

Mr Mark Folkard; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Jags Krishnan; Mr Geoff Baker; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr David Michael; Ms Jessica Shaw

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**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2023–24) BILL 2023**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2023–24) BILL 2023**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach)** [4.00 pm]: I rise to continue my speech, yet again! I have not made a speech in recent times in which a division has not been called or I have not been interrupted. Coming back to my speech, I was talking about three tells and the ability for politicians to hear what people in our community are saying, as well as learning by observing. I spoke of going to the supermarket on Tuesday mornings and watching to see what happens. Tuesday mornings are a key time because catalogues hit mailboxes on Mondays for the following week and the first opportunity to access the sale prices is on Tuesday mornings. I tend to watch seniors. They line up and race in with their freezer bags. They go straight to the freezer shelves and grab the TV dinners. The TV dinner range is on special, at between \$3.50 and \$5.50. They load up on them. When asked why they are doing this, it is because they cannot afford to buy fresh produce to produce a meal. The cheapest way they can feed themselves is to buy frozen TV dinners. That is how these people survive. In my electorate, I have an abnormally high concentration of immigrants from the United Kingdom. A lot of them are on a fixed pension scheme, so every dollar is a lot to them. When you do not have a dollar, a dollar means a lot.

The second tell for me is how many kids are using breakfast programs at high schools. Kristy Watson, the fantastic principal of Clarkson Community High School, told me the other day that she has observed as interest rates have risen that a greater number of students attend their breakfast program. Simply, families are losing the ability to feed their kids at home. They are coming to school and using the breakfast program so that kids can get a full tummy before they start learning for the day. She made the observation that it appears as interest rates are growing higher, the more their program is used.

The third tell I look at in my community, which concerns me a bit, is about the Curriculum and Reengagement in Education school in my electorate. The principal of that CARE school tells me that between 25 and 30 per cent of his students couch surf. They do not have a home or they are not living at home. His observation is that this figure has been steadily rising over the last 12 months. Those three small observations about constituents in my community tell me that things are very tight. Things are very tight, members.

This year's budget has seen nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars of relief directed to reducing the cost of living for mums and dads and householders in my electorate. That is in addition to the \$2.8 billion this government has delivered over the last five years. I was doorknocking in my electorate last Friday. Numerous constituents said to me that the \$400 that every household is going to get in the supplement for their electricity bill in this budget has been really well received. When I am out there, I come across quite a few seniors. I mentioned to a couple of them that if they both have pension cards, they may be entitled to as much as \$826 to assist them with their electricity bill, which is good. I spoke to some other people about HUGS, which is a great name. The hardship utility grant scheme has been increased by 10 per cent. Locally, in the metropolitan area, that is worth about \$640. Up north where costs are greater, particularly for purchasing fresh food and fuel, the value jumps up to \$1 060 for people in the north of our state. In addition, \$21 million has been quarantined for regional airfare zones. That scheme caps air fares so that people travelling to and from Perth to the regions are not being extorted by our airlines. A cap is put on those airfares so people wishing to come home to see their families in the metropolitan area can do it without exorbitant costs. Bear in mind that for a normal family, a husband and wife with two kids, that is a significant amount of money just for one trip home, so that is good. We have also kicked off free public transport on the Sunday at the beginning of each month. Every Sunday at the beginning of each month, our transport system is now free. That is a good idea. I can see that people who do not use our transport system could use this as an opportunity to give it a try. Particularly if there are events in the CBD, my constituents can jump on the rail line and zoom down to have a look. It might be the first time for some people to experience the rail line. That is a good one.

Another aspect that is really finding traction in my electorate is increasing the seniors' cost-of-living rebate in line with inflation. We are going to increase that by \$15.6 million. I have run out of booklets for seniors. Referring to page 16 of that booklet can save some of our seniors in excess of \$3 000. Everywhere I go, I hand out those booklets because if they have a Seniors Card and they refer to page 16, there can be significant cost savings. Most of our seniors are not aware of that so everywhere I go, I hand them out. I have gone through about four boxes of them now and I think there are a couple of hundred in each box. I am trying to track down another couple of boxes for that same purpose—to hand them out to seniors. When I tell seniors about page 16, they have an "Ah, bugger" moment. I tell them, "Really!" Instead of paying full tote odds for their rates, they can get a significant cost saving. They can also get a discount on car and licence rebates. The booklet tells them where to find those discounts. When people are on a pension, every cent counts. There are small things we can do to help them, particularly when times are hard,

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as they are at the moment. Another area is utility costs, which are being capped at 2.5 per cent; that is half the inflation rate. We have to increase those costs. I get that. Are we increasing them at the same rate as inflation? No, we are not. We are doing it in small grabs. The cost of production of our utilities—power, water et cetera—increases over time. By making small increases that are manageable in the household over the longer term, we will avoid massive price hikes at a change of government to catch up with those costs. Those small incremental cost increases will alleviate a big whack that would happen if we did not make them. Make no mistake; that will come. That is what is occurring over on the east coast. Our cost increases have been 2.4 per cent. I have family who live on the central coast of New South Wales and their electricity bill has jumped 50 per cent! Last time I checked, it was the same 240-volt power. They are paying an extreme amount over there and it keeps going up. Luckily, we have good governance from a good government and we did not sell off our electricity production here. We are in a good environment going forward.

We have maintained the two-zone cap on public transport and we will keep that going. That saves punters who work in the CBD at least \$1 000 a year. There are kids who live in my electorate who go to Aranmore Catholic College in Leederville. It is a two-zone fare for them to go down there. For two kids, that will save a couple of thousand bucks—thanks for coming. This government is looking after people by capping those fares, ensuring that those who utilise our public rail system are not extorted by excessive price rises and, more importantly, that they get more value per zone. To me, that is good.

The McGowan government prides itself on community safety. The evidence of that is we have invested in 1 000 additional police officers. We also need to invest in the support structures around those officers so that they and other emergency service workers can communicate throughout our big state. Having worked in black spots out in regional WA, I know that effective communication is critical. We are going to spend approximately \$82 million to upgrade our emergency service network throughout the state for our volunteer firefighters, career firefighters, state emergency service personnel, police officers, paramedics and ambulance staff, and this will save lives. Effective communication in an emergency is an absolute must. I hope that a standalone system will be developed that is charged by renewable power so that it will not turn off when our power system collapses.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** I know that we are going to spend \$25 million to create a permanent disaster recovery team. That is smart. What we seem to be finding at the moment, with the cyclones at Kalbarri and the midwest and the flooding in the Kimberley, is that we continually have to stand up these recovery disaster teams, so it makes sense to have one available all the time. I know that at the moment it is focused on weather events, but I am certain that this team will be able to help with fires, because recovery in that environment is just as important as the initial response. I note that will be the same for other natural disasters—heaven forbid we have an earthquake; I shudder to think! Not many of us remember the Meckering earthquake, but we have been subject to earthquakes over the years.

We are going to spend \$12 million to extend Operation Regional Shield to enhance safety in our community and deal with the problem of youth crime. That is a no-brainer; when crime is high, we need to put more police officers into that area. Bringing them out of the city to go into regional WA to assist in that environment is a smart move. Again, this is what responsible government does.

I turn to health costs. When the McGowan government first came in, we had a methamphetamine action plan. I have noticed that when we work hard, come together and put our heads in the same room, we have some great successes. This particular action plan saw a significant reduction in methamphetamine drug usage across the state. I am not making this stuff up. The national wastewater drug monitoring program saw a 10 per cent reduction in meth usage alone in WA. This government has a record of achievement and that is evidence of it. It is not me stating this; it is a fact that the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission has actually evidenced this. When we do things in this state, we get it right and we succeed. As I said previously, the methamphetamine action plan works.

Since coming into government, we have spent about \$8.8 billion to improve our mental health system. That has a direct correlation to the methamphetamine action plan. The Mental Health Commissioner's budget has increased by 60 per cent. That is over \$1.4 billion. There was a small thing I noticed that went into the budget, and not too many people will probably speak about it. There has been \$220 million set aside to improve Graylands Hospital. I have been going there since Moses was playing for Jerusalem. I am sorry to say that I have taken too many people there because our systems have not worked over the years. For the last three decades, everyone has been whingeing about the quality of the systems there. I can remember delivering people who were very sick to some of the back wards there and some of the adventures that we had. What frightened me is that it was open to the public. A person with a camera could have taken a photo of the people there. It should not have been allowed. I am hoping that, with the improvements to Graylands, all that will go away; it will be built out through the renovation of that aged facility.

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With that, I think I will conclude my statements about the bills. I commend the bills to the house.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.16 pm]: I am certainly pleased to give my contribution in reply to the 2023 budget with my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. I will start with a quote from the Premier. It states —

My WA Labor Government will always support the people of regional WA ...

What he should have said was “My WA Labor government will always support the people of regional WA, as long as they are in Labor-held electorates.” The member for Mount Lawley knows that the size of my electorate is 5 912 times the size of his electorate. He knows that we need facilities and funding. We have many requirements in our large regional electorates. Unfortunately, when I look through the budget for the electorate of Roe, I struggle to find anything new except for some maintenance on a crane at the port of Esperance, member for Victoria Park. That is encouraging. There will also be some maintenance on a road into the port of Esperance. When my constituents look at the budget, they will be pretty depressed. The thing about it is that the people of WA are actually onto it. We have seen the letters to the editor on the weekend after the state budget. One is entitled “Crumbs and a concert not enough”. We have a Mr or Ms A. Morovich from Winthrop, who says —

The masses seem to fall for it every time, so I suppose it’s a tragic human flaw.

Several members interjected.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** I will not be taking interjections today, Madam Acting Speaker. I have got a lot to get through.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Members!

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** The letter continues —

The latest examples are Mark McGowan’s \$400 for power bills and a concert at Optus Stadium.

I will correct A. Morovich; there are actually two concerts at Optus Stadium as of yesterday. It continues —

How quickly is attention diverted away from the shambles in our hospitals, ambulance ramping, the homeless, nearly \$600 million on useless RAT tests, crime rates, prisons and food prices?

Several members interjected.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** I am just quoting —

Is human nature that shallow and fragile?

We’ve basically been sold on a measly \$400, instead of calling this arrogant Premier out on all his failings.

It’s sometimes hard to know whether to get angry at the leader or the people.

That sums it up pretty well. I have a couple of other quotes from some letters.

**MR J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

Several members interjected.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** How much damage to prison infrastructure —

**MR J.N. Carey** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister!

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** I am finding it hard to concentrate here.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Housing, please!

**MR P.J. RUNDLE:** I am finding it hard to concentrate, but I will press on, and I will not be taking interjections. A quotation from another letter states —

How much damage to prison infrastructure will West Australians put up with so Mark McGowan can be re-elected on a Mr Tough footing?

Another one states —

Once again, our “one trick pony” in charge of the State, Mark McGowan, goes to the tough-guy stance over riots at Banksia Hill.

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We have seen it again this afternoon. The \$400 power rebate is accompanied by a 2.4 per cent increase in utilities, which comes to \$154 a year. Certainly, from my perspective, the government is giving with one hand and taking with the other. It is a very similar cut-and-paste policy to last year's budget. We heard the question from the member for Vasse today about debt reduction. I have run a farm budget for 40-odd years. I know how a budget works. The Premier today talked about the fact —

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I do not think the member is seeking interjections and wants to be heard in silence.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Absolutely. Members, please, the member for Roe said no interjections. Just let him have his 26 minutes.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

The Premier today admitted that when he has his projections for long-term surpluses, he does not take any notice of them because they will change and the government will come through with a different arrangement when next year's budget comes along. We have had \$19 billion in surpluses over the past five years. The Premier; Treasurer's own projections over the forward estimates are for \$11 billion of surpluses. There is \$30 billion and then when we project to the June 2027 forward estimates we will end up with \$35.9 billion in the state debt. When the Premier came in in 2017, it was \$31.9 billion. He says, "Isn't it great—we're paying off the debt. Isn't it fantastic!" I am sorry, but that is \$4 billion worse off over a 10-year period with \$30 billion in surpluses. I do not know where the Premier is coming from, quite frankly, and it is quite concerning when I look back at the excellent work that the previous government did, such as Fiona Stanley Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital, and Busselton, Albany, Kalgoorlie, Karratha, Katanning and Narrogin—any number of hospitals. I tell you what; I am glad we built them and that we renovated them. I am glad we built Optus Stadium, because this government cannot seem to deliver anything. I am concerned about the lack of delivery.

I do not want to sound like a broken record, but most upsetting for me is Esperance Senior High School. Here is a senior high school built in the 1960s with a litany of issues, which I will take members through in a minute. As the shadow Minister for Education, I do not begrudge any funding to any school in this state, but, last week, the Premier and the Minister for Education were in the Premier's electorate to announce \$100 million for Rockingham Senior High School and Safety Bay Senior High School. Members can imagine how the people of Esperance felt when the Premier announced that. Their high school was built in the previous decade and real issues were identified with it in the early 2000s. As I said, I do not begrudge any funding to any school around the state, but it concerns me that last year Hon Sue Ellery, as the former Minister for Education and Training, said, "I'm quite comfortable for the Esperance community, P&C and the school board to stump up \$50 000 to do a master plan, because I'm not going to pay for it. Let the Esperance community pay \$50 000 for a master plan for state government infrastructure." I still cannot get over that. I hope that the new minister, the member for Armadale, will see the light in relation to Esperance Senior High School. I am sure he will not try to force the Esperance community to pay \$50 000 for a master plan for state government infrastructure. That was a disgrace. We have 1 000-odd students at Esperance Senior High School. There are a lot of complex educational needs. The Premier's own statement says that there is a focus to ensure every student receives a quality education no matter where they live, but, by the way, it will not be funding something 900 kilometres away from the metropolitan area.

I have a series of photos of Esperance Senior High School that show concrete cancer. It has had to rope off different areas of the school. In the middle of winter, the canteen is not up to it. It is very dark. The toilets are not up to standard, so a lot of students do not want to use the toilets during the school day. We need a performing arts centre. Time and again I hear about the Baldy performing arts centre or one of another metropolitan high school. Students in Esperance are jammed into a normal classroom trying use their musical instruments. It is not good enough. It needs an undercover area and an upgrade to toilets, security and access, including perimeter fencing, senior campus science labs, facilities compliant with providing a safe environment, a new administration office and main office, and, of course, the new build of the senior campus for years 9 to 12. I will be sitting here this time in 2024, and I will be looking forward to seeing Esperance Senior High School in our state budget.

I go on to agriculture because, as usual, agriculture seems to get very little mention in the state budget. I know many members have probably had enough of me asking questions about live export and the like, but I was very disappointed with the Premier's response last week. There has been massive publicity about the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's live export panel that came over here with short notice, which the member for Central Wheatbelt has been right on to. The concern and lack of confidence of all of our regional sheep growers

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put upon them by the federal agricultural minister has been all over the regional press. When I asked the Premier about it last week, he was not even aware that the panel had been over here. I am in a state of shock. The reason the Premier should be aware that the panel was over here and that the federal agriculture minister is cutting the live export industry is that in his budget, he has allocated \$22.2 million to electronic ear tagging implementation for sheep and goats. Here he is—the Premier who will not stand up for sheep farmers or regional WA, and his Minister for Agriculture and Food who will not stand up to the federal agriculture minister. Up to 97 per cent of live export trade is from Western Australia, and they will not stand up. The government is overseeing the demise of the sheep industry in Western Australia, but, at the same time, it is allocating \$22.2 million to the electronic ear tag system. It just does not add up. Why will the Premier not stand up for regional Western Australia? Why has he allocated that \$22.2 million if he is going to oversee the demise of the sheep flock? Once the number of merino sheep gets below 13 million—that is the critical mass, as the critical number, for a self-replacing flock—it will start to drop rapidly, but the government is talking about increasing processing capacity and all these things. I will tell you what; once we get below that number, the processing abattoirs will struggle to have a viable industry. The sheep flock is a \$136 million industry that provides 3 500 jobs, but we have a Premier who will not stand up. We have a Premier and a Minister for Agriculture and Food who are overseeing the demise of the sheep industry, yet, at the same time, the government has allocated \$22.2 million on ear tags in this budget.

The member for Burns Beach referred to mental health funding. Producers will require mental health support. I do not think that this government understands that when a producer has worked over many years to produce a good quality sheep flock, it is very important that they have continuity and can keep breeding ewes and the like. A lot of farmers will have suffered a loss of confidence after what they have seen over the last few months. After the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fishers and Forestry made his announcement, sheep prices dropped. They will need support unless this Premier and his agriculture minister can somehow stand up and be counted. They need to talk to the federal agriculture minister and let him know that it is a \$136 million industry that provides 3 500 jobs. The Premier needs to stand up.

