroner a number of years ago did a report into the situation in the Kimberley. I had the pleasure of serving on the Education and Health Standing Committee in the last term of Parliament with the then member for Kimberley, Josie Farrer. It was her passion that something be done about that. Her entire purpose on that committee was to try to drive some reform to address youth suicide, especially in the Kimberley. I do not think that she was ever given satisfaction in that regard. I do not think that she ever felt that the matter was taken seriously enough. It is something that I would suggest is a matter that the whole state, successive governments and members of Parliament need to have some thought about and act to rectify. While we talk about the issue of youth crime in the Kimberley and other areas, we are talking about youth who are at extreme disadvantage. I do not think a child is born who wants to undertake a career in crime. I think dysfunction leads to the involvement with crime and it is closely linked to issues around mental health. Those services are sadly lacking for people in more remote areas. As I have highlighted, it is also an issue just on the outskirts of Perth. I have no doubt that it is very distressing when people in very remote areas of Western Australia try to access health services of any type, especially when it is something highly personal such as a mental health situation. In small communities, if someone goes into a clinic, people see them. People feel there could be a whole lot of negative consequences about coming forward to access those services. The issues of confidentiality and the ability of access keep people away.

I am happy—I am not happy; I am sad to have to contribute to this debate. I would prefer that we were not moving this amendment and that we did not have to move this amendment, but I think it is important that we draw to the attention of the house the failures of this government over the last six years to properly provide for the health system of Western Australia.

**MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Health)** [11.10 am]: I rise to contribute to debate on the amendment moved by the newly elected Leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Vasse. Of course, we will not be supporting this amendment, and I will outline in my contribution why this amendment is entirely misguided and how this government is making record investment in the health system in both metropolitan and regional areas.

The member for Cottesloe was at quite some pains to spruik the former Liberal–National government’s record on infrastructure, as was the member for Vasse. The former government’s record left this state in dire financial straits—there is no question about that—with a total lack of discipline, process and governance around how it managed its budget. We saw that when we came into government in 2017 and I became cabinet secretary. We inherited a two-stream budget process, which was the Nationals WA budget process for royalties for regions and the cabinet budget process, and the two never met. There was no probity and no strict governance around how taxpayers’ money was spent. The former government oversaw mismanagement of not only the budget, but also the state’s health system.

The member for Cottesloe talked about Fiona Stanley Hospital and took credit for the building of that. That was a Labor government initiative, and the former Minister for Health Hon Jim McGinty and then Premier, Hon Geoff Gallop, followed by Alan Carpenter, put \$1.7 billion aside to pay for that debt free. They put money aside to pay for that hospital. What did the Liberals and Nationals do? They privatised it and entered into a \$4.3 billion contract with Serco with no business case for doing that. That was an outrageous use of taxpayers’ money. This government is proud to have walked back that contract, and that hospital, which was paid for by the Labor government, is now a publicly run hospital for our community. The Langouant report also referred to Perth Children’s Hospital. Yes, the former government did build that hospital, and it is a beautiful hospital; however, it has to be said, if more money were spent on its function rather than its form, we might not have some of the issues that we now have at Perth Children’s Hospital. There was far too much focus on the way it looked and architectural awards than on actual functionality. There is a huge void in the middle of the hospital. When people walk in, it is beautiful—there is no question about that—but we found dealing with COVID and infectious diseases incredibly challenging. We had to close one of the closest car parks because that hospital, which looks after some of our most vulnerable patients, was not designed with infection control in mind. It is a beautiful hospital, but my focus with the new women’s and babies’ hospital is function over form and making sure that women are at the centre of those services.

The former government was not able to actually open Perth Children’s Hospital. It took this government, the former Minister for Health and the former Treasurer; Minister for Finance Hon Ben Wyatt to actually open it. Of course, we also saw that dodgy deal with the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre car park whereby taxpayers had to pay \$16 million in compensation while that car park remained closed because of delays in construction. The former government wasted \$81 million on unnecessary IT services. There was no genuine reform within the system—just an absolute ideological obsession with privatising our public health services.

Let us contrast that with this government's investment in public health services. I refer to projects of this government for which there is money in the budget or that have commenced. Members opposite want to talk about the so-called neglect of the health system; let us go through this list, and I hope they are all listening over there. There is \$256.7 million for the Joondalup Health Campus expansion. There is more than \$200 million for the Bunbury hospital redevelopment, which will see a significant expansion of services. There is \$122 million for Geraldton Health Campus, which is another significant regional expansion of services.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Only happened under Labor.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** Yes, it only happened under Labor, and the previous redevelopment only happened under Labor. There is \$61.6 million for the Newman Health Service redevelopment; \$49 million for the construction of the new Meekatharra Hospital, which is on track; \$55 million for four 30-bed modular units across our system in the metropolitan area, so that is 120 beds; \$14.74 million for the Collie Hospital upgrades; \$8.6 million for the Peel community alcohol and other drug integrated services; \$32.8 million for the Tom Price Hospital redevelopment; \$44 million to increase the medical equipment and imaging replacement program; and \$38.1 million for stage 1 of the electronic medical record system. Members can talk to any of the clinicians working in our hospitals and they will tell them that an EMR is critical to the work and functions that they do. There is \$16.7 million to build a 10-bed pod to upgrade the intensive care unit at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, \$7.6 million for refurbishment works within the neurological intervention and imaging service inside Charlies, and \$10 million to develop the business case for the statewide reconfiguration of the mental health services at Graylands Hospital with the Graylands Reconfiguration and Forensic Taskforce. That is really important work. Reform work is tough work, but it is work that this government is doing. There is \$2.5 million towards the development of a business case for the WA Comprehensive Cancer Centre, and we have just announced the tender for the Laverton Hospital project, which has now gone out, and we expect that will be in the works as soon as that tender process is complete. That hospital needs upgrading and redevelopment.

I will touch briefly on some of the comments from the Leader of the Opposition on the redevelopment of the Mullewa and Geraldton hospitals. I have to address the comments that he read out from the article. The article stated that I had said in that meeting that the Mullewa Hospital upgrades would commence after the completion of the Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment. That is absolutely untrue. I never said that. I did not say that we would be waiting until the end of construction for Geraldton. What I said was that given the very tight construction market, particularly in the midwest—we have seen obviously with cyclone Seroja and the rebuild of those residential homes that we have a tight construction market full stop, but it is even tighter in the midwest—that we have prioritised starting the redevelopment of Geraldton hospital, because that will see a significant expansion of services for the entire region. We will absolutely be building Mullewa Hospital. I did not say that we would wait until the redevelopment at Geraldton was complete, but we are starting the Geraldton hospital redevelopment first because of its strategic importance to the region.

We have had to make some hard decisions. We have had to make some tough decisions, given the construction market that we have in Western Australia. On the one hand, the Leader of the Opposition in this chamber is telling us to start them all now; on the other hand, Hon Dr Steve Thomas in the other place is saying we need to stop some of these government projects. Which of these that I have just read out would members opposite like us to stop? Hon Dr Steve Thomas is over there telling us to stop them; the Leader of the Opposition is telling us to start them!

When it comes to claims of under-resourcing of the system, they are absolutely untrue, but it does not surprise me, because this opposition relies on mistruths and dishonesty to convey what is going on in our system. WA Health's budget has grown by 30 per cent since 2017. That is an average of six per cent a year. The member for Cottesloe said that the average needed to be around four per cent; under this government, the budget has grown by an average of six per cent a year. That is an increase of more than 30 per cent. It is now \$11.6 billion in this financial year.

Since coming to government in 2017, we have added 3 300 FTE to our nursing staff. The FTE has increased. There has been a 21 per cent increase in nursing staff in our system. There has been a 23 per cent increase in medical staff, with 1 200 FTE added to the system. There has also been a 20 per cent increase in allied healthcare staff, with 1 400 FTE added to the system. Overall, there has been a 21 per cent increase in staff in our health system since 2017. Members opposite cannot call that neglect of the health system in any way, shape or form. Those facts do not suit members opposite or their narrative, but they are the facts. We have increased our staffing. It is important that we have world-class infrastructure, but our staff are the heart and soul of our health system. They are the ones who provide support and medical care to our community members when they need it most.

We have put 523 beds into the system in the last 12 months—that is the size of a tertiary hospital! Of those new beds, 483 are COVID surge beds and 40 are mental health transition care beds to help people transition out of hospital in a more sustainable way, without bouncing back. We have brought 120 modular beds online across the state over the last 12 months, in Bunbury, Osborne Park, Rockingham and Bentley. We are doing the work to move people



out of hospital who are medically fit for discharge through our long-stay patient fund and the Transition Care and Hospital in the Home programs.

For the member for Cottesloe to say that he has never heard me talk about the reform that is occurring in the health system, he must be having regular naps in the chamber. Since becoming health minister, I have been at pains to outline, during almost every question time, the reforms that we are doing within the system, because it is not just about funding. Even though this government is providing record funding, it is also about reform and doing things differently. This government is prepared to do the nitty-gritty and the hard yards that need to be done to alleviate the pressure points that we are seeing in our system and that every system is seeing. Despite the baseless fearmongering from the opposition that the health system is in crisis, we have a world-class public health system that has fantastic, highly skilled, highly regarded healthcare workers who work in it. Not one, single constructive idea comes from the opposition bench—not one.

We have reformed the ambulance contract with the new contract with St John Ambulance. The significant and historic reform of that contract will improve outcomes for our patients. We have also made a significant new investment in paramedics. The number of paramedics will increase by 60, including 30 paid paramedics in country WA. By the end of March, four new paid, professional paramedics will have been added to the Geraldton substation alone. That is an important reform that is occurring in the system. The idea that the issues in the system are a result of funding cuts is absolutely untrue. Every system in the world is under pressure, because over the last two and a half years we have experienced a pandemic like we have never experienced before. A number of detractors have used misinformation and made claims about the health system that are completely untrue and have no basis in fact whatsoever.

The member for Cottesloe talked about ambulance ramping. It existed under his government, by the way, as it has existed under governments of all persuasions. Let us look at the causes of that. Western Australia is faring very well, in national terms, in terms of how our emergency departments and hospitals are operating, but we know that there are pressure points. We know that if people stay longer in hospital, it makes it harder for people to come in through the emergency department. We know that that happens, so we are adding more beds to hospitals. The \$383 million emergency department reform fund was announced over two budgets and in last year's midyear review. As part of that, 120 temporary transition care beds will be made permanent transition care beds. The state is putting \$60 million into federal government territory—disability and aged-care services—to make sure that our patients are in more appropriate settings than hospitals. There is \$22.3 million to uplift the adult community mental health treatment teams to support people out in the community and keep them out of hospital, as it is better for people to be treated in the community than in inpatient wards. There is \$19.2 million in the emergency department innovation fund to allow clinicians to come up with ideas. We are asking the people on the floor, who know their area best, to give us their ideas, as we want to fund them and try them. We want to back in the work that those people are doing. There is \$19 million to extend the hours of operation of radiology and allied health services at adult tertiary sites to increase the number of patients who can be discharged outside business hours. Member for Cottesloe, I outlined that reform in the last midyear review. Hospitals operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and they will be able to discharge patients on weekends. We will get doctors, radiology and pharmacy services and social workers in on weekends to facilitate getting people out of hospital. That is what we are doing. We are putting together a business case for the state health operations centre, including \$18 million to develop the data that is required. That will be a permanent state health incident coordination centre that will centrally coordinate emergency departments, hospital beds and ambulance movements to make sure that people are moved to the most appropriate care setting in the quickest possible time. That is going to be a real game changer. We are doing the business case for that now. There is \$17.6 million for the active recovery teams to reduce mental health presentations. There is evidence behind these teams that support people after they have been discharged from hospital. People are intensively supported in the community to keep them out of hospital, and that is working. There will be \$12.2 million spent on two disability transition care pilots—one in South Perth and one in Coolbinia—to take long-term patients out of hospital who have psychosocial needs that are not being met by the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I met a young man in South Perth who had been in Graylands Hospital for nearly a year following a psychotic episode while on drugs. He had not been well enough to go straight home. He is undergoing a three-month transition that will see him well and back in his own home.

Acting Speaker, can I seek a short extension?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** No.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** There are no extensions in this debate—okay.

We have \$10.1 million to expand the complex needs coordination team. People are sicker and are staying longer. They have complex needs. We have to be able to coordinate their services once they are discharged, so that they can stay well and stay at home. There is \$5.7 million to top up commonwealth funding to provide respite payments. This service is currently not used by aged-care facilities because the funding is not adequate. The state is topping

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 16 February 2023]

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Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Lara Dalton; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Simon Millman

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that up and discharging patients to aged-care facilities whilst they decide where they want to go next. Hospital is not the best place for elderly patients who are medically fit for discharge. There are risks. It is not the place where they will be most well and live their best lives for the rest of their years. This funding is on top of the funding for emergency department waiting room nurses across 15 emergency departments, to address some of the recommendations from the root cause analysis of the Aishwarya incident at Perth Children’s Hospital.

The ongoing misinformation from the opposition and its deliberate ignorance—let us call it wilful ignorance—of what this government is doing to support our hospitals and our staff is frustrating and does a huge disservice to those people who work incredibly hard to provide the services that we all need in our community.

There was some mention of staffing reform and the nurses’ agreement. There is no question that nurses and midwives are the lifeblood of our public health system, and that is why we entered into the negotiations in good faith. We have absolutely embraced the historic reform of nurse-to-patient ratios. This is a historical reform and is one that I am very, very proud of. We have not signed an agreement with the Australian Nursing Federation because of the internal issues the ANF is experiencing at the moment. Despite that, we have given our nurses a pay raise of between three per cent and 4.5 per cent and have started the implementation of those important nurse-to-patient ratios, including for midwives, mothers and babies. This reform will take some time, but we are absolutely committed to it. We are committed to doing the hard work in our health system, and I implore the opposition to stop being wilfully ignorant.

*Division*

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms C.M. Collins) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

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

Mr R.S. Love  
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle  
Ms M. Beard (*Teller*)

Noes (46)

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 L. Dalton  
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  
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  
Mrs L.M. O’Malley  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr S.J. Price  
Mr D.T. Punch  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Ms R. Saffioti  
Ms A. Sanderson  
Mr D.A.E. Scaife

Ms J.J. Shaw  
Ms R.S. Stephens  
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski  
Dr K. Stratton  
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*)

Amendment thus negatived.

*Consideration Resumed*

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe)** [11.35 am]: Before I commence my substantial contribution —

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As in the bulk of my contribution, members! I was not trying to give myself airs and graces.

At the outset, there has been some commentary in this place on the Liberal leadership and some barbs were exchanged over the aisle yesterday and the previous day about it. Can I just say, congratulations to Libby. I have the greatest admiration for her capacity. Would I have preferred to have kept doing it? Well, yes, but as members know, it is the gift of members. I did not come into this place for my aggrandisement; I came here because I wanted to make this a better state. At the moment, that means holding the government accountable. Can I especially thank the many members who have offered me their kind condolences—kind thoughts.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Do not worry. I will get to put some marks on *Hansard*.

I will not embarrass any members by saying their names, but I can say that I have been really touched by those people who recognise that when you go through these things, it can sometimes be personally hard. As I said, I am grateful for that.

I want to address the Premier's Statement with a particular focus on some mythologies that the Premier likes to promote. After reading the Premier's Statement again, I wondered whether the Premier was hell-bent on peddling the usual spin or, worse, whether he is actually so blind to the issues facing this state that he is unaware of the poor performance of the government in so many areas. I will go through the Premier's Statement. That will be the substance of my contribution today. The Premier states that he is here to make life better for Western Australians. That is true. I doubt whether there is a member in this place who does not want to do that. Although I might disagree with some members opposite on many things—not everything—I know that every member I speak to here wants to make the state a better place. That is a fundamental purpose of our lives as parliamentarians. We want to make Western Australia better and life easier and better for the people in this state. However, the evidence is extremely sparse in demonstrating that this Labor government, halfway through its second term, is making that difference for the people of the state. A lot of government activity is in fact quite repetitive. As much as we like to think that the world hinges on what we do here every day, in fact, the great majority of government is carried out by public servants and other agencies, and they do an excellent job day to day. But the government has a role in reviewing laws and changing them, and ministers have roles in making decisions and interceding when they need to. But if we look at what the government has done over the last six years, as I said, it is really hard to find areas in which it has made life better for people in Western Australia.