Another issue that concerns me is the Mira Mar landslide in Albany. It is not in my electorate but I have been down there recently. The plight of the landholders is quite concerning. It has been more than two years since the landslide and questions remain about its cause. Was the landslide caused by a Water Corporation burst pipe or natural causes? I will certainly be asking questions during estimates. The homes of two home owners have had to be demolished. Three homes at the bottom of the hill have clay and soil going into their backyard and onto their porch et cetera. There has been no support from the local government and very little support from the state government. There was a \$500 000 allocation last year and this year there is a \$200 000 allocation—if you don't mind. That \$700 000 will probably pay for 274-page report that has just been released.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.J. RUNDLE:** The report has identified issues and solutions. I hope for those landholders that the short-term solutions are put in place in the next three to four weeks. I am waiting for the member for Albany, the state government and the Minister for Regional Development to come to the fore with some solutions or compensation, whatever it might be. These landholders have spent two years in the wilderness and they need communication. That is not good enough by a long stretch.

As I said before to the member for Victoria Park, the two main features in the budget for the electorate of Roe are the allocations of \$7.4 million for the port access road and \$6.5 million to repair a crane at Esperance port, which is quite concerning. Where is the CT scanner for Katanning Hospital? There is no sign of that. What has happened to the \$2.5 million for the Katanning Research Station climate change project? It seems to have disappeared from this year's budget. I will be asking what is going on with that project during estimates.

Certainly, I welcome the \$61 million—I do not want to be too negative—for Government Regional Officers' Housing. The minister always thinks that he is on the wrong end of our stick when we talk about regional housing, but I welcome that funding. I have a recent example of a regional shire that is keen to build nurses quarters. It has asked for Department of Communities land to do that. Once again, I have engaged with the minister and I will keep engaging with him. We have blocks of land out there and shires that want to build nurses quarters for the WA Country Health Service but they just need some land. On some occasions, they have received land, but the Departments of Communities and Housing do not want to let it go and I do not know why. When a local government is keen to get involved, the government should grab that opportunity.

I turn to education. Once again, it is hard to find staff and it is hard to house staff so, once again, I welcome the \$61 million. Why does the \$12 000 higher education contribution scheme relief for nurses not extend to teachers, because it is just as hard to get teachers into regional areas as it is nurses? Last year, the budget contained \$20 million for transportable classrooms; this year it seems as though the allocation is \$124 million. I would welcome getting

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those extra classrooms. Theoretically, 86 transportable classrooms were to be put into the mix. Will 500 transportable classrooms be built?

As per my question without notice today to the Minister for Education, we need to address the rising level of violence in our schools. The questions are: What are we doing? Where is the money in the budget? What programs are in place? Last year, 672 students were in their last year of training to become teachers in our regional and metropolitan education workforce. We need to encourage people into the workforce. What we have seen over the last day or so with the videos and violent statistics is of real concern. Of course, the members for Moore, Central Wheatbelt and Vasse receive phone calls at different times from regional teachers and nurses worried about their security and their standard of housing. It is a real concern when the Premier and the Minister for Tourism are in India and China and say, “Let’s bring in international students”, because when they come to Western Australia, they will have nowhere to live. This is a real issue and the government needs to address it properly.

I briefly want to talk about the road network in my electorate because there are real issues. For those members who have branched out into the regions lately, after the recent roadworks, we are seeing road trains going through and sometimes leaving a twin push-out dent right down roads. We saw one the other day just north of Crossman. Millions of dollars have been spent on the bridge in that area, with an overtaking lane on one side and a massive pushout. There was an accident involving a road train on the weekend. I obviously contacted the transport minister. We are seeing this right around the Agricultural Region. It is a real issue.

The South Coast Highway does not appear to have featured too much in this year’s budget. I welcome the funding for the road from Kelmscott to Williams, which will hopefully improve some things. We are getting to the stage that if someone has a small car, it will bottom out if its wheels are in those two trenches. This is a real worry for me, given some of the more inexperienced drivers who may be on those country roads. We need to look out for them.

I wanted to talk about payroll tax. The government has provided relief to larger companies that have a payroll of more than \$100 million. They will no longer have to pay the marginal tax rate of six per cent, which is good. I do not mind that relief being provided for our larger companies, but what about the small businesses? Where is the payroll tax relief for small businesses throughout WA? I think the government has dropped the ball in this case, given the difficult trading times they are experiencing.

As the shadow Minister for Sport and Recreation, I welcome the increased funding of \$7.5 million a year for the community sporting and recreation facilities fund. I think every member in this chamber would welcome that funding for our 138 local governments, which are all vying for it. Whichever government is in office, this funding needs to be increased. As I said, I welcome the \$7.5 million increase. Over time, there should be opportunities to leverage other funding, with one-third from sporting clubs, one-third from local governments and one-third from the state government. We have seen many great projects in the regions. When the member for Central Wheatbelt and a former member Hon “Tuck” Waldron were ministers for sport, royalties for regions supplemented the CSRFF. It was a great thing for our regional communities. That is really important.

I did not want to let today go by without once again mentioning the appalling manner in which the Auditor General was treated over the past few days. I know it is not a budget item, but it is an item about which this government needs to have a good hard look at itself. Comments made in the Legislative Council last week by Hon Sue Ellery, who basically pointed out that the Auditor General may be a COVID denier, were very unfortunate. The Premier did very little to put that to a stop today. He could not really answer our question whether he agreed with the Auditor General’s report on rapid antigen tests. We all have a stack of RATs in our offices. My stack is about four or five boxes high and I have done my best to distribute them. Hon Peter Foster’s RATs were sent to my office in Esperance. That was a concern. The Auditor General has done good work to identify issues with the Public Trustee, which the Attorney General does not seem to want to deal with. The Auditor General is a shining light. I do not like the way this government has criticised her.

The final issue I want to address relates to the lack of funding for not-for-profit bodies at a time when there are many vulnerable people. I am talking about the likes of the Western Australian Council of Social Service, Anglicare and Foodbank Western Australia. We have all visited Foodbank. All members of the opposition have visited its headquarters in the last few months. We have seen the fantastic job that it is doing for our more vulnerable citizens. The government has a \$4.2 billion surplus and it cannot seem to find any money to help out those agencies.

The Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party recently put up a \$300 million policy because they have identified the importance of these not for profits and the good work they do. I would like to think that the government will have another good hard look at itself this year because this is not the time to take with one hand and give with the other; this is the time to help out those not-for-profit bodies. As I have said to the member for Mount Lawley, with my electorate being 5 912 times the size of his, this is the time for the government, with a surplus of \$4.2 billion, to actually look after our regional areas. I appreciate that \$6 million will be spent on repairing

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the crane at the port of Esperance but the communities of Esperance, Narrogin, Katanning, Lake Grace and many others will be looking for something that might help people on the ground.

We have seen a government with this cut first, consult later policy, whether it be in the areas of forestry, marine parks, fisheries or lobster—the list goes on. We need more consultation and more support for our regional electorates. As members of the opposition, we represent five regional electorates. I would like to see that support.

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie)** [4.46 pm]: I am delighted to rise to speak to the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 relating to the state budget and to make my budget reply speech. I want to begin by talking about the great benefits in the budget relating to the cost of living. Seniors often have fairly meagre incomes. They will be assisted in this budget with a package worth an extra \$15.6 million. They will receive plenty of additional assistance, relating to things like the Seniors Card. That was a Labor initiative. Kay Hallahan was the minister when we introduced the Seniors Card into Western Australia.

There is also cost-of-living support for small businesses in the budget, including a \$650 credit on their power bills, and recognition that overheads for smaller businesses have been increasing, so smaller businesses will also receive assistance. For householders, the budget includes the \$400 energy relief package. I heard the member for Roe say that the government gives with one hand and takes with the other. It is essential that we assist people with this \$400 for their energy bills. At the same time, we have to be realistic and not make the mistake that was made in the past of keeping electricity prices constant and then playing catch-up later when costs inevitably rise. This is a perfect demonstration of good financial management. It is a measure that not only helps people, but also ensures that we are looking to the future by investing in our electricity network and electricity pricing, recognising that that will change dramatically.

That leads me to my next topic—to me, this is the great standout of this state budget—the investment in taking action on climate change. This is a \$3 billion investment designed to help us achieve net zero emissions by 2050. There are some amazing initiatives here. There is the \$368 million King Rocks wind farm. I think that might be in the member for Roe’s electorate.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** That’s out at Hyden; that’s in the electorate of Central Wheatbelt.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** I stand corrected. I worked on a wheat bin down at Holland Rocks, which I would have thought is almost in the member’s electorate. This is going back a long time.

**Mr P.J. Rundle:** It’s right on the edge. I think it’s King Rocks–Hyden.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** That will be a great contribution to that part of the south-eastern wheatbelt, the great southern, and an opportunity to build a huge wind farm there. I can recall the Albany doctor, I think it is called that locally, and how strongly that blows in the evening, so there will be a very good, reliable wind source there, that is for sure. There is an investment of \$2.3 billion to deliver a 500-megawatt battery energy storage system in Collie. This is an incredibly huge and ambitious project, but one that makes enormous sense. We have transmission line capacity that extends from Collie, so to store electricity there and then dispatch it across the south west interconnected system through the networks just makes so much sense. That will be such a boost. It will further ensure that Collie remains a town that embraces industry of all kinds and has industrial capacity, because it will have an energy base. It will have a reservoir, this 500-megawatt battery, that will store and provide electricity to all kinds of industry. It will ensure that we have continued good industry with all the infrastructure and skills capability there to enable this transition to take place.

I refer to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It is very interesting that in the lead-up to the next Conference of the Parties—COP28 in Dubai later this year—we as a subnational jurisdiction are making such tremendous headway on these climate change initiatives. I think it is something that we can be very proud of. In those discussions at COP28, it will be very interesting to hear how other jurisdictions are investing and the order of magnitude of their investment in climate change initiatives. This is a magnificent \$3 billion investment and it really will go a long way. The Collie initiative that I just mentioned will help deal with the reality of the phasing out of the state’s coal-fired power stations, which are gradually being retired by 2030, and that is important. We are expanding rooftop solar. If we look at power generation on the south west interconnected system at the moment, we see that the biggest combined generator of electricity is actually rooftop solar on homes and some businesses around the south west interconnected system. It really is turning out to be a very well constructed system in which we will have not only central storage and central power generation through the big wind farms, but also this distributed generation through the rooftop solar network that we have around the place. That is another very exciting aspect to the decarbonisation of the south west interconnected system. It is something we can be extremely proud of and take to places like COP28 and note the interest and global recognition that I think we will achieve from that level of investment.

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Of course, to support this transfer to clean energy, we have to have a strong minerals base. There are provisions in this budget that will assist with the prospecting for those rare earths and precious metals. We have been very cautious with our projections on things like lithium prices, noting the volatility of the price of lithium. I need to declare—it is already a matter on parliamentary record—that I hold a modest shareholding in the lithium company Neometals. I hold 4 500 shares, and I think at the moment they are worth about 68¢ each. I shall keep an eye on their price with interest. Interestingly, Neometals is also working closely with some German companies in a joint venture looking at the recyclability of batteries. I think this is going to be important. It is all very well to take lithium out of the ground, and certainly Neometals has some greenfields projects, but it is also looking to develop the sorts of technology that will mean that a Tesla or a Nissan electric vehicle, whatever the vehicle and whatever the battery, can be recycled in a cost-effective way. Some recycling systems demand a lot of human resource as well as energy input, so these systems that Neometals is working on are very interesting and will be very important, as well. That is another part of our transition to this clean energy future.

There are some really great headline indicators in our state government's financial management. It really is just tremendous to see the economic growth projection, which is 4.25 per cent over this current financial year. That is a very good achievement at a time when so many places in the world are still enduring consequences from not only the COVID pandemic, but also especially the war in Ukraine. There are some quite remarkable achievements here. Another achievement is the fact that our net debt is going down to \$27.9 billion. I will indulge the house here a little with a discussion about debt. Recently, I was absolutely astounded to learn that the United Kingdom has only just extinguished its debt from its payment to the slave traders that was the mechanism by which the Slavery Abolition Act got through the Palace of Westminster in 1835. The only way the government could get the Slavery Abolition Act through was by compensating people for their inability to continue to trade slaves. It had to compensate them for stopping slavery. It is absolutely amazing. In the 1830s, slave traders were paid the amount of £20 million—that today is the equivalent of about £17 billion—and that debt was paid off only in 2015.

A member interjected.

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** It is a fascinating thing. To its credit, *The Guardian* has been going through some soul-searching and has revealed some very interesting facts about those stately homes that we see sometimes on programs like *Antiques Roadshow*, owned by noble families in the British aristocracy who, in fact, were often very heavily implicated in the slave trade. They were the owners of the cotton and sugar plantations in the Caribbean. People have heard the wonderful noble story of William Wilberforce, but the truth is that the only way the government passed the abolition of slavery in the 1830s was by compensating these people. A magnificent story in *The Guardian* by David Olusoga refers to the trick of slavery and how people were given the idea that industrialisation was a genius bit of British exceptionalism, that the industrial revolution just sprang from British soil because the cooler climate gave people the time to reflect and their creativity led to all that industry, when in fact the question of where the capital and resources came from was never asked. It was all from the slave trading era. People are asking questions about it. The Trevelyan family was a beneficiary of this massive compensation payment and has formed a group of beneficiary families who are asking questions and want to go some way towards making amends for how their families historically received this incredible wealth.

It just goes to show that through trickery, all sorts of schemes can have consequences on a debt line in a national budget. That is not the case here. Scrutiny of our budget makes it very clear where we have accumulated debt. During the Barnett government, serious mismanagement in resolving various pay claims in the public sector set us up for an incredible net debt, and a succession of budget deficits added to that net debt. We provide clarity on debt in Western Australia. Fortunately, we are paying it down, and there are economic benefits that come with that. We will have a lower interest bill to pay. That is a parallel that can be drawn with a household budget. The interest the government pays on state debt is similar to the interest that a person pays on their mortgage, and there are consequences that come with that.

The budget is an example of some fine economic management. It is a budget that cares about people who may be struggling and finding paying their electricity bill a real challenge. I have constituents who receive their electricity bills with great fear and have to make choices about how they pay those bills. They prioritise which bills to pay in order to pay their rent and what have you. For those people, we have schemes like the excellent hardship utility grant scheme. I note that during my time in this place, there was once a stage when the Barnett government, again, sought to get rid of HUGS. We have a longstanding commitment to help people, who of course need electricity, to be in a position to ensure that they can pay their electricity bills and have no problems with that.

There are so many other facets of this state budget that are a tribute to good economic management. Western Australia contributes about half of the value of the nation's merchandise exports. It is a sign of the industrious nature of Western Australians. It has to be said that it is something we are very fortunate to have as well. Let us not kid ourselves; it is a matter of huge good fortune that we have this incredible wealth in mineral resources in our state.



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It is our duty to make sure that the exploitation of that mineral wealth is done in a way that is as sympathetic as possible to environmental values and seeks to engage and provide wealth to workers but also enable them to develop new skills in other areas so that they can be part of diversifying the economy.

I wish to conclude on that section of our state budget about initiatives to diversify the economy such as ensuring that we have the capacity to continue to attract, or bring back, international students. For a long time, international students were the nation's third-biggest export revenue earner, and we want to make sure that Western Australia gets its share of that. I think currently we are well below our 10 per cent of the national quota of revenues that could be achieved from that particular revenue stream. We have to do something about that, and I know a panel is now reviewing the situation. I commend this budget to the house. It delivers on many facets and is further testament to the quality of government the McGowan team is delivering.

**MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary)** [5.06 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023. I am very pleased to follow the member for Thornlie. I was particularly heartened to hear his emphasis on the investment to address climate change. I do not think any jurisdiction in Australia is doing as much as the McGowan Labor government to tackle climate change. I see the Minister for Environment is in the chamber. I want to place on the record my congratulations to the minister for his advocacy in cabinet during the budget process to secure such a significant proportion of funding to address climate change. It is something that is very important to and held dear to the hearts of many people in the Mount Lawley electorate.

I rise to make a contribution to the debate on this year's budget, but before I do so it is important to acknowledge the context in which this budget was delivered. As a state, we are emerging from the greatest shock to the international economy since the Second World War. Never before in our lifetimes have we seen the upheaval that was caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic. It is fair to say that the state faces significant challenges in unprecedented times. Fortunately, this budget responds to those challenges. To the constituents in the electorate of Mount Lawley, I want to make it absolutely clear that as a government we see the challenges that confront us. We have a cost-of-living situation that is putting ordinary Western Australian families under financial pressure. We have a significant proportion of our population facing increasing rents and many people struggling with homelessness. As a state, we are not immune from global labour shortages. The government does not seek to hide from these challenges nor to minimise them. They are real and they are significant. However, notwithstanding that no-one could have predicted the COVID-19 global pandemic, tackling all three of these challenges is something this government has been doing since it was elected in 2017, before the pandemic. If the people of Western Australia continue to repose their trust in us, we will continue to build towards that and tackle cost-of-living pressures, labour shortages, housing shortages and rates of homelessness.