**Mrs R.M.J. Clarke** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I will go through them just to remind members opposite because I noted a hint of scepticism in the interjection. If we cast our mind across the major areas of government, where do we find the government has made people's lives better? Nothing is better in health. We have just been through a debate on health. I will not go through all that, but I will highlight some areas in that. Nothing is better about our energy sector. That has gone through four years of materially worsening reliability. They are not my words, but the words of an independent agency review. Now we are in the ridiculous situation in which we cannot even get enough coal from our expansive coal deposits in Western Australia to keep our coal-fired power stations running. We have gone through this ludicrous and torturous exercise of having to literally get coal from Newcastle into the state.

Crime is rising and I might say especially violent crime. Under this government, there has been an almost 20 per cent increase in violent crime. I will go into this at as much length as I have time for in this place, but we have this situation and we know because we get the reports back from the regions. The situation is that police are being actively discouraged from reporting crime and charging offenders. This is from police being discouraged. We have a ludicrous situation in which there is a \$500 threshold for whether people are charged with a stealing offence. We have kids who may not go to school and suffer in so many ways but they can add up to 500 extremely effectively because of that. I just cannot comprehend how any member opposite can come into this place and not understand the absolute explosion of crime in the north of our state. As I pointed out in past contributions, increasingly the epidemic of youth crime is coming into the metropolitan area. We saw that over Christmas when we saw some extreme criminal activity occurring in Perth by children visiting from a regional area.

Education standards are declining with fewer high school students tackling four or more ATAR courses, especially in STEM. This government likes to beat its chest about how we need a new economy. Critically for that we need students doing sciences; we need engineers. What do we have in schools? Fewer students are doing the harder subjects that are going to be the critical feeders into the revolution the government talks about.

The housing crisis has been exacerbated by this government's sale of public housing stock, leaving us still with less public housing stock than when the government came to office. Our planning laws are absolutely trashing the amenity and comfort of family-friendly suburbs. It is all for the benefit of a handful of developers who, frankly, do not care about what they leave behind. Again, we get these glib statements from the Minister for Planning coming in and attacking me because I express concern about this. She should go out into the suburbs and talk to the people who live in Hollywood. They cannot even get to their houses because apartments are being built in ordinary suburban streets. I encourage members to go and look at what is happening with the apartment block going up opposite the rose gardens, a war memorial, in Nedlands. Members should tell me whether they think that is appropriate and whether any of them would tolerate that in their electorates. What the government is doing with ugly inappropriate infill is disgusting. The government has utterly abandoned ordered planning. It is doing nothing on the affordability of housing for the people who need it and has a hyper-focus on a handful of people who are going to be children of millionaires buying houses in the western suburbs.

We see more restrictions on water use from this government and substantially higher charges for families. We saw that massive increase with larger families being penalised for using more water because of the additional charge for water usage of 500 kilolitres or more.

We do not see any major substantial road projects tackling congestion in this state.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Go down the freeway. Go north on the freeway. What a load of rubbish!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** We do not. The government is continuing the already planned expansion. What is the government doing in major road developments to deal with congestion? There is nothing on Stirling Highway or Curtin Avenue.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** There is nothing. I think members opposite get my point. There has been a complete and utter mismanagement of major capital projects whereby we see a massive blowout of billions of dollars in the Metronet transport project.

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

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms C.M. Collins):** Minister!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** There has been a massive blowout in the capital program of this state and to the exclusion of other sensible capital projects that should be being carried out.

It took this government over six years to complete an 8.5-kilometre spur on the rail line. That is longer than World War II. It took 50 per cent longer than World War II to complete that one project. That is the measure. It took nearly two years longer than the 70-kilometre Mandurah line. Maybe Hon Alannah MacTiernan should be reprised as a Minister for Planning in this chamber. Someone should perhaps make way for her so that she can come in because, as I said, it took two years longer than the Mandurah rail line project.

We still have the Premier talking about his COVID performance and the COVID politics and overinflating WA's relative performance. Contrary to the Premier's claim that rest of Australia was completely devastated, that was not true. The rest of Australia not paralysed. It got on with things and got things done. Some things were done differently. Western Australia had the easiest task because we did not have major population centres on our land border with the other states. That certainly greatly simplified the situation for our state. People say that this has put us in a position whereby we are so much better off than the other states. I hear this claim by the other side that we did not stop mining. Guess what? No state stopped mining. Why? It is because it is a critical industry and every state kept it going. It was not some unique achievement by Western Australia. Every state kept its mining operations going—Queensland and New South Wales, in particular.

Our economy has performed well due to international demand for our commodities, and that is the same factor that has underwritten our state's modern economic history. The Premier cannot claim—I think he would like to—that international markets are somehow the product of what the Premier has achieved. I might say it goes no further than our low unemployment rate. Yesterday, the Premier was boasting about the low unemployment rate in the state of Western Australia. I had one of my staff print the latest figures. Let us look at how much better Western Australia has done than the rest of Australia with the unemployment rate. The seasonally adjusted figures for January 2023 show that New South Wales had 3.1 per cent unemployment; Victoria, four per cent; Queensland, 3.8 per cent; South Australia, four per cent; Western Australia, 3.6 per cent; Tasmania, 4.1 per cent; and the Northern Territory, four per cent. Guess what, members? We could probably draw a straight line on that graph, could we not, and it would be horizontal, parallel with the X axis. That is the measure of it. Yes, it is good that we have low unemployment. Every state in Australia has low unemployment. There is nothing magically different about Western Australia.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** Could I ask you a question?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** No, I really am pressed for time, but I am happy to chat to the minister afterwards.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I like the minister for mines. He is a good bloke.

The Premier's Statement went on to perpetuate another government mythology; that is, Labor's efforts returned the state's budget to surplus. What a load of absolute trash. I suspect that most Western Australians—or anyone who at least cares to study anything—know the truth. Our budget position is a result of two things. One is the rebound in commodity prices, primarily iron ore prices but also others, impacting royalties. The second is the GST fix that was put in place by the federal Liberal government. At that stage, Mathias Cormann was the Minister for Finance, a fantastic Western Australian advocating for Western Australia. Scott Morrison was the Treasurer. They were the people who did it. I just find it galling to see members opposite and the Premier sitting there claiming that somehow it was due to them. What a load of rubbish! It was because the Liberal federal members of Parliament worked hard, no-one more so than Hon Mathias Cormann in his role as Minister for Finance. He did that for Western Australia.

Let us look at the two factors together. In the 2020–21 and 2021–22 budgets, we see that the increase in government revenue was almost \$9.5 billion in 2020–21 and \$9.3 billion in 2021–22, whereas it was \$5.5 billion in 2019–20 and \$3 billion in 2018–19. Let us be frank here. The proverbial drover's dog could show an increase in the government surplus under those conditions. Those factors have nothing whatsoever to do with the government. There is no credit

in that for the government. It is not due to some fiscally prudent approach by the government; it is due to external factors that the government has no control over whatsoever.

I loved the rewriting of history yesterday. Actually, I do not love the rewriting of history; I am fascinated by the rewriting of history by the other side. We heard the Premier extolling the virtues of the domgas policy, which was credited to Alan Carpenter. The Minister for Mines and Petroleum should know—I am sure he does, but he may not talk about it—that, in fact, the gas reservation policy was set up in the very original state agreements for the North West Shelf gas.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Under those agreements, the first gas had to come to the state of Western Australia. That is what underpinned the investment by Alcoa and Western Power, as it was, in the gas pipeline.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** That's just not true.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Minister, go and read the state agreements, because I have.

**Mr W.J. Johnston:** No, that's not what happened. It's not true. It's a fabrication. It's wrong.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** For goodness sake!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister, the member is not accepting interjections.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As I say, I am fascinated by the spin. It was written into those agreements. That is why we ended up with a pipeline, underpinned by state investment and support from Alcoa to use the gas in that pipeline. Those agreements were put together by a Liberal–National government. That is the reason we had it. That was formalised to 15 per cent under Alan Carpenter. I freely admit that that was done under the Carpenter government, but it was formalised in the policy that already existed.

The Premier is talking about going to China. That is important; it is a major trading partner and we should have good relations. However, what was not forthcoming from the Premier was whether he contacted or visited China when it was cutting our agricultural exports. When it was cutting major exports that affected the rural industry in this state, he was not so forthcoming then.

The Premier likes to talk about the future. He talked about the Square Kilometre Array. Let us go through the history of the Square Kilometre Array. In 2009, the Liberal–National coalition government committed to the Australian Square Kilometre Array Pathfinder, or ASKAP.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** In 2012, the final decision was made to commit to the Square Kilometre Array; in fact, the project by an international group was to be shared between Western Australia and Africa. That project is simply being continued by this government; it is not a project that was initially committed to or commenced by this government. It is good to have it. It is a great project, but, as I say, it is not correct for the government to claim it as its project.

The Premier likes to talk about hydrogen. There is a proposal for Yara, which is mostly going to make ammonia out of natural gas, but it will take some hydrogen when it can get it as feedstock for its ammonia plant. That is a reasonably easy fit for it. However, where are the other major developments in hydrogen projects? We have seen major projects being committed to in other states. We have heard lots of talk, lots of spin, about all of this. I give the government credit for some of the investment it is making into research in some supporting areas to try to get a workforce in that area, but the reality is that we are not seeing projects commence. One of the main reasons we are not seeing projects commence in this state, and we will not for some considerable time, is the complete lack of adequate industrial land in Western Australia.

A couple of months ago, I once again drove past the Oakajee estate. I think every other time I have mentioned this, I have said that it is exactly the same as it was when I commenced in this place back in 2018. There has been a change, and that is that when I drove past it, I saw that the driveway through the old cocky's gate had been graded. There you go, members! Six years in and Oakajee has a graded driveway! I assume it is so that a tour bus can get in there and people do not have to get out and dirty their feet when looking at it. Otherwise, Oakajee is years away. The critical enabling infrastructure has not been installed, and we have heard nothing yet of meaningful plans to make it a working industrial estate.

Even more importantly, the Kwinana and Rockingham industrial estates and the Australian Marine Complex contribute over \$16 billion of state product to this state, yet we are almost at the point at which there is no land available in that area. The government has exacerbated the problem. How has it exacerbated it? Under this Labor government, the original proposed 1.5-kilometre air quality buffer around the estate was reduced to 0.5 kilometres. That will bring future householders into a direct conflict of interest with industry in that area, because industry impacts such as noise and odour are going to impact on residents and it will be harder and harder for businesses to operate in that estate.

The decision that the government made may have pleased certain property developers that the government seems to be enamoured with, but it will do nothing for future industrial development in Western Australia. There is an opportunity. The Latitude 32 estate is available, and it should be designated for heavy industry so that we can continue to expand. Why is that important? It is important because we need jobs where people are located. Sixty per cent of the employees in the Kwinana and Rockingham estates come from the immediate area. It is an area that has high unemployment. The members for Kwinana and Baldivis will know that 80 per cent of the employees in those businesses come from Kwinana and Rockingham and the Peel region. These are local jobs for local people. Based on my experience, these are extremely high quality jobs—the sorts of jobs members would want their kids to have. We are not seeing the development of industrial estates. Some land is available in Karratha, but, as I say, we are not seeing the industrial estates being developed and we are not seeing land being made available in the south of the state.

The Premier likes to boast about the \$1 000 in electricity credits that the government has provided to everyone. I think he should be embarrassed about the way that that was done and I will tell members why. When was the \$600 credit provided? It was provided when inflation in the state was about one per cent, but guess when that was? It was just before the state election. It was nothing more and nothing less than a \$600 bribe before the state election. We move forward and the inflation rate is skyrocketing, yet Western Power gave only a \$400 allowance to households. It did nothing for people who were homeless and struggling. Nevertheless, when did the government give the \$400 credit? It was just before the federal election. We know why it gives energy credits. It gives energy credits so that people will vote for it.

What is the government doing now to give cost relief to households in Western Australia? People are now suffering enormous stress. Half of the households in Perth are heading into some form of mortgage distress. I know that people in the electorates of the members in this chamber are contacting them because they are in dire straits. Let us talk about the so-called \$1 000 that has been given back. These were one-off grants. What has happened to the underlying fees and charges of this government? They have increased by more than \$1 000 during the term of this government. Just one year of that increase wipes out that \$1 000. The government talks about holding back fees and charges but it has done nothing to hold back fees and charges in its latest budgets. It has increased all the underlying fees and charges and just given back \$1 000 in two tranches of money to households when elections were coming up. The ludicrous thing is that the billionaires who live in my electorate received the same credit as those struggling in the suburbs of Southern River, Baldivis, Kwinana, Rockingham and Joondalup. People who are really struggling received the same money as billionaires in my electorate, and that is why I have been critical of that and why I will continue to criticise the lack of targeting. I commend the new Leader of the Liberal Party for the policy to provide \$300 million to relief agencies to help people who are struggling and in difficulty. Those amounts the government provided did not reflect people's needs; rather, they reflected political opportunism.

The Premier's Statement broaches the subject of public housing, and I am sure that other members will touch on this. After selling 1 300 public houses, the government is now boasting that it has 1 000 back on the books. Six years of this government and we are not even back to square one in social housing; no wonder so many people are struggling with rentals. Young people I know and dearly love—members may know of young people in the same situation—cannot get rental accommodation or they are forced to put up with most appalling landlords and rental situations because they are absolutely terrified that if they complain about substandard wiring or maintenance issues, they will lose their existing rental property and literally have nowhere else to go because so few rental properties are available. Obviously, that is exacerbated all the more for those people who are struggling and depend on public housing. The Premier informed us that he will allocate funding for two new Common Ground facilities. That promise has been around for years. The first Common Ground facility press release was dated 4 December 2019. All I say is do not hold your breath because, based on the performance of this government to date, these projects will not get off the ground.

We have heard the Premier talk about tackling youth crime, which is probably the state's most serious escalating social issue. The Leader of the Liberal Party talked about the issue of domestic violence, and I fully understand that that is a scourge in our community. But in terms of the escalation of a social issue, youth crime is an utter disaster. I have heard a couple of ministers come into this chamber and say that there are no significant issues; indeed, for a significant period, the Minister for Police denied that there was a crime issue in the north of the state, and then suddenly there was intervention for something that apparently he said did not exist. Unfortunately, I do not have time to do justice to just how serious this issue is. Members should go into those communities; it is the most personally distressing thing I have ever seen. I encourage ministers not to go up on a preannounced, well-prepared tour with a glossy tour bus. As I have already said to the Premier, they should contact some local communities in those areas, go up there with appropriate security arrangements and walk around and discuss the situation with the people in those areas because it is shocking and terrifying. The fate of the children in those areas is utterly horrifying. The communities are terrified. All through the Fitzroy Valley at Kununurra, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Broome, every community has been seriously afflicted. Outside of going to Carnarvon on a preannounced government tour, ministers should go any day and visit the shopping centres where they will see youth fighting and stealing—kids

not at school. It is an absolutely horrendous outcome. This government has failed to deal with it effectively. Whatever it is doing is not effective. I want to comment on the Target 120 program in particular. I like its objectives, but it is a voluntary program and the fact is that it is not reaching the people it needs to reach. That is the problem. The government needs to take this issue seriously.

The Premier boasted about his plans for the toughest gun laws in the country, which made a great headline with a big glossy picture. I have spoken about this before. A picture on the front page of the newspaper can always be guaranteed when one is sitting next to a .50 calibre rifle. Tell me what material difference that will make to the crime that ordinary Western Australians are experiencing on a daily basis. It will do nothing. It is a good headline but in fact it will not do anything materially to change crime statistics in the state of Western Australia. We will have a chance to explore this issue when the legislation comes before Parliament.

I have spoken about transport and transport-busting projects. There is a hyper-focus on Metronet and insufficient focus on the mode of transport that most people, the overwhelming majority of people, in the state use, which is private vehicles. That will continue to be the case into the future.

Unfortunately, members, there is just too much to cover in this place. Energy transition is a debacle. We have not seen the detailed plans but we have to see them because Western Australians are facing increasingly unreliable energy security in this state. Members, outside of the shield of COVID-19, this government is struggling in the key portfolio areas of health, law and order, education, industrial development and energy transition.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt)** [12.05 pm]: I rise to respond to the Premier's Statement and support the contributions of the members of the opposition who have already spoken. Before I do, I would like to note very briefly for the purposes of *Hansard* and posterity the reasons why I am no longer sitting in this Parliament as the Leader of the Nationals WA and the Leader of the Opposition. I proudly stand here today as the member for Central Wheatbelt and I will continue to do so until next state election.

Over the summer, I contemplated what the next two years—and the four beyond that because that is the commitment we make as local members—will look like for me. As the Leader of the Opposition outlined in his speech earlier this week, I started my parliamentary career in 2008 in the Legislative Council. I transitioned to the Legislative Assembly in 2013, and very shortly thereafter I took on the higher duties of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Regional Development. Later that year, I became the Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA and the Minister for Water; Forestry and, a year later, the Minister for Sport and Recreation. In 2017, following the defeat of our government, I became the Leader of the Nationals WA, and in 2021, in very unusual circumstances, the Leader of the Opposition. It has been an absolute privilege to hold all those higher office roles for the last 10 years, but I have felt no greater personal privilege than that of being the member for Central Wheatbelt since 2008.