People need only look at this budget to see that the work the government is doing to tackle cost-of-living pressures. Not this year but over the last few budgets, we have contributed to households throughout Western Australia with electricity credits. Some were distributed as a result of windfall gains. The first electricity credit was a result of the resolution of the Bell litigation, orchestrated by our Attorney General. That windfall gain was distributed to the community to help with rising cost-of-living pressures. This year, the budget will once again provide \$400 of relief to energy bills to ease the cost-of-living pressures faced by the community. There will also be additional support for people with the Health Care Card so the most vulnerable in our community will get the most contribution, which we think is fair and consistent with Labor values. Secondly, through cutting land tax, putting downward pressure on payroll tax and supporting small businesses, this government recognises the important role that small businesses play in our economy as drivers of innovation and job creation. We are additionally providing a \$650 credit for small businesses throughout Western Australia, particularly in the Mount Lawley electorate. To further assist the most vulnerable members in our communities, the budget will increase the cost-of-living rebate for seniors in line with inflation at a cost of \$15.6 million. Additional money is being provided for all households in Western Australia and there is additional money on top of that for small businesses, additional money on top of that for the most vulnerable in our community and additional money on top of that for our seniors. That is looking after the people of Western Australia, which is what this government has a reputation for doing. Recognising that this is a challenging time for many, the McGowan government has also committed to keeping fees and charges low, with increases limited to 2.5 per cent for 2023–24. That is well below inflation. That is dealing with the cost of living.

The second challenge I refer to is housing. All the work that has been undertaken by our Minister for Housing to tackle housing is reflected in this budget. This budget delivers a \$750 million boost for housing supply and housing choice initiatives. This includes a \$511 million boost for social housing and homelessness, taking our government's investment to \$2.6 billion over the next four years. A \$450 million increase in funding to the social housing investment fund will mean a total of 4 000 houses will be added. We recognise that homelessness is a challenge.

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That is 4 000 houses that the government will construct since we started this program in the midst of the COVID pandemic, and 1 200 of them have already been delivered.

When we were elected in 2017, we said that Western Australian jobs were our number one priority and they remain our number one priority. In fact, there are now more Western Australians employed than ever before. Talk about delivering on our election promises; we promised that Western Australian jobs would be our priority and we now have 1.53 million Western Australians in work. That is an increase of 220 000 jobs since we were elected in 2017. This budget speaks to lower unemployment and greater job creation, which is a signature hallmark of the McGowan Labor government. We also said that we were committed to preparing our kids for the jobs of the future. That is why, when we were elected, we had to slash TAFE fees that had been drastically increased by the previous government to make sure that a pathway to employment was open for young Western Australians. We prioritised local labour. Our other packages for health, education and housing all put a premium on making sure we have a pipeline of workers coming through to tackle the labour shortages we are facing. Western Australia is in the same situation as every other jurisdiction throughout the world. They are all facing critical labour shortages at the moment but this government has the policy levers in place to address them.

As we have in the past, in the future we will implement our plans to address each of these areas. Constituents in the electorate of Mount Lawley should know that we, as a government, see these challenges but we have a plan and we have their backs. This is not merely a reactive budget that responds to these three challenges. In my mind, this is a budget that probably does more than any budget in a generation to set up the future of our state. This is a budget that delivers infrastructure in three key respects—health, transport and climate change. We were elected in 2017 on a promise of putting patients first. I can safely say that with a \$2.7 billion investment in health and hospitals, and the highest per capita investment in health in any state in Australia, the Western Australian McGowan Labor government is committed to putting patients first. This extra \$2.7 billion investment in health will mean that our total new investment since we were re-elected in 2021 is close to \$10 billion. The investment also reaffirms that the McGowan government is committed to making our healthcare system affordable and accessible, and ensuring that people receive the world-class health care they deserve as residents of Western Australia.

I want to break down some of the things that are particularly important to me, which I think really speak to some of the things we should be tackling as a government when it comes to health. Firstly, we have allocated \$544 million over the next four years for the construction of a new women's and babies' hospital. Additionally, a new family birthing centre will be built alongside the redevelopment of Osborne Park Hospital to ensure that first-class maternity and neonatal services will be available for the residents of the Mount Lawley electorate, which includes people who live in Mt Lawley, Yokine, Dianella, Coolbinia and Menora. Those people have access to the redeveloped Osborne Park facility. I spoke to someone today who was born at Osborne Park Hospital. There is a great tradition of Osborne Park being the leading maternity hospital in the inner northern suburbs. This is a government that has also always put an emphasis on medical research. I want to give a shout-out to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Medical Research, the member for Victoria Park, who was with me and the Minister for Medical Research when we recently toured Royal Perth Hospital to see some of the terrific innovation that is going on there. One of the great things that this budget does is make a \$100 million investment in electronic medical records. This is an esoteric concept, which is not as flashy as an infrastructure build or investment in a school but it will have a critical impact on the delivery of health services in Western Australia not over the course of this budget, not over the course of the forward estimates, but over the next decade and beyond. This will bring our health system right up into the twenty-first century. As well as providing world-class health care through our electronic medical records systems, researchers have said to me that some of the depersonalised data will unlock the potential for incredible research into health conditions affecting Western Australians and will provide us with an opportunity to tackle those issues. We have always known that health investment and health infrastructure is a priority of the McGowan government but we have to make sure we invest suitably and sustainably. It is impressive that all these commitments in this budget fit nicely within the sustainable health review that we undertook when we were first elected in 2017.

I now want to talk about the investment in transport infrastructure. We are really setting up the state for the future. We have all the Metronet projects. Just today, the initial sections of the new Yanchep rail extension were laid. The McGowan government continues to deliver the Metronet project, which is 72 kilometres of new rail with 23 new stations. We have already opened the airport line. Constituents in the seat of Mount Lawley can travel from Mt Lawley train station to the airport in 12 minutes. It is a couple of stops and they are there in a flash—easy as you like. It is a fantastic testament to the quality of public transport in Western Australia. The minister is investing \$2.5 billion in road and rail infrastructure and this government has made sure we have taken money from the commonwealth to assist with those investments. Another \$1.7 billion will be invested to deliver the Metronet program of works with a total investment of nearly \$6 billion over the next four years. There will also be \$250 million for

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the procurement of electric bus infrastructure to progress our public transport network to a cleaner, greener future. Again, members can see the overlap with the next issue I want to address, which is climate change.

The McGowan Labor government and this budget continues to invest in climate action and adaptation. A total of \$3 billion will be invested to take action on climate change and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. It includes \$2.3 billion for Synergy to deliver the largest battery energy storage system in the state and \$368 million for the new wind farm at King Rocks, which has been the subject of discussion among members this afternoon. There is also \$126 million for planned network upgrades to support the fast-tracking of government and industry transitions to net zero. We also have \$65 million for the new desalination plant, which will mean 100 billion litres of safe, clean drinking water every year. The budget also allocates \$36 million to deliver the government's historic decision to end native logging and \$32 million to facilitate green energy project approvals, again supporting small businesses. The massive funding injection will help to replace the generation capacity of the state owned coal-fired power stations, which will be retired sensibly in 2030 to ensure a stable and secure electricity supply for Western Australia. This investment shows the government is serious about tackling the impacts of climate change and futureproofing our environment for years to come.

Next, I want to talk about economic management, because one of the things we said in 2017 when we were elected was that WA jobs were our number one priority. We said we wanted a health system to put patients first and we wanted to train our kids for the jobs of the future, and we said we wanted budget repair that is fair. This budget delivers economic management in three key respects. It again delivers a budget surplus for the benefit of Western Australians, builds on and maintains WA's AAA credit rating and takes action to reduce the debt and clean up the mess left to us by the Liberals and Nationals.

In this week's edition of *The Economist*, the cover reads "Fiscal fantasyland." It asks, "When will politicians wake up?" I was struck by this article. I thought it was fantastic. This is from *The Economist*, 6–12 May, page 9, if I may quote —

Around the world budgets are in a bigger mess than politicians are prepared to admit

WRANGLING OVER budgets is always part of politics, but today's fiscal brinkmanship is truly frightening. In America Democrats and Republicans are playing a game of chicken over raising the government's debt ceiling.

Skipping forward —

The political point-scoring also misses a bigger and more enduring problem. America's budget deficit is set to balloon as its population ages, the cost of handouts swells and the government's interest bill rises ...

Governments elsewhere face similar pressures—and appear just as oblivious. Those in Europe are locked in a silly debate about how to tweak debt rules, at a time when the European Central Bank is indirectly propping up the finances of its weakest members. China's official debt figures purport to be healthy even as the central government prepares to bail out a province. Governments are stuck in a fiscal fantasyland, and they must find a way out before disaster strikes.

It then goes on to mention low interest rates in the wake of the global financial crisis as we entered an era of quantitative easing —

Those days of forgivingly low interest rates have now passed. This week the Federal Reserve —

That is in the United States —

raised rates again, to 5–5.25%. America will spend more on debt interest this year, as a share of GDP, than at any time so far this century; by 2030 the bill will be at an all-time high.

Then it says this at the end —

Politicians need to get real, fast. Public debts are in danger of becoming unmanageable, especially if interest rates stay high. Every step up in borrowing hampers governments' ability to respond to the next crisis.

I want to finish with that line, "Every step up in borrowing hampers governments' ability to respond to the next crisis." When we were re-elected in 2021, the people of Western Australia placed their trust in us because we had undertaken what we said we would do during the course of our first term. That was the first reason. The second reason was the way we handled the COVID pandemic. The reason we were able to respond to the pandemic the way we did was because of our sound financial management during our first term in government. Continued sound financial management has placed us in a position in which we are able to respond to the next crisis. To the editors of *The Economist*, and the author of this article, I would say that if they wanted to look to a jurisdiction that has not fallen into "Fiscal fantasyland", and if they wanted to look to a government that has the fiscal discipline and the necessary rigour to maintain a strong state budget balance sheet, look to Western Australia.

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Do not take my word for that.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Look no further than S&P Global's upgrade of WA's credit rating to AAA on 27 June 2022. This is the first budget-in-reply speech that I have been able to give that responds to the upgrade of our AAA credit rating because last year's budget was before the upgrade.

I am quoting S&P from the ABC news article by Keane Bourke on 27 June 2022 —

A global ratings agency has reinstated Western Australia's AAA credit rating, noting the state continues to outperform domestic and global peers.

It is the first time WA has been awarded the highest rating in nine years.

... S&P Global said the upgrade was a result of WA's "track record of robust financial management, a very high-income economy, and exceptional liquidity."

That is the combination of factors that it identified as being important to upgrading our rating. It continues —

"A strong economic restart in Western Australia since mid-2020 has propelled broad-based revenue growth, including in transfer duties and payroll taxes," ...

It is interesting to note that we had been stripped of our AAA credit rating in 2013 amid declining revenues and a blowout in state debt. They were the two attributes that were bequeathed to us by the former Barnett government.

When Standard and Poor's gave our AAA credit rating back to us, it said —

WA was stripped of its AAA credit rating under the previous Liberal National Government in September 2013, with multiple downgrades from the credit rating agencies due to the State's rapidly deteriorating financial position and the previous government's 'lack of political will' to make difficult decisions.

...

S&P's report also assessed "Western Australia's financial management to be very strong" and that "the current government has displayed a track record of robust cost control."

When it comes to the necessary fiscal discipline to maintain a good budget position, the likes of which *The Economist* is saying threatened other jurisdictions around the world, Western Australia is in a fantastic position. We have a situation in which the WA government is strengthening its financial position and that will place us in the best possible position to confront the unforeseen challenges of tomorrow. We are well placed to weather the next storm, whatever that might be.

This government's investment in infrastructure has only been possible through its strong management of the economy and finances. With the delivery of the \$3.3 billion surplus in 2023–24, this government can support a record \$39 billion in infrastructure investment over four years. It will deliver infrastructure in health, transport and climate change.

Being good economic managers is not an end in itself. Being good economic managers means we can invest in what matters for Western Australians without burdening future generations with debt. In pursuit of a better and fairer Western Australia, I am pleased to say that since coming to office the government has reduced the state debt by almost \$16 billion on what it was projected to reach. That reduction in our state debt has saved us around \$4.3 billion in interest, which can then be reinvested into schools, hospitals, public transport and pay rises for public sector workers. There is all manner of things that that money can now be invested in because of the strong financial management of the McGowan Labor government. The government saved \$4.3 billion in interest payments. I cannot imagine what the circumstances would have been like if interest rates had been as high as they are now, back when we were first elected. I cannot imagine what the debt would be like if it had stayed as it was with interest rates now spiralling up.

I would like to turn next to some of the projects that have taken place in the local electorate of Mount Lawley. When it comes to investing in my local community, it gives me a great sense of pride as it is a great honour to represent the people of Mount Lawley. Some of the projects we have invested in include \$10 000 for new picnic areas for Banks Reserve, down there on the shores of Derbarl Yerrigan in the City of Vincent. We have put \$30 000 towards developing a vegetable garden as well as improvements in outdoor play areas at Mount Lawley Primary School. Sir David Brand School in Coolbinia received \$40 000 for inclusive learning space improvements. I was out at the school a couple of weeks ago and it is fantastic to see its new classrooms. The students are relishing the new environment.

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Investment has been made into the Meela Child Care Centre, the Yokine Community Playgroup shade sail, the Sutherland Dianella Primary School climbing and activity nets, the nature playground at West Morley Primary School; and, in my view, two terrific investments close to the geographical centre of the electorate at Inglewood Oval and Hamer Park. Together, with the City of Stirling, we have invested \$1.3 million for the Moyle Pavilion and clubrooms at Hamer Park. Across the road at Mount Lawley Senior High School—this is where investing in education is so important—we have invested \$15 million towards the addition of 20 new classrooms, including state-of-the-art creative arts facilities which are due for completion next year. These are the sorts of things that members want to deliver to their local communities, but that can only be delivered responsibly with a government undertaking sensible financial management.

Before I finish, I would like to talk about the benefit we will now derive as a result of the federal Labor government coming into office, and the budget it delivered a couple of days before our state budget, and some of its initiatives. It was great to see the federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler and the federal member for Perth, my friend Patrick Gorman, out at Rudloc Road in the electorate of Maylands, to announce the first federally funded Medicare urgent care clinic. It is by working in concert and collaborating with the new Albanese federal government that we can help to tackle those challenges that I articulated at the start of my contribution—things like tackling homelessness and housing, cost-of-living pressures and supporting initiatives to address labour market shortages. It is also through working in concert and collaboration with the federal government that we can undertake work in those areas central to the identity of being a Labor person and Labor member of Parliament. That includes investing in things like health and education. With the combination of the financial management of the McGowan Labor government, and the commitment to address years of neglect from the commonwealth government, we are moving in the right direction.

Before I finish, I want to commend the federal government for one other thing—the work of federal minister Tony Burke. Over the last little while, some appointments of a couple of great Western Australians have been made to the Fair Work Commission. I want to commend my two good friends—the first being Peter O’Keeffe, who was appointed to the Fair Work Commission by the federal government in March. I think he will do an outstanding job advocating on behalf of workers. He comes from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association, where he was secretary. Secondly—I have a tendency to do this—I am very proud to see another Mount Lawley constituent, my friend Pearl Lim, elevated to a senior position. Pearl is an industrial officer at the Australian Services Union, the union of which I am a member, and I am coming up to 20 years of continuous membership. Pearl is a constituent of mine and I made sure that as soon as I saw the announcement about her elevation to this illustrious position, I sent her a text to congratulate her on being another Mount Lawley constituent appointed to a very important position. These are great appointments. Both Peter O’Keeffe and Pearl Lim have a history of advocacy on behalf of workers. I think they will help rebalance the Fair Work Commission and put us into a position in which workers will know that when they make applications to the Fair Work Commission, their cases will be heard by generous, thoughtful and intelligent commissioners like Peter O’Keeffe and Pearl Lim and they will get a fair hearing. I congratulate Pearl and Peter on their appointments on my first opportunity. I am sure that my sentiment will be echoed by others.

**Mr D.A.E. Scaife:** Outstanding appointments.

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** Both are outstanding appointments. I am very proud and I think they will make a terrific contribution.

I finish by saying that when looking at the significant investments that the McGowan government is making in housing and homelessness, transport, health, education and particularly in climate change, this will be a budget that we will look back on in three, five and 10 years and say, “They took the difficult decisions to return the budget to surplus, and they took the difficult decisions to invest in the future of our state.” This budget benefits the whole of Western Australia and will set us up for years to come. For that reason, I have absolutely no hesitation in congratulating the Treasurer and commending this budget to the house.

**DR J. KRISHNAN (Riverton — Parliamentary Secretary)** [5.33 pm]: I rise today to make my contribution on the state budget this year. I am very proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government presenting such a positive budget for the people of Western Australia. One line, the opening statement of the budget, explains the entire budget. The gross state product is expected to be complete this year at 4.25 per cent, which is the highest it has been in the past nine years. What happens when the economy grows? Everybody is comfortable. That is happening with our robust economic management in looking after the entire state. We have had a record 4.25 per cent growth over the last nine years.

When going to the election in 2021, the McGowan Labor government realised that Labor’s core policy is jobs. Once people have the security of a job, their family is looked after and everything else seems to fall into place. Since the McGowan Labor government came to power in 2017, 218 000-odd jobs have been created. In 2021, we made an election commitment to create 125 000 jobs. We are nearly at 118 000 already, and still have two years

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 16 May 2023]

p2299b-2332a

Mr Mark Folkard; Mr Peter Rundle; Ms Libby Mettam; Acting Speaker; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Simon Millman; Dr Jags Krishnan; Mr Geoff Baker; Ms Elizabeth Kelsbie; Ms Lisa Baker; Mr David Michael; Ms Jessica Shaw

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to go to deliver on our election commitment. When it comes to creating jobs and giving a sense of security to the people of Western Australia, we take it very seriously.

A record 1.53 million people in Western Australia are in the workforce, which clearly states how strong our economy is. The unemployment rate remains very low at 3.4 per cent. Our exports hit a record \$272 billion over the year to March 2023. To put that into perspective, we contribute 10 per cent to the population of Australia, but we contribute 45 per cent of the nation's exports. That is what \$272 billion worth of exports means. All these numbers clearly indicate that we are doing extremely well.

However, there will be problems in every economy. This government acknowledges that the people of Western Australia are facing cost-of-living pressures. There are various reasons for that. People did not travel during the COVID pandemic. There were supply chain issues causing an imbalance in demand and supply, and the unexpected Ukraine war had an impact on the global economy. All these factors contributed towards cost-of-living pressures. The government acknowledges that. Every household will get an electricity credit of \$400. The government also recognises that the most vulnerable who are struggling to make ends meet will get additional benefit and extra help to cope with the cost-of-living pressures. The consumer price index increase needs to be controlled. We know that the Reserve Bank of Australia has continuously been putting interest rates up in a hope to control inflation. However, compared with the eastern states, we have done really well. The CPI growth is expected to ease to 3.5 per cent in the coming year.

A projected surplus of \$3.3 billion for next year, with a record infrastructure investment of \$39 billion, really prepares the state for the future and for the next generation to have excellent infrastructure to cope with population growth and demand. I was listening to the member for Roe's contribution in his budget reply speech. I think he also carefully picked some numbers from here and there. He said that if the debt position has increased by \$4 billion or \$5 billion over 10 years, how is that a good look? He clearly did not take into consideration the \$39 billion moving forward, and the billions of dollars invested ever since the McGowan Labor government came to power in building infrastructure for the future. The money is going into building the state and preparing the state for the future. Net debt has consecutively reduced over the last four years to \$27.9 billion, which is almost a \$16 billion reduction—\$15.8 billion to be precise. The savings in interest payments to the state of about \$4.3 billion can be used toward useful investments in health, education, infrastructure, community safety and various other projects. We would not have that additional money to spend on important projects if not for the robust economic management that has resulted in interest savings of \$4.32 billion. The net debt trajectory remains stable. The member for Roe also failed to consider the fundamental difference between how the former Liberal-National government planned things and how the McGowan Labor government plans things. The former Liberal-National government projected high commodity prices. When prices fell, it did not make adjustments to its spending and the state ended up with an increase in net debt. We are being very conservative in projecting commodity prices. We are prepared to make the tough decisions to manage the economy robustly.

The government is providing \$2.8 billion in cost-of-living assistance measures. We are able to provide this simply because of ongoing robust economic management. There are many other measures to help with cost-of-living pressures. Some examples include the regional airfare zone cap scheme, public transport being free every first Sunday, and low fees and charges, with increases limited to 2.4 per cent in 2023–24. The fees and charges increases in almost every other state have jumped beyond double-digit figures. Even small businesses across the state will receive an electricity credit of \$650. Other measures include free flu vaccines and public transport fares being capped at two zones. All these savings are particularly helpful to families who are struggling to make ends meet because of cost-of-living pressures. This government is doing everything possible to contribute to and look after the people of Western Australia.

We, the McGowan Labor government, believe in science, which is why we are investing \$3 billion towards climate change initiatives, including \$2.8 billion to decarbonise our electricity grid by 2030. There is \$2.3 billion for Synergy to install a 500-megawatt battery storage system in Collie and a 200-megawatt battery storage system in Kwinana, \$368 million for Synergy to build new wind farms, \$126 million for the early planning of network upgrades and \$196 million to commence works on Perth's third desalination plant. We are able to plan for the future to contribute towards the next generation. That \$3 billion for climate change measures is a bold move. We have been able to do that only because of the McGowan Labor government's robust economic management.

I turn to health. It is no secret that health is close to my heart. It has been my profession and I know a bit more about health than the common man. I can tell the house that ever since the McGowan Labor government came to office, the health budget has increased by 33.34 per cent. To put that into perspective, the health budget, which was \$8.8 billion when the McGowan Labor government came to power, is now \$11.8 billion. We recognise the importance of investing in health.

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The Mental Health Commission's annual budget has increased by a massive 57.3 per cent; in dollar terms, it has increased from \$863 million to \$1.4 billion. We understand, recognise and acknowledge the need for investment in mental health, and that is what the McGowan Labor government is doing by investing in the right place. In the past two years, 547 new beds have been added to the health sector, equating to a new tertiary hospital. Three billion dollars will be spent over the next four years to add another 600 beds to the health infrastructure. In the last three years, the health workforce has increased by 22 per cent, despite many countries and states competing for staff. It is a big struggle to recruit staff into the health workforce. Despite this, this government was successful in increasing the workforce by 22 per cent, which equates to 1 784 nurses and 779 full-time medical staff. This budget allocates an additional \$2.7 billion spend to health. Since 2021, that increase is an unprecedented \$10 billion. This budget includes funding for hospital services and funding to meet the costs related to the response to COVID-19. It also includes funding to address emergency department pressures. It contains new initiatives and innovative approaches, such as the \$12 000 higher education contribution scheme relief for newly qualified nurses who commence employment in regional areas. In addition, \$544 million has been committed over the next four years to commence construction of the women's and babies' hospital, \$150 million for the Bentley Health Service Surgicentre, \$99.4 million to complete the electronic health records project and \$58 million towards ICT projects to improve accessibility to specialist outpatient services and for cybersecurity protection. There is more funding towards the WA Country Health Service mental health emergency telehealth service. All these investments will bring about noticeable changes. If anyone in the house has recently looked at ambulance ramping data, they will have seen that there is a clear indication that we are making significant in-roads into making things better.

I turn to electronic health records. For decades, this investment was not made because of other constraints in converting to electronic health records, including requiring new infrastructure to house the old records and a transition process. From what I know, four to five rounds of funding, starting from the previous Liberal–National government to this government, were put on hold. I am glad that we were finally able to put that in the budget and approve it so that we can see electronic medical records being the reality in WA, which will improve health care for every Western Australian.

The budget includes a \$750 million boost for housing supply and housing choice initiatives.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr J. KRISHNAN:** No-one is denying that there is a shortage of housing. Again, going back to the reasons behind it, demand went up and supply was not able to be met for various reasons.

Why did demand go up? The federal government announced grants during the COVID-19 pandemic. What did the McGowan Labor government do? It also announced grants to facilitate helping people get into their own houses. We did not expect global supply chain issues to cause problems in the construction industry. We had population growth. The opposition claimed that people would boycott Western Australia, but we saw a significant migration of people from interstate to Western Australia. When the opposition claimed that international migration would go to zero, there was increased migration, including from international students. All this put pressure on the housing industry. The government is investing significantly not only to ease the pressure in infrastructure, but also in skills and training and fixing supply chain issues. Various other measures are being taken.

This government is very proud of contributing to and building a stronger and fairer community for the future. The state's contribution towards the National Disability Insurance Scheme is \$1.3 billion, which will benefit those who need to access NDIS services. The budget also includes an increase of \$125.5 million for child protection services because we believe in building stronger and fairer communities; \$52.5 million for family and domestic violence initiatives, including funding for refuge and safe house service providers; and \$18.9 million to support legal services for people affected by family and domestic violence—essential services that enable people to move on in life, which the government has recognised by providing money.

I turn to community safety. At this juncture, I congratulate the member for Kimberley for her efforts around ex-tropical cyclone Ellie. I have personally witnessed the amount of work she has been doing in coordination with the ministers. The government has allocated more than \$322 million to support affected communities in the Kimberley. When it comes to community safety, \$81.7 million has been allocated to upgrade and maintain the state's emergency radio network and equipment used by frontline officers, including police officers and firefighters. Twenty-nine dedicated disaster recovery officers will form WA's largest ever recovery team, to which \$24.4 million has been allocated—a record investment. Also, \$11.7 million has been allocated to extend Operation Regional Shield and maintain additional police resourcing in regional areas.

The government is diversifying the economy. This budget includes \$463 million for new economic infrastructure and diversification initiatives, which will be spent on roads, ports and other infrastructure—building infrastructure

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for the future and preparing the next generation for diversification of the economy. If we encounter troubled times, the government will have multiple options rather than depending on one commodity to survive.

A lot of work has been done in international education, tourism and business investment, and \$40 million will go towards a sustainable geoscience investment package to accelerate critical minerals discoveries.

When it comes to transport, roads and ports, I repeat that I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government that is delivering unimaginable and unprecedented infrastructure for the future, particularly with Metronet.

I turn to investment in the regions. Regional mental health services will get increased funding of \$342 million. Also, \$61.6 million is being invested in Government Regional Officers' Housing. There is \$32.6 million in this budget to protect the state's livestock industries. Funds have also been allocated for marine parks. A total of \$23.6 million will support survivors of family and domestic violence in the regions, including a new family and domestic violence hub in Broome. Also, \$20.2 million is in the budget for future drought fund programs to build farm and regional community resilience. A further \$20.7 million will be contributed to the regional airfare zone cap scheme. There is also \$6.5 million for implementation of the aquaculture development plan for Western Australia.

When it comes to education and training, although I have mentioned it several times in this house, I do not mind mentioning one more time that education is in the gene of every person in the electorate of Riverton. I am proud to make that statement over and again. This government is investing significantly towards school infrastructure and the delivery of education services.

This government is also investing in women through various projects that were announced in the budget. I was excited to see additional investment in the community sporting and recreation facilities fund of \$15 million, which will help every local sporting club throughout Western Australia to improve its facilities and engage more people in sport to build a healthier future for Western Australians.

In summary, people want stable jobs, a reasonable cost of living, good infrastructure, community safety, good health care, a good education and a stable economy. This budget covers every aspect of that in detail, not only looking after the current situation, but also preparing the state for the future. I commend these bills to the house and I thank members for the opportunity to speak.

**MR G. BAKER (South Perth)** [5.59 pm]: I rise today to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. I will also talk a bit about protecting trees and preserving our environment. We think of suburbs such as South Perth as being green suburbs, but they need protection. They face threats. I will talk about what we can do to protect the tree canopy and how it relates to this budget.

First, let me talk about this budget. I could not be more pleased. This is a responsible budget that pays down debt and spends on key issues such as more beds in hospitals, more spend on mental health, building infrastructure for the future, and a great cost-of-living package that will keep household bills down. The \$400 energy credit for every household is wonderful. There is so much good news I could talk about here, but the thing I will talk about before getting to the environmental issues is the discipline of this government's spending.

This is the sixth consecutive McGowan budget that projects a surplus. This sequence is not luck. In any other Australian state or at any other time in Western Australia's history, the government of the day would have given in and blown the surplus. The Barnett government blew its surplus; the Morrison government blew its surplus; the Court government blew its surplus; even the Howard government, with its coffers full of GST money, blew its surplus from time to time, so to get consecutive budgets in surplus is not luck. As I have said before in this house, this is fiscal discipline. Many governments have failed to build sustainable finances during boom years. How much temptation could another government resist with all that cash? A new stadium—throw some money at it. A tram down St Georges Terrace or a tunnel under the suburbs—throw some money at it. More consultants to look at a political problem—throw some money at it. Soon enough, the surplus has gone, baked into the forward estimates, and the next thing we know, the government is borrowing money to keep the lights on. That is exactly what happened to the Barnett government.

I want to take a moment to put this budget into its proper historical context. It is part of a continuity of fiscal discipline that is the envy of every other government in Australia. Every spend this government makes is essential. It falls into years of achievement with a plan for the future. With sustainable finances, we can build for the future. When I look at the spend on the environment and climate change issues in this budget, I am pleased. I want to talk about how this government is supporting and investing in environmental issues in this budget and beyond.

I start with the trees in the street. We like to think of South Perth as being a green suburb, but according to the Western Australian Planning Commission's urban tree canopy dashboard website, the City of South Perth has only 17 per cent canopy cover. That is much lower than in places like Nedlands. There is much we can do to retain and



**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Tuesday, 16 May 2023]

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increase our tree canopy coverage. We can remove power poles by undergrounding power, control pests like the polyphagous shot-hole borer, and engage in proper urban development and support planning laws.

I refer to removing power poles by undergrounding power. I was out in Manning in September last year with the Minister for Energy. We were celebrating the end of the Manning transition to underground power with the removal of the last power pole. It was great that as the power pole came out, a tree went in. This allows increased tree canopy along the streets of Manning and also means that those ugly powerlines over the top of the trees are removed and the existing trees are allowed to grow to their full height. The removal of poles and overhead cables has alleviated the need for pruning of taller branches and allows older trees to flourish and grow to their full capacity. The next areas to be undergrounded in South Perth are Kensington and the Hurlingham area. The City of South Perth has planted new trees in these spaces to further increase the canopy. The benefits of the tree canopy on the street is it creates a greener aesthetic, increases shade for walking and cycling and gives a better local environment. It also cools the suburb and improves property values. It is good value for a project.

The polyphagous shot-hole borer is an emerging threat for our trees. Our trees are now facing a threat from this tiny borer beetle that is native to South-East Asia. It attacks a range of plants and trees by tunnelling into trunks, stems and branches. The preferred host trees of these little pests include maples, Moreton Bay figs, London plane, avocado and coral trees. There are lots of these trees in the gardens of South Perth and in places like Perth Zoo. The WA government is working with local governments and residents to keep the borer populations down through quarantine and surveillance measures as part of a \$44 million eradication program. I recently attended a talk by Dr Kylie Ireland from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the South Perth Tree Canopy Advocates, at which there was key interest from local residents about the spread of this little pest. Borers recently infested 150 trees in Nedlands and they had to be removed. We want to see this critter brought under control. It is also a significant threat to our agricultural industry.

Another problem facing South Perth is balancing development and green space. How do we increase our population and maintain tree canopy? Perth is a prosperous and growing city. People want to live here, and I do not blame them, but spreading the city endlessly along the coastal plane is environmentally devastating. It is not only socially dislocating and financially expensive for the taxpayer, but also bad for the environment, particularly when it involves the clearing of native bushland. To change this and accommodate growth, we need to allow more density in the inner suburbs.

We have done this before, but not in a very sensible way. I remember in the 1970s and 1980s, in places like Como, South Perth and Manning, the quarter-acre blocks were subdivided and backyards were built over with triplex and quadruplex buildings. We ended up with whole streets of subdivision and nearly no deep soil for trees. If members have a moment, they should open up Google Maps or something similar, put on satellite view and have a look at the density of houses around the corner of Coode and Comer Streets, Robert Street and Greenock Avenue, or Talbot Avenue and Saunders Street. Have a look at the subdivisions and the lack of trees in backyards. That is evidence of density done without an eye on the tree canopy. This is where the McGowan government's changes in density planning will come in. First, density increases are targeted for specific zones—hubs with walkable neighbourhoods.

We already have a great one in Mill Point with the vibrant shopping strip amongst medium and high-density houses and mature gardens. Others will develop near shopping and transport hubs such as Canning Bridge and Preston Street. Sensible, considered development can occur in these places. Development in these hubs will alleviate the need to develop on blocks away from these zones, so the quieter suburbs such as Manning, Kensington, Como, South Perth, Waterford, Salter Point and Karawara will stay quiet. But if we look at the recent medium-density constructions around Canning Bridge, on Henley Street in particular, we will notice that they do not allow for much tree canopy. These are boundary-to-boundary developments that leave no space for deep soil. However, a new scheme recently introduced under the Minister for Planning requires more deep soil, more setbacks and more places for trees to grow alongside medium development. We want increased density in this area that is close to Canning Bridge and the shops. However, the development needs to be balanced and developed in a way that prevents boundary-to-boundary units, which is what these improvements to state planning policy will achieve. The new medium-density amendments to the *State planning policy 7.3: Residential design codes* for medium density will help reduce this long sprawl and improve amenity in older suburbs by providing better access to gardens and open space, greater tree canopy, and trees on private lots. We already have a model for medium-density housing with well-developed tree canopy right down to the Mends Street area and in Mill Point Road. There are many multistorey buildings that are well spaced so that sunlight is not blocked, view corridors are maintained, and there is lots of deep soil for mature trees to grow in the middle of a walkable community.

I cannot talk about Mill Point without mentioning the lack of trees along the foreshore. One easy win for increased tree canopy is the South Perth foreshore, Mindeerup. From the Narrows Bridge to the Mends Street jetty there is nearly no tree coverage the whole way, no shade. Would it not be great to see the state government and the

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City of South Perth cooperate to plant some trees in this vast expanse of shore without shade? Let us get some shade down there.