My electorate is 100 000 square kilometres in size. I represent 27 local governments and countless more towns. As a minister and Leader of the Nationals WA, I have had the privilege of travelling to every corner of the state, which may sound glamorous, but for those who have also had the privilege of doing that, sometimes it is not so! It has had its moments. I have met some wonderful people. I have worked alongside members of Parliament from both sides of this house, and with our candidates in every federal and state election and by-election since 2005. I have worked with business and community leaders from St Georges Terrace down to the smallest community in our state. It has been an amazing ride.

In 2025, I will have been a member of Parliament for 17 years, and I know that my cup will be full and I will be ready for a new challenge. I am not sick. I have been asked that countless times. I am perfectly healthy—robust in fact. I have great faith in our team as we plot a path back to government and play a role in balancing out this Parliament and providing good opposition and hopefully government into the future. Our team will have my full support over the next two years. At the end of this term I would, however, like to pursue interests outside of public life and make way for others who have the necessary passion, experience, enthusiasm and ideas to bring to the role that I am privileged to hold now and for the next two years. I have given my absolute all to the role and I will continue to do so for the remainder of my time. I know in myself that this is the right time for me to move on. It is as simple as that. That is all I will say now, because there will be time down the track when the job is done for me to reflect on what those 17 years looked like.

It is time to continue the hard work of the opposition. I want to congratulate the member for Moore and the member for Roe for their elevation to the leadership of our party. I want to thank the member for Cottesloe for his collegiate approach to leading our alliance over the last two years. I also want to congratulate the member for Vasse on her ascension as Leader of the Liberal Party. They will have my support as we go forward.

I am now in the position that I can stand and deliver a speech on my electorate as the member for Central Wheatbelt. That has always been my passion, but when we have additional roles sometimes that comes at the end of the speech instead of at the start. Those who know me and have worked with me will know that health and education are of significant interest to me in my electorate but also as a space in public policy. I spoke yesterday and on Tuesday

on the importance of health services and education opportunities for all Western Australians no matter where they live in this state. Offering health services in rural, regional and remote communities is a perennial challenge for either side of government. We need to continue to work hard at doing that. Not one person in my electorate expects to have a Fiona Stanley Hospital at the end of their road in a town like Wyalkatchem, Tammin, Mukinbudin or Boddington. They do not have that expectation. They do have an expectation that in a state as wealthy as Western Australia we will get the basics right so that they are able to access emergency health services via the Royal Flying Doctor Service, with the support of good primary healthcare services in their community, thus preventing them from having to end up, heaven forbid, at the other end in our tertiary health system.

Sadly, primary healthcare general practitioners and allied health professionals are very hard to come by. That is not a new thing in regional Western Australia. It is also certainly not a new issue for me as the member for Central Wheatbelt. A new trend is emerging that general practitioners are ceasing to bulk-bill because of the lack of changes to Medicare at the federal level. That means that many in the community cannot afford to go to a doctor and end up presenting at our emergency departments and clogging up the hospital system. I am not blaming general practitioners or general practices. Most of them are unable to make the system work with the current Medicare rebate and have shifted to charging their patients.

I want to tell members what that looks like in my electorate. As of 1 February, no general practice medical service in Northam, the major community centre in my electorate, will be offering bulk-billing for patients. Northam is 99 kilometres from the Perth CBD. It is a regional service centre for the electorate and the catchment for the majority of the electorate.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members, can you please turn the conversation down a bit, thank you. It is quite distracting for Hansard and others.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you. As I have said, my electorate is 100 000 square kilometres in size. The majority of the community will have a doctor, if they are lucky. Some will have a hospital or district hospital in a neighbouring town. The two regional centres that we rely upon are Northam and Merredin, and Narrogin in the south, which is just over the border in the electorate of the member for Roe.

Northam Family Practice and Wheatbelt Health Network, which are two of a number of medical practices in Northam, recently sent a message to all their clients advising that from 1 February they would no longer be providing bulk-billing. They will still provide that service to people who have a Health Care Card. However, as we have heard from a number of opposition members, there are many people who are the working poor. They have income but do not have a Health Care Card. Many of those people have contacted my office and said this will make it very difficult for them to access GP services. We know what will happen. They will make the decision not to go to their GP, the issue will compound, and they will end up in emergency departments, which are the sole responsibility of the state government. I am not placing blame on Northam Family Practice or Wheatbelt Health Network or any of the other health services in the electorate. They are simply trying to survive and offer a service to their clients. It concerns me that people in the major regional centre in my electorate will no longer have access to bulk-billing. I urge the Minister for Health and the Premier to make sure that this is one of the first things that they raise with the federal Minister for Health, and also the Prime Minister, because this trend is occurring across regional Western Australia, not only in my electorate.

The other serious matter relating to doctors—again, there is a federal-state nexus here—is that there are simply not enough. If people in regional WA are lucky enough to have a doctor in their town and can afford to pay for it, they are in a good position. I want to make sure the Minister for Health and the Premier raise this with the Prime Minister and the federal Minister for Health to make sure that they understand the dire situation in regional Western Australia when it comes to accessing general practitioners and allied health professionals. Members may have seen the article on the front page of *The West Australian* on 27 January with the headline “Small town offering \$1 million salary in desperate bid to secure a doctor for local general practice.” Frankly, it was more shocking to me that that had made the front page of the paper. It is not news in my electorate. What hits the front page of the paper is normally new and shocking. It is not shocking in our part of the world for this to happen. In fact, it has been a normality for local governments to have to offer that kind of incentive, although that is a significant escalation on what they have had to offer previously, in order to secure a doctor for their community. Every wheatbelt community, and probably a vast number in the midwest and a big chunk of the great southern, would face similar challenges. There are probably only a couple of communities in my electorate that do not face that challenge. I understand that Beverley, because of its proximity to Perth and its liveability, has a number of doctors. It is flush with doctors. That is a great community for people to move to if they are looking for primary health care. Other communities are not so lucky.

I would put to members, particularly those in the metropolitan area who have city or town councils in their electorates, that they ask how many of them have had conversations with their local governments about having to pay for or



**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 16 February 2023]

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Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Lara Dalton; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Simon Millman

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build a clinic, pay the staff, pay a salary to the doctor to guarantee them an income and then allow the doctor to keep the takings on top of that, provide them with a house and a car, and making sure they have coverage when they need to go on leave, because they are the sole practitioner in that community. It is also a 24/7 job because they are also brought into the hospital system and are on call for the state hospital season.

In context, the population of Quairading is 961 people. That is 2021 Census data. The population distribution is older than the average for the state. It is also common across my electorate that our communities have a higher percentage of Aboriginal people compared with the state average. We also have older communities. Both those cohorts require additional health services. A GP is key to that. It is a small rate base from which to draw a \$1 million incentive. That is also certainly not the role of local government, yet it will do it because it knows that it will be the one that is criticised if the town cannot secure a doctor. We need more assistance from the state and federal governments to relieve our local governments from having to go down this path. Unfortunately, to add to this, there is a cohort of medical practitioners who are playing our local governments one against the other. They know that because those local governments are desperate, they can say, “I want this much, and if you don’t give it to me, I’m off down the road where I will get this much.” Every community is desperate to secure the services of a doctor. It is unconscionable, but it is business, and it is what we are seeing more and more. We go through the process of trying to ask these professionals to be reasonable, but the reality is that nothing requires doctors to practise in regional areas. It is much easier for doctors to set up their practice in the Perth metropolitan area and not have to face the challenges that many single practitioners have to face. For anyone who goes along this pathway, it is a great, worthy, rewarding and enormous learning opportunity to work in a hospital in a small country town. However, it is not easy.

When we look at the statistics, we see that we are going in the wrong direction. When I met with Rural Health West last year, it said that the situation was the worst it has ever seen. Rural Health West is responsible for helping to recruit doctors into regional Western Australia. In 2017, there were 80 GP vacancies across regional Western Australia. In 2022, there were 115. The clear trend is that year on year, there has been a decrease in the number of doctors recruited, and an increase in the number of doctors who are retiring. The problem is getting bigger, and the recruitment drive is not working. A WA Country Health Service internal paper identifies that for every doctor it loses to the system, it needs to be training two full-time equivalents to replace them, and that is not happening. Curtin University graduated 50 to 60 students—I think it was last year; it may have been the year before—and only two of that cohort took up regional placement. It is not enough. That problem of not delivering primary health care ends up in the tertiary, and most expensive, part of our health system. We need to do better at making sure we have GPs, nurse practitioners and allied health professionals paid and attracted, recruited, looked after and housed—all of those things—in our regional communities because the prevention aspect of that is significant and yet not enough focus is put on costing what that prevention looks like as a real cost to our health budget. It is six years in and this government on all of those indicators is failing on the very basics. Although I have talked about the responsibility of the federal government, there is an intersection for the state government because our health system relies on GPs, allied health professionals and specialists to work. We need to make sure that we are doing better to look after the health of our regional communities.

I will talk briefly about housing. I spoke about this on Tuesday as part of the Premier’s Statement debate. The housing issue is wrapped up in the attraction and retention of people into our regional communities. I have heard ministers say, when they are around, that they are doing the very best they can to deliver on the pipeline of promises they have created; however, I have seen nothing in my community. I think one house has been delivered out of that social housing package. Out of the \$6 billion surplus delivered last year, there could be the creation of a long-term regional development headworks fund. I hear ministers opposite say that we are a policy-free zone. They clearly need to clear the wax from their ears. Last year at budget time, we said, “Over 10 years, with a billion dollars, create a long-term plan to pull out some of the stops that make it difficult for the private sector and local government to invest in communities in regional Western Australia.” It costs too much to develop land-and-house packages in regional WA. For the most part, it is not an attractive proposition for the private sector in areas outside the coastal strip of the south west and the metropolitan area. It simply does not work. That is where government has a role to play. We have had that on the table for over 12 months. It is a policy position that governments of both persuasions have had over the course of the past two decades—even three. It is not something that is out of the box; it is just sensible long-term policy that is supported by the industry and local government sector and others trying to develop and assist the government to deal with this housing crisis that is getting worse and worse. It has increased to a crisis level over the past six years.

The face of that housing crisis and those numbers that we talk about regularly is the people who walk through the door of the office of their local member of Parliament and who are escaping family and domestic violence and have nowhere to go and do not have a place to live, or people who are living in substandard housing and simply cannot afford to leave and, therefore, are causing conflict with their current landlord. It is people who have gone

through medical issues through no fault of their own and then find themselves without a financial security net to allow them to enter the private market. They will not be able to overcome that in the current market.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** They will not be able to overcome those challenges as the cost-of-living pressures we see in Western Australia continue to rise. Housing is fundamental. Health is fundamental. They are two issues that this government is failing to deliver on, yet we see multiple billion-dollar surpluses year on year. It just does not add up when we see the wealth that is being generated in this state, yet there is a growing cohort of Western Australians who are under significant pressure and this government fails to step in and make meaningful change.

In the time I have remaining, I want to touch briefly on transport. As a member representing the wheatbelt, it would be remiss of me not to mention that we have just had another record year in the agricultural sector—the grains industry. For two years in a row, our harvest records have been broken. In celebrating those wins, we pay testament to everyone involved in the industry—those who take the risk to put the crop in the ground, those who do the science behind the scenes that provides the varieties that allow us to grow significantly improved crops with reducing amounts of water while managing our weed load, as well as all the challenges that come with farming in a low-water and challenging environment in the wheatbelt, right through to the supply and logistics. CBH Group is the prime carrier in the logistics and the supply chain manager for the industry. In January, CBH surpassed its intake of a 21.3 million tonne record that was set the year before. For me, it is worth reflecting in this place on the hard work and the investment that farmers make every year to put in multimillion-dollar crops without knowing whether they will get a return at the end of that year. It will generationally change the wealth that has been accumulated for some of those families who have never seen two years in a row like this, and it will create some wonderful opportunities for those who have been in the industry for a long time, as well as those who have just started. I hope there will be cause for reflection and celebration at the end of the next year. As every farmer knows, it is a year-by-year proposition and we never count what we do not have in the bin. However, in the past two years, there have been many smiles on the faces of people across my electorate who are involved in that industry and the people who support them.

The big challenge we have—it is a short-term challenge because there is a long-term plan of both the state and federal governments and industry to improve supply chain logistics to get that grain to port in a more efficient manner—is the carryover sitting in bins upcountry that is compounding year on year. In the short term, we need the government and industry to come up with some out-of-the-box thinking around how to clear some of that; otherwise, it will cost growers and the state the opportunity to capitalise on the prices set in an international market. There is a time frame in which the industry can capitalise and maximise that. If it cannot get it efficiently out the door, on the boat and to market, it costs growers and the state dollars that we can ill afford. I know that if this were the mining sector facing a short-term challenge, all stocks would be pulled out and we would be asking what we can do to ensure that supply chain and industry is supported to ease that. I am not sure that that thinking is being done. The reality is that that supply chain will face increased pressure over the next 12 months. If, as predicted, we have another bumper crop, it will be a very big task at the end of this year.

I call on the government to make sure it is thinking outside the square to clear some of that backlog and support industry and the mechanisms it will need to get through the next two years. The longer term plan for that supply chain still needs ongoing investment from the state and federal governments. It is not something that can be peppered in. It needs a twenty-first century logistics network, road and rail—not at the expense of one or the other. We need to make sure that our roads and our rail system can deliver on the task that we have so successfully delivered over the course of the past 10 years. Although I acknowledge that there has been some investment on Great Eastern Highway, the major east–west network road in and out of the state, that work is already failing and the sections beyond Northam, and then Merredin to Southern Cross and out to Coolgardie, are little more than a goat track. I drive a pretty reasonable car and I spend a lot of time on the road. I hang on for dear life between Mundaring and Northam on some sections of that road and if I go beyond the edge of my electorate. I can only imagine what it is like for a road train carrying a full load of grain or mining produce or for drivers in a little buzz box, as so many of our inexperienced drivers are. They bottom out regularly. I am not over-egging it. With the ruts, divots and pushouts, it is very serious. Great Eastern Highway and Brookton Highway in my electorate cannot get enough investment. Alongside that, we need to continue to invest in making sure that we get tonnage on rail. That needs to be a rail and road logistics system for the twenty-first century.

Just briefly in relation to rail, I have stood in this place and spoken about passive rail crossings and the ongoing campaign by Lara Jensen and families in my electorate, and across the state, who have been impacted by the loss of loved ones as a result of passive rail crossings being unlit and improperly signposted and the trains themselves lacking lighting. Last year it was 20 years since Lara lost her brother and his friends at a passive rail crossing just out of Jennacubbine in my electorate. Through many, many inquiries—state and national, coronial, parliamentary and investigations by industry—they have persisted to try to get improvements. Before the federal government changed, the former Liberal–National federal government committed to increasing funding to upgrade passive rail

crossings across Australia. I have been asking the state government to pitch in to add to that in Western Australia so that we can fast-track some of those upgrades.

At the same time, they have continued to campaign for changes to light up the trains. Trucks in the road transport industry are lit up like a Christmas tree every time they leave the depot. Trains do not have the same requirement. When someone is travelling parallel to a train at night in my electorate, they are quite often taken aback and surprised to know that there is a significantly fully laden train travelling alongside them. If someone comes around the corner, as many of my constituents do, to get into their own property or to cross the road and there is only a Give Way sign—there is no ditch lighting or actual requirement for a boom gate to drop—accidents do happen, and have happened.

I point out that Lara's brother had an impeccable driving record. He was not speeding or under the influence. These are not people who are reckless drivers. The impact on those families who lose their loved ones is felt forever. The impact on the train driver who goes through the trauma is felt forever. That is why they continue to campaign, and have my support and the support of my colleagues, to make sure that we have the regulatory changes required to improve lighting on trains, and also that we see real investment into passive rail crossings across Western Australia to prevent unnecessary deaths. When we are in a state as wealthy as Western Australia, it is something that we could and should prioritise.

The Minister for Tourism walked in just before I stood up and he wanted to have a chat with me. He made some very strange motions with his hands. He was referring to the ballooning championships that my electorate is going to host at the end of this year. The Australian National Ballooning Championships and the Women's World Hot Air Ballooning Championships will be held in Northam at the end of this year. Ballooning enthusiasts from all over the world will come to Northam. I am told that we are one of the prime locations in the world for ballooning. If members have not been to Windward Balloon Adventures in Northam and taken the time to go ballooning, particularly when the canola is out, I encourage them to do it. It is the most magnificent experience that they will ever have. I am terrified of heights and I hate flying and I would do it every day of the year. It is so special.