But there is more we can do to protect trees. I am very proud to be the member of a government that has a great record in protecting trees on a vast scale. This government is preserving all native forests by ceasing all logging in native forests by 2024. This is a historic decision. It is a shift to sustainable forestry and recognition that intact native forests are a tremendous asset to WA. No previous government has been able to make such a commitment. The consequences for generations to come will be huge.

But we are tackling even bigger problems than that. The biggest threat to tree canopy across WA is climate change. Trees are thirsty. Trees like their climatic niche. The consequences of long-term shifts of climate around Perth, where our summers are getting warmer and our winters drier, are very challenging for all our vegetation—our culture, backyards, public open space, the whole lot. As climate change reduces our natural water sources, we face some difficult decisions with our leafy suburbs. Do we keep watering our trees at increasing expense or do we allow them to die? Or do we work to prevent climate change? This government is making policy that preserves our unique WA environment now and will be sustainable for the environment in the future and for the WA economy. The savings from investing in clean energy are only the start of a stronger, greener budget. We do not want to see Perth's climate become too dry for trees. If members want to know what I am worrying about, they should try driving to Geraldton, which some of us did the other day, and watch the light forests of the Swan River plain slowly give way to scrubland and then to bushland around Cervantes or Lancelin. There are nearly no trees at all. This is the possibility we face with unchecked climate change.

We see in this budget and previous McGowan government budgets many measures to address climate change and ensure the clean energy transition. This McGowan government is investing in battery technology so that we will come up to 1 200 megawatts of batteries, including a new 500-megawatt battery in Collie that will give us 4 000 megawatt hours of storage. This is bigger than the coal-fired power stations that are currently in Collie, so it will be an immense improvement. We are building the electric highway, so people will be able to drive their electric vehicles from the top of the state to the bottom. We are setting state targets for carbon emissions later this year. We are promoting solar energy for homes, we are planning for the future electricity transmission system and many more things.

One area that WA is a world leader in is small-scale energy solutions for small towns such as Onslow, Denham and Walpole. These solutions are better for the environment and will save money for years to come. Horizon Power has successfully powered Onslow with 100 per cent renewable energy in a demonstration of advanced microgrid technology. The small coastal town of Denham in Shark Bay launched a green hydrogen pilot in late 2022. Electricity from a solar plant is being used to make hydrogen, and hydrogen then powers the turbine that generates enough electricity to meet one-quarter of the town's needs. Works for WA's first pumped hydroelectric solution commenced in Walpole 12 months ago. The renewable energy solution will mitigate up to 80 per cent of town power outages and comes at no additional cost to businesses or the community.

**Ms E.J. Kelsbie:** It is fabulous.

**Mr G. BAKER:** And it is so simple. It is fabulous and so simple.

**Ms E.J. Kelsbie:** It is. I visited recently and it is great.

**Mr G. BAKER:** And it is not even a big elevation change. That project could be rolled out in many places across WA.

These are small-scale renewable energy projects that WA is leading the world on. If members want to see what a small-scale hydrogen project is, Denham is the absolute cutting edge at the moment. But we are also working on huge renewable energy projects that will have a lasting regional impact.

We are developing the hydrogen industry. This not only is a great thing for the clean energy transition in WA, but also will feed the transformation of the Japanese and Korean energy markets. We have the potential to lead the world in this emerging industry. Earlier this year, in January, the Premier visited Korea and Japan to sign agreements to develop this multibillion-dollar trade and help the region decarbonise its energy markets. We will see solar and hydrogen hubs develop around places like Geraldton, Esperance and the Pilbara. Earlier this year, the house passed the Land and Public Works Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. This legislation provides an opportunity for pastoralists, native title parties and others to be involved in the growing renewables market, which will include carbon farming, hydrogen, and wind and solar markets, through diversification. The McGowan government is also enabling the development of minerals and mining sectors for the transition—lithium, nickel and other key rare minerals. All these innovations will help us decarbonise and head off climate change, and one very good result will be the preservation of our leafy tree-lined streets. But in addition to this, we will stop the drying of our climate, protect our agricultural industries and preserve our environment for future generations.

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When we look at something as local as the tree canopy in our gardens and down our local streets, we see a direct connection from maintaining the local tree canopy through strong budget management to the emerging international clean energy markets and climate change prevention. The budget announcements last week secure a strong, sustainable future for WA's economy and the environment, and our economic sustainability and environmental sustainability are becoming closely entwined. Our state's strong financial position will remain sustainable if our environmental policies remain sustainable and, vice versa, our environmental policies will remain sustainable if our financial position remains sustainable. I commend this budget to the house and the WA community.

**MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren–Blackwood)** [6.16 pm]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2023–24) Bill 2023 and the Appropriation (Capital 2023–24) Bill 2023. It is my great privilege to speak on these bills and I rise proudly as the first female to ever represent the communities in the electorate of Warren–Blackwood. As ever, it is a great honour to advocate on their behalf. I was at the Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival this weekend and had to follow Minister Templeman's rousing introduction speech, and I can tell members it is not an easy thing to follow the Minister for Culture and the Arts.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday)**: Absolutely agree!

**Ms E.J. KELSBIE**: It was not easy I can tell you, Acting Speaker! He sang a song as well.

I got up there and mentioned that I was the first female member for Warren–Blackwood, to absolutely rousing applause. I also commend all the volunteers who put on that event. It was fantastic. I suggest everyone add it to their diaries for next year.

I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government providing real cost-of-living support while investing significantly in health, housing and WA's transition to cleaner, stronger, reliable and affordable energy.

This is a fair budget. It is a strong budget. It is a budget that looks after families. It is a budget that looks after and invests in our regions. All across Australia, families are feeling the pinch, with the Reserve Bank of Australia raising interest rates many times in an attempt to bring down inflation. Groceries cost more, mortgages have increased significantly and everyday bills are rising.

Our government recognises this. To the families doing it tough across Warren–Blackwood: I see you. I have been a single working mum myself. My daughter is a single working mum to five-year-old twins. I know how hard it can be. I know how tough it can be to balance the budget at the end of the week, to work out what food to buy, where the specials are and how much fuel can be put in the car—I know that every dollar can count. I am proud that our state budget will deliver more than \$715 million of genuine cost-of-living relief to WA households and small businesses, with targeted support for regional WA. All WA households will receive at least \$400 of energy bill relief to ease cost-of-living pressures. Additional support will be provided to those most in need, with \$826 of total support available for around 350 000 households eligible for the energy assistance payment. Hardship utility grant scheme payments will be increased by 10 per cent for those in financial hardship who are unable to pay their utility bills, with grants of up to \$640 per household or \$1 060 for households in the north of the state. Many people in my electorate will be very pleased to hear that the seniors cost-of-living rebate will also be increased in line with inflation, at a cost of \$15.6 million.

On top of these measures, we have committed to keeping government fees and charges low, with increases to fees limited to 2.4 per cent in 2023–24, which is well below forecast inflation. We are able to keep electricity price rises much lower than prices on the east coast because we, WA Labor, fought hard to retain ownership of our electricity assets and our gas reservation policy. Former Liberal Premier Colin Barnett was desperate to sell off Western Power, taking his plan to flog public assets to the 2017 election. We all know how that went! His reasoning was to pay down debt. We kept Western Power and we have a \$3.3 billion operating surplus forecast in 2023–24. For members opposite, that is what strong financial management looks like and provides.

All of these decisions on cost-of-living relief measures and investment in WA infrastructure and services make a difference to communities like mine, across Warren–Blackwood. Families are doing it tough and every little bit helps. Our strong financial management has put WA at the forefront, leading the way with our CPI lower than those in other states and territories—again, it was a good decision not to sell off Western Power; just saying!—a record 1.53 million Western Australians in work, including the highest ever level of full-time employment; and our economy is expected to grow by 4.25 per cent in 2022–23, which would be the highest rate of growth in nine years. Our operating surpluses mean that we can fund record levels of investment while reducing net debt and saving our state a substantial amount of money in the long run. Significant lower net debt levels have already saved Western Australians around \$4.3 billion in wasteful interest payments since WA Labor came to office. Again, for those opposite, that is what strong financial management looks like. Members opposite might want to take notes!

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As a former regional statewide telehealth manager, I know how important health and mental health services are in our regions and how important it is that health and mental health services are available close to home for people of all ages. Telehealth plays an important role in this space, delivering virtual care closer to home across a huge range of disciplines. My team was situated in health campuses across WA, from Bunbury in the south to Kununurra in the north, helping regional people access healthcare services including but definitely not limited to allied health; cancer services; cardiology; ear, nose, throat and audiology; orthopaedics; paediatric services; pain management; renal and urology services; emergency telehealth services; and mental health services. I am proud that this budget has an extra \$24.4 million to extend the mental health emergency telehealth service, providing 24/7 mental health support and allowing country doctors to make referrals whenever needed.

Our government continues to prioritise investment in our health and mental health systems. Since coming to office, the McGowan Labor government has increased WA Health's annual budget significantly. It has increased by 33.4 per cent from \$8.8 billion in 2016–17 to \$11.8 billion in 2023–24. The Mental Health Commission's annual budget has increased by a massive 57.3 per cent from \$863 million in 2016–17 to \$1.4 billion in 2023–24. WA has the highest per capita spend on hospitals of any state, which is 18 per cent above the national average. In the past two years, 547 new beds have been added to the system, which is the equivalent of a new tertiary hospital. From 2022–23 to 2026–27, \$3 billion will be spent on health infrastructure, adding a further 600-plus beds. In the past three years, the health workforce has increased by 22 per cent, including an additional 1 784 nursing and 779 medical FTE.

I have worked for the WA Country Health Service, or WACHS as it is affectionately known in the regions, and I know firsthand how hard it can be to staff regional hospitals and services. I am extremely proud of the series of initiatives we have announced to attract and retain key health and mental health professionals, including paying up to \$12 000 of HECS–HELP loans for newly qualified nurses and midwives who come to work in regional WA. We have also set aside \$2.9 million to provide eligible regional diploma of nursing students with financial support to undertake up to 400 hours of practical placement, including an allowance of \$350 per week, with a travel allowance of up to \$500 per training block in the great southern. These are great incentives for health staff to make Warren–Blackwood their base and their home. Who would not want to live, study, work and play in my electorate? It is, quite frankly, magnificent.

I also worked on the redevelopment team for Albany Health Campus, alongside the regional director of the day. I was responsible for communications, technology and security. I am very pleased to see \$2.1 million in the budget to provide an extra 100 car parking bays at Albany Health Campus plus \$6.3 million to extend regional cancer services and an additional \$6.7 million towards regional renal support teams.

I was proud to host my budget briefing lunch on Friday at the River Hotel in Margaret River alongside Hon John Carey, the Minister for Housing; Lands; Homelessness; Local Government. I thank the minister for coming to my electorate and taking part in this important event to talk with people from across the Warren–Blackwood and Vasse electorates. It was my pleasure to host six student leaders from Margaret River Senior High School along with their teacher. Apparently he was the only teacher who was wearing a suit on the day so he got to come along to the budget briefing lunch! As ever, these students had considered questions. They wanted to know more about the \$1.1 million investment to continue the Respectful Relationships teaching support program and the delivery of culturally appropriate services for victims of family and domestic violence in regional areas. The program promotes respectful relationships and gender equality in WA public schools, and aims to increase teachers' skills to educate and support children and young people to build relationships characterised by nonviolence, equality, mutual respect and trust. I look forward to spending more time with school leaders at Margaret River Senior High School and other schools across my electorate to continue the conversation about what matters to them. Other questions raised at the briefing covered training; our precious environment, in particular, the Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park; planning; housing; and homelessness.

Access to housing is an important issue across my electorate, and it is one the government is tackling from many different angles. This budget provides a \$61.6 million boost to Government Regional Officers' Housing to refurbish existing properties and to add new supply, with \$8.2 million to help upgrade WACHS staff housing, including safety and security upgrades.

We are also adding \$450 million into the social housing investment fund to boost social housing across the state. This investment will increase the total number of social houses to be added to 4 000, with 1 200 already delivered. There is \$49 million to partner with community housing providers to provide 100 homes across regional WA in a supported landlord model for people in regional WA who are experiencing rough sleeping, and \$12 million over four years to deliver more development-ready land throughout regional Western Australia through the regional development assistance program. We are providing funding for the Office of Homelessness to support the delivery of the state's first 10-year homelessness strategy. We have a number of targeted initiatives to expand our construction

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sector workforce and support apprenticeships, including boosting the base employer grant from \$10 000 to \$12 000 for apprentices, expanding the group training wages subsidy to include residential and commercial construction sector apprentices, and a \$2 000 training completion payment for apprentices. As a previous CEO of a community focus not-for-profit—Worklink WA—that delivers training, careers and employment services to people across the great southern and goldfields–Esperance regions, I know just how vital apprenticeship incentives are. They support our local businesses to take on apprentices, share their knowledge and skills, and keep an industry running in the local community and make sure that much-needed goods and services can continue to be delivered locally, all while giving young people the opportunity to build a meaningful and successful career.

As a local government member who spends a good amount of time on our roads—my electorate is about four hours wide and 24 000 square kilometres and covers eight local government areas—it is great to see continued investment in our regional roads. We are committing a further \$407 million to regional road projects, bringing the total investment over the next four years to \$5.3 billion. This week is National Road Safety Week. As someone who spends much time on the roads, I see my fair share of risky driver behaviour. This week is a timely reminder to drive so that others survive, to drive as if your loved ones are on the road ahead, to remove distractions while driving, to not put other people’s lives at risk by speeding or driving while tired or under the influence, and to protect all vulnerable road users, especially our road workers and traffic management teams by slowing down and giving them the space they need to be safe. I am proud that we are providing an additional \$175 million to continue the regional road safety program, which has to date sealed shoulders and installed audible edges, which I love, to 536 kilometres of roads in the great southern and 1 202 kilometres of roads in the south west. This follows on from our commitment to bring regional road maintenance jobs back in house to Main Roads, which will see 490 jobs created across regional WA and a new depot being established in Manjimup.

This budget carries on our good work and investment in education and training initiatives, delivering an additional \$965 million boost. Of that, \$325.1 million is set aside for the delivery of primary and secondary education, including increased supports for students with a disability; \$93.4 million for our training sector, including new and expanded initiatives that support students in the regions to access training and for women to enter apprenticeships in non-traditional fields and for Aboriginal people to gain employment.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms E.J. KELSBIE:** I had someone approach me at the budget briefing on Friday to talk about Lady Tradies Australia. They thought it would be a great initiative for us to look at. They were going away to work it up and then come back to me. There is also \$38.6 million to improve the wellbeing of students through pastoral care services and student support strategies under the national student wellbeing program. Agricultural colleges and farm schools around the state will receive \$6.8 million from 2023–24 to 2026–27 to improve and restore aged assets at regional ag colleges and farm schools, including in my home town of Denmark, as well as Manjimup and Margaret River in Warren–Blackwood. This investment is on top of our investments in STEM, with multimillion-dollar classrooms being delivered across Warren–Blackwood, again in my home town of Denmark, as well as Mt Barker and Manjimup.

This budget sees a major investment into WA’s future. It tackles climate change through a \$3 billion package to ensure that we have cleaner, stronger, reliable and affordable energy into the future, and that we continue to invest in the protection of our precious natural environment. This includes a \$2.8 billion investment to transition WA’s energy system for a low-carbon future, \$22.2 million to assist industry transition to the mandatory sheep and goat electronic ID system to bolster our state’s animal biosecurity systems, and \$18.8 million to continue the Healthy Estuaries WA program to improve the water quality of estuaries. Feral cats cause immeasurable damage to our natural environment and the management of these animals is something many people across my electoral feel very, very passionate about. In this budget, I am very pleased to see that we are investing \$7.6 million towards the feral cat strategy to bolster the management of feral cats throughout regional WA. This budget will also deliver \$36 million to create dozens of new jobs to help deliver on our historic decision to end native logging in the south west. These additional jobs will assist in the implementation of the *Forest management plan 2024–33* to improve forest resilience in a changing climate. The funding will provide 50 full-time positions, as well as operational funds to enable the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, along with the Forest Products Commission, to carry out their work. WA overwhelmingly supports the protection of our native forests, and this \$36 million continues our commitment to support affected workers and communities through our \$80 million native forest transition fund.

I would also like to mention how proud I am that we are continuing to provide funding of \$700 000 to the Rural, Regional, Remote Women’s Network of Western Australia—the RRR Network—and its programs to regional women. I am very proud that the 2022 RRR award went to Louise O’Neill from my home town of Denmark for running Farm Life Fitness. We also had a finalist in 2023 from Narrikup, Kate Mitchell, for her project called the Darcy Effect that makes first-aid training within schools easier to access.

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This budget has something for everyone. It is a testament to the Labor value of fairness, equality and a fair go for all. I commend these bills to the house.

**MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands)** [6.37 pm]: The member surprised me by sitting down.

**Ms E.J. Kelsbie:** Sorry!

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** That is all right. No problem, member.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** She surprised me, too!

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Yes. I would like to start my reply tonight by reminding folks that tomorrow, 17 May, is the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, commonly known as IDAHOBIT day. If members are wondering what the hell IDAHOBIT stands for, I have just told them. What are the aims of the founders of this international day against homophobia? They decided that they would commemorate the decision to remove homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases of the World Health Organization. Quite interestingly, that was in 1990, which is fairly recent. One of the stated goals of 17 May is to create events that are visible at a global level without needing to conform to any specific type of action. The approach allows a diversity of social, religious, cultural and political contexts in which violations occur, but it leads to lots of different approaches to celebrate IDAHOBIT day, so I encourage all members to think about wearing rainbow colours tomorrow to help me and many other Western Australians and people around the world celebrate IDAHOBIT day.

I would like to turn now to my reply to the budget. I want to start by speaking about an ongoing agenda for me that has been part of my life for more than 25 years—the care and wellbeing of animals in our state and internationally. I start by referring to the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development section of the budget papers. I am pre-empting estimates when we have to quote a page and a section. I want to recognise at the start that I am very proud that the former Minister for Agriculture and Food was successful in bringing the McGowan government’s commitment forward at our last election to establish the animal welfare grant program. It will see \$2 million over the four years of our term of government go into supporting the function and activities of rescue and rehoming groups in Western Australia. I am very pleased to see that this year, \$600 000 is contributed to that fund and the following year there will be another \$600 000. I intend to run a workshop for groups that might be interested in applying for these grants. I think I will schedule that for early next year as the grant recipients for this current funding round are due to be announced fairly soon. I assume the next funding round will not start until next year, so I would like to run a workshop to give some advice to groups that want to put in an application and perhaps are not familiar with how to write government grant applications. I hope that the department of agriculture will come to present at that forum and provide advice to the many groups—in fact, over 500 groups—in Western Australia that are interested in accessing those funds.

I also draw members’ attention to a significant issue impacting the agency. I want to talk about this for a little while. It is the eighth paragraph on page 210 of budget paper No 2. It reads —

Fit-for-purpose, modern legislation is required to support the State’s businesses and keep industries globally competitive. The Department’s legislative reform program includes a major amendment to the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* ...

This is something I want to spend a bit of time on tonight because it is a topic that has drawn a huge amount of support from the constituency and stakeholder groups that I tend to represent in Western Australia. To tell members a little bit more about the level of support for these reforms that we are waiting on, I want to mention the newly formed Australian Alliance for Animals, which is based in the eastern states but works nationally and very closely with our federal colleagues. The alliance came to Western Australia in October last year in partnership with the Minderoo Foundation to offer members of the community interested in animal welfare improvements an opportunity to come together and talk about the urgency of updating the Western Australian Animal Welfare Act 2002. For the interest of members of the house who were elected more recently, they might not be aware that it was our Premier who took the bill through in 2000. Prior to that, he put an enormous petition to this Parliament with literally hundreds of thousands of signatures asking for animal welfare reform in Western Australia. The Premier has a vested interest in this and has maintained his support for a modernised act. I am very much looking forward to seeing a bill come through to do that.

Another aim of the forum was to facilitate conversations with the incredible, interesting stakeholders—44 organisations were represented—on specific ideas for reform across five sectors. The sectors are companion animals, wild animals, farmed animals, animals in sport and recreation, and legislation and enforcement. I would like to spend a bit of time going through some of the specific recommendations. Before I do that, I would like to say at the beginning that the overall feeling of members of the group was that they agreed to write a letter to the Premier offering their unconditional support to move the bill forward as quickly as possible in this Parliament.

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I will run through the list of eight cross-sector priorities that they agreed on. I quote —

The various sector groups covered a range of issues. However, when each group reported back ... on their discussions, there were eight key areas of common agreement across the majority of forum participants:

1. Expediting the review of the Animal Welfare Act 2002, to ensure WA has a modern and robust animal welfare legislative framework.
2. Establishing the WA Animal Welfare Advisory Committee as a statutory body under the Act.
3. Better enforcement of existing legislation and creation of enforceable minimum animal welfare standards.
4. Improved resourcing and funding of those agencies responsible for enforcement and compliance.
5. Clarification around the roles and responsibilities of current enforcement entities to ensure reported incidents and non-compliance are responded to effectively.
6. The importance of regular review and improvement of legislation and codes of practice to ensure these are fit for purpose and easy to understand.

I think that will be important later when I talk to members about specific issues, because many of them involve needing to review, refresh and modernise the codes of practice that we are working under at the moment. It continues —

7. The importance of education and training for all parties involved in animal welfare.
8. Introduction of a comprehensive animal welfare strategy to address priority animal welfare issues.

This is something that I have been calling for for about 10 years. Western Australia needs an animal welfare strategy to guide the work that we are doing in this space. We have nothing at the moment. It is a major opportunity. When the act comes onstream, after our winter break I hope, many things will need to happen concurrently. One of the most powerful things that we can do to guide the work in this area is to have a plan. It is not rocket science. Other jurisdictions in Australia have animal welfare plans. They have a strategic direction. They spend time working out the key issues that people want to see improved and then they go ahead and deliver them. This is a great opportunity and I would encourage the McGowan government—my government—to think about putting that into action when the new bill is presented to this house and hopefully goes through both houses.

Another thing I thought I would take this opportunity to highlight is some of the specifics that were raised because I have been talking in general terms. Although general terms are very good for politicians and for regulators and legislators to speak to, specific issues might be more approachable for some people in this house who are perhaps not across the animal welfare issues. I will go through some of them.

The sector-specific priorities that arose from the 44 different organisations that gathered last October have been written about under a number of specific headings. The first is “Animals in sport, entertainment and recreation”. I will talk about it briefly. I will give one example from each of the categories.

The first category is “Horses” or the equine world, one which many in this house will know I know a fair bit about. Under the horses category, the group—which I was not part of; it did this without any undue influence from me—identified, firstly, the need to introduce enforceable minimum animal welfare standards for all horses. Secondly, it identified the need to introduce an identification and traceability register for horses, or mandatory registration of horses with a national body, making them traceable for life. On the traceability issue, the CEO of the horse welfare organisation that is based in the UK and runs equine welfare through bodies around the world said to me that traceability, traceability and traceability are the three key priorities in improving animal welfare. I know what he means; he is absolutely correct.

On the greyhound issue, this group of 44 organisations called for the introduction of enforceable minimum animal welfare standards for greyhounds; amendments to the legislation to make it an offence to euthanise a healthy greyhound; and for racing greyhounds to be included in the dog standards and guidelines, as well as the stop puppy farming legislation.

There are several general issues that might be worth mentioning. The first and probably most pointed issue they raised is one that has been raised many times in this house with many different governments, as well as nationally and internationally—that is, the need to establish an independent inspector for animal welfare, separate from industry, to oversee animal welfare generally, including of racing and equestrian activities. There are more, but I will go through some first.

The next category of priorities is under the heading “Companion Animals”. As members may or may not know, companion animals fit uneasily across the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the

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Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. They do not fit clearly in either category, so it is murky and hard to work out exactly whose buttons to press if we want to improve the welfare of companion animals. I will talk about the regulatory issues that were raised. The groups want us to increase the regulation of animals that are sold online, including through Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace. By the way, the McGowan government has tried to do that. The previous Minister for Local Government wrote several times to Gumtree asking it to regulate the practice more severely and warning that the stop puppy farming legislation was coming into play and would place additional demands on it. We have not seen any progress in that space. Shame on Gumtree and Facebook for their negation of that information and advice.

The second big priority in the companion animals section is to progress the reviews of the Cat Act and the Dog Act, both of which are due. It is well-nigh time that we did that. I know the Minister for Local Government has committed to starting that in 2025, but if he has any space in his diary, I urge him to encourage the department to start before 2025. A growing number of people are dissatisfied with the Cat Act, with the lack of enforcement and with cats roaming in protected areas where wildlife is present, and they want better protection for domestic cats. The other point they made is that a comprehensive animal welfare strategy is required. I think we have already said that, but I will say it again because it was raised by every group. This is not just a one-off; every group wants this. They said that the strategy should address a range of issues, including the basic health needs of animals, the use of technology to improve animal welfare, and dog and companion animal training and socialisation. They also said it should clarify the roles and responsibilities of parties across jurisdictions.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L.L. BAKER:** Under the heading “Enforcement issues”, the groups also seeks to —

Increase powers of entry and resourcing to help abused animals, including ranger availability on weekends and limited powers for “Good Samaritans” to enter properties to provide essential care

I cannot tell members how many people have phoned my office to ask how to rescue a cat or dog that has been confined, not fed properly, abused or whatever. They tried to report it and had no success, so they wanted some advice on what to do. It is very difficult to tell them to sit down and do nothing—very difficult.

The groups also seek to —

Increase the circumstance in which vets are permitted to euthanise animals who are suffering, and expand the legal protections for vets who act in such situations

That is a topical question that needs greater examination. Indeed, the whole issue of vets in our community is something that I would like to bring to this Parliament in far more detail in the future. The veterinary profession is in crisis. The suicide rate is very, very high—it is unacceptably high. We are losing vets because of the nature of their job, the amount of money they are paid for the work they do and just the sheer rigour of the profession in which they are involved. I have a wonderful proposal that has been given to me by a new group that has been established as a charity and wants to tackle the issue of building the profession of veterinary studies and building a social support network for vets in our community. I will talk more about that on another occasion.

The groups also want to —

Increase powers for enforcement agencies and local councils in relation to the rescue and care of companion animals

Under “Social issues”, they want to encourage and incentivise pet-friendly communities. We see some fantastic local governments doing some wonderful work around cat and dog management and the like—local government authorities that take a proactive view on dog management and ownership, rather than criticising dog breeds or picking on a particular type of dog as being aggressive because it has pink skin and almond-shaped eyes. That is simply not the case; it is not genetically sound. We need to look at that.

Legislation and enforcement was another area that the groups covered. We have already seen powers of entry go through for food production facilities, but, in general, the call is for better powers of entry for inspectors. The groups want to streamline animal forfeiture processes in abandonment cases and increase routine compliance and monitoring for commercial entities. Under the subheading “Clarity and collaboration”, it states —

Clarify the roles and responsibilities for the different enforcement entities to ensure reports are responded to efficiently and effectively

Under “Governance and policy” in this section, it states —

Establish a WA Animal Welfare Advisory Committee as a statutory body under the Act



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Establish a genuinely independent authority to administer animal welfare legislation (DPIRD is not appropriate as it is conflicted)

Finally, it states —

Introduce decision-making principles to apply to public authorities making decisions that impact animals (the proposed Victorian model is a good example)

I would like to keep going as I am running out of time. There are many more specific issues in that section, but I will jump to the section on farmed animals. Remember, there were farmers, live exporters and animal transport people in the room as well as rescue groups and farm animal rescue groups. They agreed that increasing the training and education of inspectors about the industry was vital. They also want to improve the training and education of producers in relation to processes and animal welfare laws. Under the subheading “Inspectorate” it states —

Increase resourcing of inspectorate services in relation to numbers, equipment and training and development

Increase inspector powers of access with appropriate biosecurity controls

Finally, it states —

Improve effective enforcement including progression of notices leading to prosecution

Clarify and review the model codes of practice

Clarify the intent of the Act to emphasise administration and not just prosecution

Under the final category of “Wild Animals” it has two groups—native and introduced species. Firstly, under native species, it states —

Recognise climate change as an animal welfare issue, e.g. mass mortalities due to increased heat

Take action to reduce emissions contributing to global warming including no new coal and gas developments

Save habitat for wildlife—stop land clearing and consider animal welfare in land clearing decisions

I recently released a report done by a parliamentary intern who worked from my office last year on the impact of land development and decision-making on who is actually responsible for the care or relocation of wildlife when a developer goes in and attempts to raze all the trees. We see some devastating outcomes for wildlife. Under “Regulatory issues”, the table lists —

Require Local Governments to have fauna management policies

Develop regulations for wildlife rehabilitation and reduce delays in issuing of licenses to wildlife rescue and rehabilitation groups

I think that might have moved forward now because the licences are just starting to be issued. There are problems with the licences. Despite the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions’ very good work in consulting with the sector, some glaring problems still need to be addressed and I understand the department is working with the wildlife sector to fix those problems at the moment. It also refers to —

Increase regulation of fishing-related wildlife harm, including:

- No-fishing zones for piers to decrease entanglements
- Regulate and control recreational fishers to avoid injuries to seabirds
- Safe disposal of fish hooks
- Penalties for those who cause wildlife to be injured—for example fishermen to pay for bird and dolphin rescue

Introduce wire on all open and grated stormwater drains to reduce ducklings falling through and callouts to DFES

Increase monitoring and enforcement regarding the illegal wildlife trade and reducing the risk to biosecurity

Finally, under “Funding”, it states —

Increase funding to support:

- Wildlife centres and hospitals
- Declining species
- The mental health of those who work in wildlife care

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- Vets who treat or euthanase injured wildlife

Under “Wild Animals (Introduced Species)” it states —

Increase available resourcing for monitoring and law enforcement in relation to illegal translocations, trespass and enforcement for non-compliance and inadequate control techniques which results in inhumane treatment of introduced animals

Improve clarity in wording of regulations, control methods and definition of pest animals, including s.24 of the Animal Welfare Act

Under “Hunting”, it states —

Increase monitoring and enforcement to prevent recreational hunters trespassing onto private property and prevent the illegal release and translocation of feral pigs

This issue was particularly raised by a farmer who has had an incredibly bad time over the years and also by a shire president in the country where they have had dreadful experiences with the not so friendly folk who like to release piglets, wait for them to grow up and then go back and shoot them. They cut their ears and tails off so that they can identify them. It is a horrific practice. It continues —

Some participants also supported a ban on recreational hunting.

Under “Methods of control” it refers to —

Increase investment in research for non-lethal methods for introduced species management

Require wild dog traps to be checked daily and ban the use of strychnine on wild dog traps (see Regulation 29 of the Animal Welfare (General) Regulations)

I raise the point that I could go on and list the 25 issues that members of Parliament interested in this topic have raised in meetings with me as well, but I will mention the issue of rodenticide because people in this chamber have repeatedly raised this issue with me. Rodenticide and glue traps are two massive killers of our wildlife. If members have never heard of glue traps, they should go to Bunnings and they will find them. They are like fly strips that mum and dad used to use—long rectangular things that are really incredibly sticky on both sides. The problem is that they are meant to catch insects but they catch baby owls, baby birds and many of our native species who simply starve to death with their wings pinned to the glue traps. It is horrendous. I should say that at the behest of wildlife groups I have written many times to Bunnings, asking it to withdraw them from its market and recently it announced it would do that. However, we should ban them and we should ban rodenticide, 2,4-D and the like. It is a horrific death. There is no excuse for a developed nation to be using these products. In fact, other states banned them a long time ago. There are far more humane modern efforts of dealing with pests and rodents. We should not be reduced to the hideous poisoning that rodenticide causes in our community.

I had one chap come up to me and say he was a farmer who was on his way out to his property up at Mullewa, I think it was, and one of his dogs jumped off the ute to have a pit stop, as you do, and took off into the bush and, unbeknownst to him, picked up a bait. While he travelled back to Mullewa, this dog died a hideous death on the front seat of his car. He was crying when he told me this story. He said, “Why do we use this? We should not use this in Australia.” Indeed, we should not. It is absolutely unforgivable. I call on the ministers involved to do something to withdraw the use of rodenticide permanently and unequivocally forever from our community.

I wanted to go on and speak about a lot of other things to do with my other favourite subject of the decade and that is the innovations around agriculture in the alternative protein and cultivated meat sector. I probably do not have time with three minutes to go, but I want to mention a couple of companies that are doing amazing work—in particular, Magic Valley, which is one of only two cultivated meat companies in Australia. It was founded in 2020 and it hopes to have its products in supermarkets by 2024. It uses innovative stem cell technology with no animal by-products. In 2022, it applied its technology to create a lamb prototype. It is the first time anywhere in the world this has been used to create cultivated lamb products. Paul Bevan believes that their technology may be the only one that does not require the use of foetal bovine serum, which has been a very controversial part of this industry. It is being rapidly phased out. This company is leading the way in that space. It is very, very impressive.

Vow, founded in 2019, use a combination of cell biology, robotics and software engineering to decipher information at cellular level. It is a foundation of new food design, making products for every occasion, from fine dining to the local supermarket. Vow is working with the local Australian regulator to become the country’s first approved cultivated meat product. In 2022, it opened factory 1, which has the capability to produce 30 tonnes of cultured meat annually. Plans are underway for factory 2, which will have the capacity to produce 110 times that scale.

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I just wanted to quickly mention those two businesses, and Cauldron, which was founded in 2022 and is the Asia-Pacific's first large-scale fermentation launch pad. I would like to talk to members a lot more about what precision fermentation holds for this world. It is a revolution in food production and in this planet's future. It has the capacity to produce all dairy products without cows. The technology and the science is very, very easily sorted. Cauldron is taking a leadership role in this country in this space. I would like to mention that both Cauldron and Vow have recently had conversations with our very own member for Mount Lawley, who is also the state's representative on food regulation committees and the ministerial groups working together in Australia. They have spoken at length about the need for good food regulation around cellular and cultivated products and the way forward in this space.

**MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Parliamentary Secretary)** [7.08 pm]: It is always lovely to be in the chamber when the member for Maylands makes a speech on anything to do with animal welfare. She is a trailblazer in this place on these issues. I know a lot of members in the chamber stand behind her in all she has spoken about over the years. The member ended with some discussion regarding precision fermentation. I encourage members to do a Google search and watch a few YouTube videos on that topic. It will transform the agricultural industry, much like synthetic insulin did in the early 1980s. Anyone who thinks otherwise figuratively has their head in the sand. There are some great not-for-profit organisations that I have not met with, but I keep an eye on their websites—for example, Cellular Agriculture Australia. There are clearly some trailblazers in this area and if I had the money to invest and could invest, I would probably invest in a few of these companies.

**Ms L.L. Baker:** Cellular Agriculture Australia is running a first conference on 15 June in the eastern states into cellular agriculture and the production of cellular meat—amazing speaker list!

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** That sounds great, member for Maylands. As I said, congratulations. The member for Maylands leads the way for those of us in the chamber who want to treat sentient animals other than human beings in a humane way without having their head in the sand—much like some of the parties that represent some areas of our state.

Today we are obviously talking about the 2023–24 budget. As a member who has sat through budgets as a former staffer for members of Parliament in both the Gallop–Carpenter government and in opposition under Eric Ripper and our current Premier, I can say that budget day was always exciting. I remember when I was in opposition, all of us used to come up here, wait for the budget papers and hurriedly go through them. We were all allocated a bit, like the member for Belmont's husband, Pat. We would go through our allocated portfolios in the budget papers and see what the Liberal government had cut. We would compare it with the last budget, see what was different and get ready for a blistering attack on the budget in the week after.

**Ms C.M. Rowe:** Those were the days.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** Those were the days.

I do not think that blistering attack comes anymore because the budget is so good. Of course, no budget is perfect, but this budget makes me proud, not just as a Labor member of Parliament, but as a member of Parliament. It is something that gives a lot to most, if not all, Western Australians, at least to some degree. It looks after the community as much as the state government possibly can, given the resources it has.

Earlier today we heard some of the ridiculous discussions around state debt. Members opposite were having a go at the government, saying that state debt in the out years might be rising. However, everyone knows that in the budget, the out years are predicated on a reasonably low long-term average iron ore price. That is a conservative way to do budgeting. That is why these things are shown in the budget. Of course, we all hope that those prices, and the royalties and the revenue that the state gets, will not be what is predicted, but I think it is incredibly important, as the Premier said earlier today, to conservatively have those assumptions in the budget rather than be spending money that we may not have in the future.

I am proud of the budget. It is always an important day. In 2017 when the budget came down and those big red books were placed on my desk at the old Whip seat over there, I think I almost shed a tear, being a member of this place for the first time and receiving my own budget pack. Last year, I was not here for the budget. It was my first bout of COVID, so I actually fell asleep during the budget speech. I was sick in bed, but I was trying to watch it on TV.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** Get a life, member.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** COVID hit me pretty bad that first time; I have had it again since, despite having a few jabs.

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I thought tonight that I would give the Parliament an update on some of the things that have been happening in the great electorate of Balcatta. I have lived in the electorate for my entire life. I went to primary and high school there and it is an area I am incredibly proud to represent in this place.

First of all, I will talk about Westminster Primary School, which is a school I inherited from the former member for Mirrabooka Janine Freeman after the last redistribution. Just before the 2017 election, Westminster Primary School and Westminster Junior Primary School amalgamated. Those schools were established in 1958. They were great schools. I think that was the last junior primary school in the state to be amalgamated. The new Westminster Primary School and the co-located education support centre onsite do a great job for local children in Westminster. As I do every year, in the coming months or so I will have some of the kids from Westminster Primary and the education support centre to lunch. It is a great school with a great mob of kids. The teachers do a great job looking after them. I am so proud and I thank the government and Janine Freeman the former member for Mirrabooka. We are in the middle of a \$12.8 million upgrade to the school, which will do wonders for that area. When I walked into the school for the first time, I did not think that too much money had been spent on it for some time. This is a major rebuild, including a refurbishment of the existing classrooms in the old junior primary school, and new buildings, including teaching blocks, a staffroom, a dental centre, administration area, parking, landscaping and some great new sports courts. That building is underway. I hope that in a year or so, an almost brand new school will serve the Westminster area well. It is a great area. It will give our students an ideal learning environment with an outstanding educational experience. The redevelopment will benefit current and future generations of Westminster children.

The school is really good, but we all know that schools are not just the students, teachers and administration staff. They are obviously an important part, but school communities are made up of parents and the community that support that school. I want to make mention of a gentleman by the name of Norman Gibbons, who was a volunteer at Westminster Primary School. I think he originally started with the P&C because his children were at the school. He volunteered five days a week in the canteen for 18 years—an absolutely extraordinary effort. Last year, Norm was the winner of the 2022 Nan Marlow Award for Excellence in Volunteering. Norm, salt of the earth, has done so much for that school and that area. I would like to recognise him for his dedication to the school and the community.

Balcatta Primary School is another school in my electorate. Its principal, Peter Gates, has been at Balcatta Primary for many years. On the weekend before last, I racked up 18 years as an elected member for the area—12 years on the City of Stirling and six years as the member for Balcatta. Peter Gates has been there for much of that time. I often used to go to Balcatta Primary School for its graduations to present the City of Stirling Citizenship Award. The principal does a great job at the school, and there is a great P&C, with president Shoshana Lam. I am pleased that towards the end of last year, one of my and the government's election commitments was to install one of those big fans to cool the undercover area —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, I do not think that is the correct name for them.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** Acting Speaker, I will not repeat some of your former discourse in this place! I will call it a big fan.

The fan was installed to cool the undercover area where the school has its assemblies, as well as some shade for the drinking fountains just outside that always got the westerly sun in the middle of summer. Those stainless steel drinking fountains would get very hot. In 2017, part of my election commitments were to get some great blue basketball courts as well.

I have four Catholic primary schools in my electorate, too. Late last year, we finished the court resurfacing at St Kieran Catholic Primary School in Tuart Hill. Principal Daine Burnett and St Kieran have a massive commitment to disabled students with some very serious disabilities. The school does an absolutely amazing job. I would like to put a call out to all the parents, volunteers and especially the specialist teachers at St Kieran.

David Tennant is a teacher at Takari Primary School. I recognise his contribution to the school. I know he has not been well lately. If he reads this later—I do not think he will be listening—I wish him all the best. Leah Clegg has stepped into the principal's role since the start of the year. Takari is a great school as well. Under former education minister Ellery, we did some court resurfacing and quite a few little upgrades to the school over the four years of the first term of the McGowan government. I think they are nearly, if not fully, complete. I have not been out there for a week or two. There is a new swing set and a portable stage for assemblies and performances in its undercover area. Again, the state government has been able to help with an election commitment.

Osborne Primary School with principal Kylie Jones is a great small school. The school is well over 110 years old now. It is just off the freeway on Hutton Street. The P&C president is Kym Eaton. Another election commitment was a nature playground expansion. That work is in progress as we speak.

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St Gerard’s Catholic Primary School is another school I inherited from Janine Freeman. Principal Mitch Bristow is the only principal I have seen who plays the guitar at graduation ceremonies. The school is currently developing a new administration building. As soon as that is done, the school will take advantage of the election commitment for a nature playground.

Sheldon Carey is the principal of St Lawrence Primary School on Main Street in Balcatta. It has an urban orchard with some fruit trees and the kids get out there, learn how to do a bit of gardening and are able to pick some fruit, chop it up and eat it later. Again, St Lawrence is a great school.

St Denis Catholic Primary School in Joondanna, with Justin Tuohy as principal, has purchased with the election commitment iPads and some other equipment to focus on robotics. That is an incredibly important thing in the modern age, and something that we did not have when I went to primary school.

West Balcatta Primary School, with Caroline Booth as principal, is a school of choice in the northern suburbs of Perth. It is bulging at the seams and could not fit another student. I think the Department of Education said, “No more demountables; stop taking kids from out of area.” It has a major new playground and a seating upgrade. I think Michelle Rankin is the P&C president and that P&C does an amazing job raising a lot of money for the school. The school was able to fundraise and leverage from our 2017 election commitment and build a wonderful nature playground that has a stream. It has a water pump at one end and pumps water down, and it is amazing to see. If anyone ever wants to look at it, let me know and I can take them out to West Balcatta Primary School.

We spoke about Westminster Primary School already. It is also going to get some undercover areas through a small election commitment, so I am looking forward to that happening as well, once the school has been properly redeveloped.

There is also my old primary school, Tuart Hill Primary School, which has a very good principal, Bev Innes. I have a special affinity for that school; I still live only five houses away from it. It has almost a parkour-like nature playground with lots of climbing and jumping things—things that I cannot do anymore with my cricket knees! That has been completed and it looks great up there near Wanneroo Road.

I turn to high schools, and of course there is Balcatta Senior High School. I am incredibly proud that the McGowan government was able to fund a \$50 million upgrade of that school in our first term. Principal Helen Maitland saw the school through that redevelopment and does an absolutely wonderful job there. These are rough figures, but when we were redeveloping I think the school numbers dropped into the 500s, which was incredibly low for a public high school. I am told that, now the school has been redeveloped, the numbers are creeping back up towards 900 again, so it is a case of “if you build it, they will come”.

There is also my old high school, Servite College, with principal Silvana Vicoli. That school does a great job and, with the City of Stirling, the government was able to help it expand its car park at Grenville Reserve; that is where the school’s oval is located and it uses that space for its sport. The car park is mainly for some of the year 12s to be able to park their cars. The school also put in to a public good, which means that on weekends there is extra car parking at Grenville Reserve for sports matches and a community hall for hire.

These are great projects. I know all members in this place will have similar projects at their schools. I am very proud that this government has allowed all members in all seats across the state to undertake some of the smaller projects, whether they are Labor, Liberal or Nationals members. Money goes to all sorts of projects, no matter who the member is. I am looking forward to seeing some more school projects in conjunction with the Department of Education in the future.

I turn now to health. Last year I was pleased to join the Minister for Health in opening a new 30-bed modular hospital ward at Osborne Park Hospital as part of our commitment to delivering extra capacity in WA hospitals. The ward is at the back of Osborne Park Hospital. From the outside it looks like a quite fancy but traditional donga, all connected together, but inside it is an all-new hospital ward that looks lovely. Having seen other hospitals, it is really nice and some nice landscaping has been done. I am very happy that the minister was able to progress that project at Osborne Park Hospital. It will care for patients who require rehabilitation following an amputation, and it will free up other hospital beds in the system for patients needing more acute care. Also at Osborne Park Hospital, as part of our 2017 election commitments, we have a gym, a therapy pod, a dining room, 10 single rooms, 10 double rooms, staff offices and reception facilities at the rehabilitation centre. That builds on the \$24.9 million expansion to Osborne Park Hospital that, again, I am very proud of.

Something else has happened in Balcatta that has not been publicised too much—I think we are waiting for the government trading enterprise to do a little more work on it—but I am very proud that the government and the Minister for Energy made a decision on underground power. A lot of suburbs in the metropolitan area probably traditionally could not afford underground power. In the last round of the underground power program under the former government the rules were changed. It used to be a 50–50 split between the council and the state government,

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or Western Power. The rules were changed to make communities bid against each other, so some communities said, “We’re happy to take 70 per cent of the cost”, but this just meant that underground power would never go to areas with lower incomes. I congratulate the Minister for Energy on the new targeted underground power program.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** I am really proud that the minister has started a new program that will use science to determine where underground power goes. It will be determined on the age of the poles and wires in the relevant area, any faults that happen and any environmental factors such as salt from the sea and other things that might affect the power reliability of an area. I think it is great. There will be 31 projects included in the program across 12 targeted metropolitan areas that have a high density of ageing overhead assets. This will mean that more than 50 000 properties will be converted to underground power, including around 7 500 in my electorate, which I am very happy about. The benefits of underground power are many, including improved streetscapes with the removal of overhead power lines, and more attractive tree canopy growth, reducing the “heat island” effect of urban infill. I know that is something that local governments are very, very happy about. It also means that there will be fewer car accidents and fewer incidents of birds, tree branches and balloons impacting on the power system as a result of poles and wires. The cost to local residents will be factored in to take into account the socio-economic conditions of any given area. If it is low, it will cost local residents less, which the local government can then apportion over many years.

When I doorknocked the suburb of Westminster for the first time in late 2016 after the redistribution, residents told me about when Reid Highway went through in the early 1990s, and the fact that they never put a wall along most of the highway. As traffic increased and Reid Highway got busier, the noise, pollution and number of car accidents has increased. I want to congratulate Main Roads for the wall that has been installed on Reid Highway on the Westminster side. Residents say it has made a very big difference in terms of noise. I have spoken to the City of Stirling, and it is looking at some tree planting on the residents’ side of the wall in the coming year or so.

With regard to transport, we will be seeing a lot of things in inner city electorates. As our suburbs continue to expand north, everyone will be funnelled into those inner city seats. Several parts of my electorate will soon see changes that will support a better-connected city. The widening of Mitchell Freeway south, from Cedric Street to Vincent Street, was completed last year, as was the widening of the Mitchell Freeway north, on the other side. Connected to that is the smart freeway project. I think I mentioned last Thursday, in a very short speech at the end of the day, that I had always been sceptical about smart freeways, but that people who live south of the river said that they work. We are rolling out 16 on-ramps for Mitchell Freeway southbound. That work is ongoing at the moment. Smart technologies will be installed to overhead electronic signs that will manage the flow of traffic on the freeway, improving safety and cutting travel times for commuters. It is an important step in innovative traffic management that will more effectively benefit thousands of commuters every day. As we saw with the southbound widening of the Mitchell Freeway, other upgrades include construction of emergency stopping bays, stopped vehicle detection, CCTV cameras and all those other things that come with the Smart Freeway project.

The only on-ramp off the freeway is in my electorate, where there are three side streets coming off Hutton Street—Cape Street, Hector Street and McDonald Street. Some of the local residents were concerned. I want to commend Main Roads for listening to their concerns and coming up with innovative solutions to fix some of the problems. I am looking forward to that work going ahead.

Cycling and walking are very important. I am very proud that over our last term, we were able to improve the principal shared path from Telford Crescent in Stirling all the way through to Vincent Street. It was a big project. It goes down the residential part of Osborne Park and Princeton Estate in Stirling. That was a great project, which was finished last year, including amenity walls for the entire residential section.

I am proud to say that yesterday morning we opened the new section of the principal shared path from the eastern side of Reid Highway heading south to Civic Place in Stirling. Whilst I was out there with the Minister for Transport, we saw cyclists already using the path. They recognised the minister, not me, and thanked her as they rode past. Again, it is a great thing. The principal shared path diverts at Civic Place around the old Hertha Road tip site. As part of the Stephenson Avenue project, the path will continue, so the PSP will no longer go past people’s driveways, which has always been a safety concern when cyclists ride their bikes very fast down residential streets.

Last year we opened the first section of the Stephenson Avenue extension, which is parallel to Ellen Stirling Boulevard, from Scarborough Beach Road, just behind Ikea. The City of Stirling managed that project. I think the project came in under budget, which is rare in the current climate. I thank the council for its work on that project. There was old swampland under the ground. On top of it was fill or cut from when Main Roads put the freeway through in the 1980s. There was some asbestos and other materials in there. Phase 2 began last year. It includes a new connection from Cedric Street to Scarborough Beach Road, including a new grade-separated Mitchell Freeway interchange with

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a southbound smart freeway on-ramp as well as new local road links to Ellen Stirling Boulevard, cutting underneath the new bridge to the back of Ikea. The project, which is jointly funded by the federal government, will also deliver a \$90 million refurbishment to the Stirling bus interchange, upgrading it from an 18-stand to a 30-stand bus interchange. For many years—even when I was a councillor at the City of Stirling—we have known that at peak times, another bus cannot get into Stirling station. There is no room for another service. This project will almost double the number of buses that will be able to get in and out. We are still working on it. It is a massive project, worth over \$300 million. It will be finished by the end of next year. I am really looking forward to it. It has been a ghost road on the UBD maps probably since the 1960s. We are finally putting it through. It will unlock all that land right next to the train station, the Osborne Park industrial area and Westfield Innaloo. It should hopefully mean that a lot of people will not need a car, especially first home buyers or those on low incomes. They will be able to get on a train, travel to work, enjoy a lot of leisure areas around them and that kind of thing. I am really looking forward to the Stirling city centre going ahead in leaps and bounds. It will be a great addition to the local area. Obviously, half of it is in the electorate of the member for Scarborough.

I wish to talk about a few more small commitments that have been delivered since the last time I made one of these speeches. I would like to mention some sporting clubs and acknowledge the volunteers and committees at clubs such as the Balcatta Cricket Club, the Stirling Macedonia Football Club and the Osborne Park Bowling Club. There are some great clubs in the area. I also want to refer to the Westside BMX Club. In April, I had the privilege of attending the 2023 AusCycling junior national championships at the Westside BMX track in Balcatta. It was an important national meet that saw several interstate competitors and visitors visit the Balcatta area. I was proud that our government made a commitment to upgrade the facility by providing funding for a shelter and new PA system, which was very much needed. The volunteers out there do a really great job.