They had this planned for two years before COVID hit. There have been a few expense blowouts. They have had some support from the state government and they are looking for a little bit more. I pitched to the minister that maybe he might like to see that big whale shark that has been in Times Square attached to a balloon basket sailing over the canola fields in full blaze. That might be something that Tourism WA would like to see beamed across the world. I am looking forward to that conversation with the minister.

As my time comes to an end, I want to just note that, as a result of the leadership change and reshuffle, I have taken on the new shadow portfolios of mining and petroleum, Aboriginal affairs and electoral affairs. I am very much looking forward to getting stuck into meeting with all the stakeholders in those portfolios. There are some significant issues in all three, particularly in Aboriginal affairs. I pledge my support to the Voice ahead of the referendum to be held later this year. I will meet with those who support it and those who do not or have questions. We need to have a respectful conversation across Australia about how we take this next step. It needs to be done respectfully, without making people feel like they cannot ask questions. Personally, I pledge my support. I am supportive of that.

With the two minutes that I have left, I will say that this is a state of great opportunity, wealth and people. However, we are missing too many opportunities and that wealth is not being shared. There are too many people who are being left behind. I am afraid that apart from the massive budget surplus and that economic piece of the argument, the Premier and his government are failing to meet key performance indicators that any decent government should make a priority. The affordable, decent homes that the Premier talked about are now further from the reach of most Western Australians than before this government took office. Life is not better or fairer for those who are struggling to pay their bills or keep a roof over their head. It is not better for those who work in our failing health system or those who need to use it. It is not better for those people who have endured constant power blackouts and the impact on their households and businesses that it creates, and it is not better for those communities that have seen crime and dysfunction rage out of control.

I look forward to continuing the hard work of the opposition to prove that there will be a good alternative for Western Australians at the next state election. I look forward to getting stuck into my shadow portfolio roles and making sure that the issues that impact the people of the Central Wheatbelt are heard loud and clear in this Parliament.

**MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary)** [12.36 pm]: It is a great privilege to stand and respond to the Premier's Statement. Before the member for Central Wheatbelt departs, I just want to thank her for her contribution. It is always difficult to follow the member for Central Wheatbelt. When it comes to presenting her arguments, she has the facts absolutely right. She presents her case in a very factual way and it is a real testament to her and what she brings to the Parliament. Her departure from the Nationals WA, together with the departure of her colleague Steph Ryan in the Victorian Parliament, will diminish the National Party in Western Australia and Victoria. It is a shame to see two young passionate advocates for the country depart the political stage. I do not know what we can do as a community to try to encourage people like the member for Central Wheatbelt and Hon Steph Ryan to perhaps stick around a little bit longer.

Personally, I just want to say how impressed I have been with the contributions that she has made while I have been a member of Parliament since 2017, and the contributions that she makes to debates. I thought what she said just now in her reply to the Premier’s Statement regarding access to general practitioners in her community was precisely on point. I disagree with the member on her conclusion of the role of the state government in that, but she nailed the issue. I think the Parliament of Western Australia and the people of the Central Wheatbelt will be much the poorer for her departure. I just wanted to thank her for her services to those people and to this Parliament. I would just like to mention the member for Cottesloe and congratulate him on his service as the Leader of the Liberal Party.

I will follow on from those two contributions with what I wanted to talk about in my response to the Premier’s Statement. I love the consideration of the Premier’s Statement because it gives us an opportunity to talk at length about what is going on in our local communities. Members have stood before me and articulated with great clarity all the great projects that are being undertaken in their local communities and why they are so proud to represent them. I think that those contributions speak to the “what” of effective government. What do we get when we govern effectively? What tangible benefits can we deliver to our communities when government is going well? I will do that. Do not worry; I have a long list of local achievements in Mount Lawley and in the health portfolio as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health. I will recite these achievements as the “what” of good government.

I want to go a bit behind that during the opportunity that I have in the broader debate on the Premier’s Statement to look at what might characterise the “how” of effective government. What are the essential pillars that governments need to do a good job, operate effectively and deliver effectively for the communities they serve? Since the Premier delivered his speech on Tuesday afternoon, I have been thinking about the key attributes of good governments and the things they need to demonstrate to fulfil their promises to the community. I have tossed and turned, considered and contemplated, written things down and crossed them out, but for the time being I have distilled it down to three key attributes that are unequivocally and unmistakably attributes of the McGowan government since its election in 2017. The first is stability. A good government needs stability. It needs a steady hand on the wheel, a competent and effective cabinet, and ministers who know their brief and can speak with authority, persuasion and intelligence about their portfolios. So, the first thing a government needs is stability.

The second thing a government needs is credibility. It needs to go out and say to the community, “This is what we are going to do and this is why we are going to do it”, and then to go ahead and do it. It needs to establish reciprocity with its community, whether it is Mount Lawley or the state of Western Australia, so that it can say, “This is what we propose to do”, and do it. When I was phoning constituents during the COVID pandemic and interacting with people on social media, people kept saying to me that although they might not agree with the decisions the Premier was making that affected small businesses, the tourism industry and those sorts of things, one great source of comfort for them was that when the Premier said he was going to do something, he did it. An incredible reliance could be placed on his public statements. The only time I can recall things changing was when the original proposal, announced before Christmas 2021, to open the state borders after Australia Day the following year was pushed back a month. Even then, the Premier had said it was the government’s intention to do that. He could not guarantee that that was when the borders would be open, because a constellation of circumstances were going to affect the safe way to do that. Thank goodness we postponed the opening of the borders. We increased the vaccination rate and then the borders opened at a later time. That is the only occasion that I can think of when the Premier announced his intention and then had to vary it slightly. I think this engendered a great deal of trust and confidence in the government on the part of the community. Credibility is the second thing. Credibility is important. When the government asked the community to follow mask mandates, get vaccinated or work from home or work remotely, it needed to do it from a position of trust and confidence. When the Premier stood up to talk about the COVID response, time after time he thanked the people of Western Australia. Although the government has been praised almost universally for the way in which it handled the COVID pandemic, there is no way it could have been anywhere near as successful if the community had not come with it. My hypothesis is that the reason the community came with us is that the government was credible; we said what we were going to do and then did it.

The first two attributes are stability and credibility. I think the third and final characteristic of how to do government well is flexibility. I think a government needs to be intellectually agile. When circumstances change, it needs to respond accordingly. It needs to be able to drop the nice-to-dos—the things that a government would love to do—down the list of priorities as more immediate priorities come to the fore and its attention is grabbed by them. One example of that was the paying down of the enormous debt that was left to the Labor government by the previous Liberal–National government. We would love to have paid down more of the debt that was left to us, but we needed to put billions of dollars into our COVID-19 response. We would not have had as effective a response to COVID and protected and kept safe the community of Western Australia if we had focused only on paying down the debt. The money was available because of sound financial management, and that money needed to be spent on responding to COVID. It is exactly the same argument when we look at the skills shortage that we are experiencing. The supply chain, skills and training and apprenticeship choke points meant that there was a lack of qualified staff coming

through. When the government saw these issues on the horizon, it needed to think about how it was going to get more people into jobs and apprenticeships. What did it do? It cut or froze TAFE fees and made TAFE more accessible, and all of a sudden a pipeline of workers opened up. Governments need to respond to the challenges that they are faced with, and they can do that if they have demonstrated a capacity for the first two limbs. If a government has demonstrated a capacity to conduct itself in a way that is stable and credible, it will have the faith of the community to be flexible because it will have already earned its trust. If a government is stable and credible, it will have the freedom to be flexible. These three attributes all work in concert. I do not think one alone will be sufficient; all are necessary. If a government can demonstrate those three things, it will be well placed to deliver good and effective government.

The trouble with the opposition is that it does not have any of those attributes. The Premier spoke in his statement about the state's AAA credit rating through Moody's and Standard and Poor's that the Labor government has recovered since it was elected in 2017. The first point is that we will hopefully fight the next election campaign on sound financial management, and we will do that because of stability. Since 2017, we have had two Treasurers. Hon Ben Wyatt served for four years as Treasurer until 2021, and Premier Mark McGowan has served as Treasurer since. We have had three Ministers for Finance: Hon Ben Wyatt, who was both Treasurer and Minister for Finance; Hon Tony Buti, the member for Armadale, until the minor cabinet reshuffle before Christmas; and now Hon Sue Ellery. That is three Ministers for Finance over the entire course of this government, which is now into its sixth year. That stands in stark contrast to the previous government. I will list for members the Treasurers of the previous government. They were Buswell, Barnett, Porter, Barnett 2.0, Buswell 2.0, Barnett 3.0, Nahan—seven successive Treasurers over the course of eight and a half years. Is it any wonder that Moody's, Standard and Poor's and other sensible commentators said that the former government did not know how to do financial management and could not balance the books? The Liberal-National government had a succession of Treasurers; it was chopping and changing. There were half a dozen Ministers for Finance over the course of the previous government—O'Brien, Nahan, Nalder, Marmion and L'Estrange. I have spoken previously about 2014, as it was incredible. The three finance ministers who featured in 2014 all increased land tax. This is the party that is supposed to be opposed to taxation! The previous government's three finance ministers in 2014—Hon Mike Nahan, Hon Dean Nalder and Hon Bill Marmion—were all responsible for land tax increases. When it comes to evidencing stability of financial management, the former Liberal-National government did not have a leg to stand on. Members opposite cannot demonstrate stability. I have never seen anything like the recent rotation that took place on the opposition bench—every single person moved into a new position. Congratulations to the member for Roe. The member for Roe is now the deputy leader, the former deputy leader is now the leader, the former leader is now the shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the new member is now the Whip. In the Liberal Party, we have had the toss of a coin.

I was walking my dogs around Forrest Park in Mt Lawley last night when I bumped into a constituent of mine. Let us call him Nick, because that is his name! I have not spoken to him about whether I would mention him in *Hansard*, so I will not give members any more details than that.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** Nick Catania!

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Nick Catania has moved, so he is not a constituent of mine. He used to be my constituent and I am always happy to speak to him. He is a testament to that name.

I said to Nick that Parliament is back this week and asked him what he thought. Nick is a businessman who lives in a very nice house in the avenues. I think it would be okay to say that Nick is not a traditional Labor voter. I do not know whether he voted for us before 2017. It is a secret ballot, but I am confident that he voted for us in 2021. He is not a traditional Labor voter, but he said that the Liberal Party does not do any succession planning or articulate what it is going to do and then goes ahead and does it. He said that it just chops and changes and does not have any credibility. I thought Nick was absolutely right, and that got me thinking about credibility. I wonder whether Nick was seduced to vote for my predecessor in Mount Lawley on the basis of some of the promises that were made in 2013, like Metro Area Express light rail and investing in Royal Perth Hospital—promises that were not delivered. The opposition comes up short on stability and credibility.

On the matter of flexibility, I was not entirely sure how I could rebut the opposition's position, because when we look at its stated position on particular policy matters, we can see that the opposition is more flexible than gymnasts. It is doing backflips and cartwheels and turns and everything. It was incredible to listen to the audacity of the member for Cottesloe when he talked about coal after standing there with a previous Leader of the Opposition, the honourable Zak Kirkup, to say that the Liberal Party would close down all coal-fired power stations in two years, which would have had disastrous consequences. That literally threw the Liberal Party's candidate for Collie-Preston under the bus and it would have had disastrous consequences for energy security in Western Australia. That was before the 2021 election, and now the opposition has reversed its position almost entirely. It is a complete backflip.

I am astounded to hear the phrases "working families" and "working poor" that I am surely going to hear ad nauseam because it has been tested by the opposition in its focus groups and all the rest of it. This government has credibility because people know what the Labor Party stands for. We stand for equal opportunity and investment in health and

education, and we stand in support of organised labour. When we give our contributions to the Premier's Statement, we talk about how and why these things are important to us. Our communities know these are the things that featured in our inaugural speeches and are the things that are important to us and motivated us to be members of the Labor Party and to stand for Parliament.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** I have not done this exercise, but I would be astounded—I am happy to take a bet—if the phrase “working poor” featured in the inaugural speeches of the members for Roe, Moore, Central Wheatbelt and North West Central, and particularly the member for Cottesloe, or even the member for Vasse. What do they stand for? They did not stand for it when they were first elected to Parliament and they have not talked about it before, but all of a sudden, because of the polling or focus groups or whatever exercise the opposition has undertaken, the opposition has latched onto it. I think we will hear more of it, but the opposition lacks credibility with the community when the community does not know what the opposition stands for because the opposition does not know what it stands for and chops and changes what it is trying to articulate.

I said at the start that I was impressed with the contribution of the member for Central Wheatbelt, and I am, but the member drew the wrong conclusion, particularly on GPs. I have articulated one of the challenges that the Minister for Health articulated much more clearly and cohesively than I have. We face a number of challenges in the Western Australian health system. That is without doubt. They are as a result of a one-in-100-year global pandemic that has put incredible pressure on health systems around the world. Every health system around the world is facing incredible and unprecedented pressure, and we are no exception to that. Every health system is looking to hire workers. The red-tops in the UK, the *Daily Mail* and all the rest of it, are going ballistic about our campaign to hire police and nurses from the UK. They talk about the audacity of the Western Australian government trying to recruit people to live in one of the most beautiful places on earth! We are facing the challenges that every other jurisdiction is facing when it comes to the pressures on our health system. That is fine. That is an unarguable proposition. But those pressures are not the consequence of any inaction or underinvestment on the part of this government.

One of the reasons that I think we saw massive double-digit swings of 10 per cent to the Labor Party in the recent federal election that cost Ben Morton his safe seat of Tangney and, although Christian Porter had already retired, his seat of Pearce, was the years and years of neglect of health care by the federal Liberal and National Parties. They had not invested precisely the money that the member for Central Wheatbelt should be asking for to support GPs, bulk-billing and primary care. The member is right when she says that if people do not have access to GPs, they will take up spots in our emergency departments. There is no doubt about that, but the blame for that does not lie with the state government and all the work it is doing investing in health, but with the former Liberal–National coalition government that spent years and years underinvesting in primary health care. This government is now working constructively with the federal Minister for Health and Aged Care to look at ways we can promote access to primary health care and encourage more students to get into university to study medicine and encourage more medical students to decide that they want a career in general practice and more graduates to decide that a career working in the country is what they want to do so that those communities can get the services to which they are entitled. We agree with the member for Central Wheatbelt that those communities should have access to those services, but we disagree that it is the fault of this state government. This state government is working tirelessly to address primary healthcare issues across the state, but that is not all, because the same can be said of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Again, for years and years, the NDIS was undermined by the previous coalition government. Bill Shorten is the responsible minister and original architect of the NDIS. He shows a real and passionate commitment to restoring that service to the level that the people of Australia should expect, and strength to his arm. If we can provide those necessary services through the NDIS, again, that will take pressure off our tertiary health system.

I have mentioned aged care before. We have many excellent aged-care providers in Western Australia, but we have to make sure that we get people who are taking up time in hospital that is clinically not appropriate for them to transition into aged care. The previous federal government was the subject of a royal commission into aged care and the title of the interim report was *Neglect* because the previous federal government did nothing to address the crisis in aged care. Once again, the McGowan Labor government is working with the Albanese federal government to facilitate access to aged care and transition people out of tertiary hospitals into aged-care positions to free up those beds for the people who need them because, clinically, it is actually better for their health, and to take the pressure off our tertiary health system.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** I look forward to seeing it because just about every regional aged-care set-up can't make the numbers add up, so I look forward to seeing the results.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The member raised an interesting point. Has he heard of the Monash model? Does he know about the funding regime and the funding tiers?

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** Yes.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 16 February 2023]

p373c-402a

Ms Meredith Hammat; Ms Lara Dalton; Ms Libby Mettam; Dr David Honey; Mr Shane Love; Amber-Jade Sanderson; Ms Mia Davies; Mr Simon Millman

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**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** The advocacy that can be made on behalf of people in Western Australia is to say there are unique geographical circumstances that pertain to Western Australia that mean that Kalgoorlie is not equivalent to Wollongong. These are the types of sophisticated and intelligent arguments that a sensible government with credibility, stability and flexibility can make. This government gets a hearing from the federal government, which is something we did not get from the previous Scott Morrison government. We know what the issues are and we act in the interests of the entirety of Western Australia. We are not interested in a secular division between the country and cities.

**Mr P.J. Rundle** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, members. Under standing order 61, this business is adjourned until a later stage of today's sitting. The member said "live sheep export" and that threw me!

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 414.]

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*