The Osborne Park Agricultural Society has been operating the Osborne Park Show for more than 107 years. It took a break during both wars and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year it will hold its 107<sup>th</sup> show. It is slightly less agricultural than it used to be. I think most of my electorate was in the regions 107 shows ago, with lots of piggeries and market gardens. Obviously, it is still renowned in the area and very much loved. The society does a great job. As someone who lives a couple of streets away, I was always allowed to attend on a Friday night, get a couple of show bags with the money we had, have a few rides and watch the fireworks. I was always allowed to stay up late on a Saturday night to watch the fireworks from the front porch.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** In terms of multiculturalism in the area, I consider myself very lucky to sit in this chamber and represent the colour and vibrancy of multicultural communities in my local area. As a lifelong resident and, more importantly—my office wrote this—as a son of a Finnish migrant, which is true, I have come to embrace the cosmopolitan environment —

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** They were robbed at Eurovision, I reckon!

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** It is funny you should talk about Finland and Eurovision. I rang my mum. She has been crook, so I did not see her on Mother's Day on the weekend. I will probably see her in the next week or so. She said that she has contact with our cousins in Finland. I am actually related to the *Cha Cha Cha* singer, who is some long-lost relative. In case members do not know, while we are on Finland, I also need to put on the record that when I did my family tree—I am not misleading the house when I say this, because that is very grave—ancestry.com indicated that I am an eighth cousin once removed from Pamela Anderson. That is actually a thing; I am putting it on the record.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** You had to get that on there.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** Yes, it is on the record forever now.

Returning to my area, many market gardeners from Croatia, Macedonia and Italy were just pioneers in the area in really tough times, working on tough land. They also endured a lot of racism in those days. In September last year, I joined the City of Stirling in recognising one of our local pioneers in the renaming of a reserve in Balcatta—the Dusan Lucev Reserve. The late Dusan Lucev was one of several migrants who contributed to the development of the area, making it the thriving community that we know today. I have many other clubs in my electorate, including the Siciliani Association of WA, the Tuscany Association WA, the Vasto Club, the Stirling Adriatic Centre and Bowling Club, the Chung Wah Cultural Centre and the Ilinden Macedonian Cultural Centre. They do such an amazing job. I am very proud to say that just before COVID, the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests announced a fund, which will assist them with some of their maintenance. I hope the minister can continue to work on those kinds of things.

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With a minute to go, I will save the rest for my contribution in reply to the Premier's speech, which I am sure the Whip will make me do at some point later in the year. I am very proud to be a member of this place and very proud to be a Labor member given the budget that has just come down. I commend it to the house.

**MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary)** [7.37 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the budget this evening. Other members have spoken at quite some length about the fantastic financial management of the McGowan Labor government, so I will not labour that point. This evening I will talk about the importance of translating these macro figures into real outcomes for our constituents because I think that is the measure of a good government. It is not just about producing the best set of books in history or having the strongest subnational jurisdiction in the world, certainly in Australia. It is about what these sorts of numbers translate to for our constituents. At the end of the day, all politics is local. We can talk up these wonderful numbers as much as we like but we need to always have a mind to how we improve the lives of everyday Western Australians. I would like to talk about some projects that are referenced in the budget that do indeed make a tangible difference to the people of Swan Hills. At the end of the day, as members, that is our job.

In the last budget, there was a very pleasing focus on youth. The former Minister for Community Services; Youth sits in front of me, and it was under her watch that the Target 120 program was expanded into Ellenbrook. It is very important that youth issues are front and centre in Ellenbrook. Ellenbrook is one of the fastest growing parts of the Perth metropolitan area, where 30 per cent—I think it is closer to 32 per cent—of our tens of thousands of residents are under the age of 18. When I was running for election in 2017, there was a youth service that ran out of a place called the Coolroom. It supported 40 children for two or three hours twice a week—that is, to service the fastest growing population in the metropolitan area with the largest proportion of people under the age of 18. That was the sort of operating youth service there was in the area. As I doorknocked throughout Ellenbrook, the one thing that people consistently said to me was that the kids needed somewhere to go and something to do. The more I consulted with the community on these issues, the thing that came through loud and clear was that these kids deserved a place in the heart of our community. They should not just be shunted off into some little room. They should not be stuck right at the back end of Ellenbrook. They deserved a place in our town centre where they would have access to public transport, where there are library facilities, school facilities and shops. We should not just be shunting kids off but embracing them and bringing them into the heart of Ellenbrook.

Hon Dave Kelly—at the time he was not honourable; he is honourable, but he was not a minister!—was the opposition spokesperson for youth and I had a long conversation with him about our capacity to make an election commitment. In February 2017, I was very pleased to stand alongside Dave and announce that a McGowan government, if elected, would commit \$2 million towards youth in Ellenbrook, some money for mental health services, then \$1.86 million for a new Ellenbrook youth centre. I extend my gratitude to the member for Bassendean for his incredible support in securing that commitment for me in the lead-up to the 2017 election. On the day, the Deputy Mayor of the City of Swan, as he was then, David Lucas, stood there with me. We had local culturally and linguistically diverse community leaders. John Aciek from the South Sudan Community Association of WA was there. The former mayor, the CEO of the City of Swan, Mike Foley, was there. Other youth leaders all stood with me on the Ellenbrook library verandah and we made this commitment.

Obviously, I love the fact that we have a train coming to Ellenbrook, it is very important, but the most important election commitment that I personally secured as a member was for that youth centre because it is the sort of project that will make a tangible difference to the youth of Ellenbrook for decades to come. I remember once I was at a breakfast that the former Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit, spoke at. I am verballing him and I am not going to get it right, but he said something that really stayed with me, the sentiment of which was that we need to treat young people very carefully because the way we treat our young people will determine the sort of society we will age in. That was such an important point and it really stuck with me. When there is such a big community with so many young people, we have to do the right thing by the young people in Ellenbrook or we will run into all sorts of difficulties.

After I was elected, we immediately got to work on the project. The Ballajura Dungeon Youth Centre is in the member for Bassendean's electorate. He said I should go and check it out. It had just been recently built for \$1.5 million, and I thought, "You beauty! For \$1.86 million, we should be able to get a pretty good facility." I would like to thank Daniel from Whitelion Youth Agency for showing me through that facility. He is a constituent. He lives in the Coolamon part of my electorate, and I knocked on his door and I said, "Hello, Daniel." He was very generous and talked me through the operating model of Whitelion at the Ballajura Dungeon. It had a kitchen where kids could be taught to cook for themselves, drop-in spaces, little counselling rooms where services could be provided and computer spaces. While I was there, this wave of kids came in from all different age groups. There was a basketball half-court out there. It is just great. I spent some time at the Ballajura Dungeon. I met with Youth Focus,



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I met with the YMCA and I met with Lotterywest to talk about its capacity to provide some support. I will honestly say that I really encountered some difficulties with the City of Swan councillors. There was some real resistance.

**Ms C.M. Rowe:** Surprise, surprise!

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** Yes, surprise, surprise!

Some councillors in the City of Swan were not keen to support a youth centre for Ellenbrook. I encourage the people of the City of Swan to appraise themselves of who these people are and think about it in October.

Anyway, I decided to put on a bus and take the City of Swan councillors who were willing to entertain the fact that they should provide services for young people in their electorates on a bit of a roadshow to meet some of WA's best youth service providers. In fact, we visited the member for Belmont's electorate. We visited the YMCA, the Youth Affairs Council, the City of Belmont youth services, Cockburn Youth Services, the Foyer Oxford and the Dungeon Youth Drop-in Centre—all these absolutely fantastic facilities—and then we finished up quite purposefully at the Coolroom in Ellenbrook, which, as I say, could cater to only a maximum of 40 kids at a time. I think on that bus tour I met the CEO of the City of Cockburn, who is now the CEO of the City of Swan, so he totally understands the sort of vision we are aiming for.

We were working on the project, but in the meantime there was not really anywhere that young people could receive services. In October 2018, working together, we managed to create a temporary youth and community services space. While the Coolamon Coolroom was running for kids, space was created for service providers, and that was located on Main Street. I want to thank Hon Peter Tinley, who was Minister for Youth at the time, for helping to support that, and I acknowledge the extraordinary generosity of Joe Passione, who provided that commercial space to us for a peppercorn rent for five years to make sure that while we built this beautiful facility, the kids nonetheless would have access to services, which they had not been able to receive in place before, so it was very important.

Through 2019 and 2020, the City of Swan consulted with hundreds of local kids on the design of the facility and what sorts of things they would like to see in it. In June 2020, the plans were released. Unfortunately, in that time the project costs kept expanding and expanding. Thankfully, in January 2021, the state government provided an additional \$2.1 million to the project through Lotterywest. In fact, the state government in total contributed \$3.9 million to this project, also through the WA Recovery Plan funding, to a total project cost of \$5.2 million. The state government has really contributed significantly to this project.

On 25 February 2022, we finally broke ground. I was a bit of a blubbing mess that day. It was very emotional because we had had to struggle so much because the goal posts just kept shifting. There were all sorts of shenanigans going on with people working against the project and I thought it would never happen, so when we finally broke ground, I broke up. It was very emotional. I would like to thank Vaughan McGuire, our local Noongar elder in Ellenbrook, for doing our smoking ceremony and for his support for the project. It was great. As I said, Mayor David Lucas was there. He is by far the best mayor the City of Swan has had in many years. He was there when we made the announcement and he was there at the groundbreaking. It was really lovely to have his support all the way through this project.

Fast-forward to a couple of weeks ago, on 4 May 2023, following a commitment from the state government of another \$180 000 towards the final cost, which is included in this budget, we opened the facility. Minister Templeman came. There was the member for West Swan, Rita Saffioti, who shares Ellenbrook, which is across the two electorates of West Swan and Swan Hills. Swan Hills incorporates the north of Ellenbrook and Aveley, and West Swan incorporates the south of Ellenbrook and Aveley. There were also Tania Lawrence and our member of the Legislative Council, Hon Lorna Harper. It was great to have them there. It was great also to speak with our City of Swan councillors, whom I had the pleasure of speaking to on the day—Councillors Bowman, Jones, Singh and Richardson. It was lovely to chat to them and it was great to see their support for the project.

This project did not happen in isolation. I want to extend some incredibly important thank-yous to some really special people who have made this project possible. I will thank two people in particular. Firstly, Jimmy Cangy, who is no longer with the City of Swan. He is doing all sorts of exciting things with his life. When I was elected, he and Debbie McCabe, whom I also thank, ran the Ellenbrook Youth Centre out of the Coolamon space. The two of them were unrelenting in their advocacy for the need for a more appropriate youth space. The pair of them had a wonderful vision. They were fabulous in their advocacy. They have such an amazing, compassionate, committed approach towards youth services in Ellenbrook. I want to thank them both for their advocacy and dedication. I wish Debbie, who will stay with the centre, all the very best. To her new youth team, which will be opening the new centre, I wish them all the very best of luck. They have the space now. It is time to make it theirs and bring our kids along. I would like to thank those councillors who supported the project, including the City of Swan team of Mark Bishop and his project delivery team. Lotterywest was just absolutely magnificent in its support, particularly

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Lorna Pritchard. There was always an open door as we engaged with Lotterywest about the changes to cost structures and the expansion of the project. It was incredibly supportive. I thank our St Hilliers construction partners, Chris Tanase, John Moore and Adam Billington. Every time I popped into the site and asked to have a look around, those guys were very excited and passionate about building the project. It was absolutely lovely. I think the love they put into that building can be seen in the quality of the finish. I really want to thank them. Ellenbrook police were also at the opening. I thank Ian North, the senior sergeant, who is the officer in charge, and his team for their support and incredibly proactive way of reaching out to our young people. They are very hands-on and proactive. It is great. Finally, I want to thank the young people who had a lot of input into the design. It is over to you now, kids. It is up to you to make the Ellenbrook Youth Centre everything that it can be. I am excited to see what those kids do for it. These are the big things. We talk about big numbers, but these are the things that translate those big numbers into real outcomes for our community.

The second thing that I would like to have a quick chat about today is the provisions in the budget for fire and emergency services. I have a very interesting electorate. It is about 1 500 square kilometres. It is a pocket of Ellenbrook that is incredibly densely populated and has micro-lots. I remember being there when the first sods were turned on the plot to build the micro-houses. It is a really urban place. We are bringing the train to Ellenbrook and it has all this new growth and families and schools that are heaving with children. We have to think about that and plan as we go forward. However, just a few kays down the road and all of a sudden it is the hills part of the Swan Hills electorate. That is the other 1 450 square kilometres of it that has the escarpment, which is a very bushfire-prone area, and broadacre farming and tiny communities. I talk to the people in Ellenbrook about bringing the train to Ellenbrook. The people at Gidgegannup do not even have sealed roads, streetlights or a bin collection. It is a very different part of the electorate. The thing that consistently comes through to me in that part of the electorate is the importance of fire and emergency services. No more was that brought home to us than during the Wooroloo bushfires.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** The Wooroloo bushfires were obviously devastating for the people of Swan Hills. It is called the Wooroloo bushfire, but it went from Wooroloo all the way through to Gidgegannup and Bullsbrook. It was an incredibly fast-moving and expansive fire. To this day, the impact it has had on my community continues to resonate. I work very closely with my fire brigades. I again want to extend my sincere thanks for the work that our fireys do every summer and also every winter in preparation to help the hills' residents get their homes ready for the fire season. They do preventive measures such as burning and they provide education and community engagement.

Every year since I have been the member—I also did this initially when I was running for Parliament—I have brought all the fire captains together. We have a round table with whomever the minister happens to be at the time. The minister sits with them. Minister Logan, Minister Whitby and now Minister Dawson have all sat with the fire captains. It is a really great discussion. It is a very frank, no-holds-barred discussion, which is great. It gives my brigade captains the opportunity to put their views in a quite forthright manner and to ask direct questions and receive straight answers. Again, I think it is important as local members and ministers that we hear from the people who are most affected and on the front line, because a lot of filters are passed over information flows sometimes. I think that particularly for emergency services, there is no better resource to listen to than the people who are actually responding. The fire captains round table is important.

From Swan Hills, I would like to thank Justin Skewes from West Gidgegannup Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Aaron Thredgold from Mt Helena Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Jack Lakey from East Swan Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Daryl Coleman from Swan State Emergency Service, Brian Davis from Bullsbrook VFES, Lesley Lynam from Wooroloo Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, Sean Corbin from east Gidgegannup volunteer bush fire brigade, Brett Davies from Chidlow Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and Adrian Woodley from Sawyers Valley Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade for coming along. I particularly thank Minister Dawson and Acting Deputy Commissioner Jon Broomhall for attending the round table. The member for Kalamunda was also present. He invited the brigades from the seat of Kalamunda to participate. Our brigades work together. We might have separate electorates, but it is a single community of interest in the hills. The brigades all turn out to support one another in training and incident response. We discussed a number of issues that were very, very interesting and important.

The first issue straight off the bat was about the application of the new national fire danger ratings. There is a bit of an adjustment period as we have gone to the national fire system. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the minister advised that we are in the process of fine-tuning the inputs that go into the algorithms that determine what the fire rating is on any particular day to ensure that they are properly adapted to Western Australian conditions. It is acknowledged that that is a learning process and an evolving system. The minister advised us that a review of the national system is coming up and that information would be provided about that. I understand that will be an opportunity for the public or interested stakeholders to provide some views. Certainly, when that information

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becomes available, I will make that available to the brigades so that those who are interested can provide that feedback directly.

The next very important issue in the hills is about fire preparedness. It is a big problem post-COVID. One of the interesting things about the COVID era is that we have a lot of tree changers moving to the hills. A lot of people want more space. It is people like the member for Belmont who desperately wants room for a pony! A lot of people are moving into the hills who do not necessarily know what they are letting themselves in for and do not understand that when they buy a property, they buy much more than a nice view; they have to maintain firebreaks and fuel loads. Ideally, they should get engaged with their local bushfire ready group and prepare their plan for escape and decide what they are going to do in the event of a fire. A lot of people do not understand the implications of living in a high-fire risk area, including a lot of tree changers. That issue was acknowledged.

Personally, on 29 May, I will be attending Gidgie's Countryman Gidgegannup Small Farm Field Day. I encourage people to head along; it is a great event. As I do every year, both at the small farm field day and the Gidgie ag show in October, I will be making fire planning kits available at my mobile office. I will also drop those fire kits to locations throughout Swan Hills so that people can pick them up. They are free. People can give my office a call and we will send one out. One thing I do when people move into the Swan Hills electorate is that I write new electors letters. I thought that in the hills part of the electorate, as part of my new electors' letters, I will incorporate some information on the importance of property preparation and developing fire plans.

The other thing that was spoken about was the declining number of volunteers. It is a very interesting conversation. In the hills volunteer bush fire brigades, the membership is ageing and declining. Despite the temporary bump in numbers following the tragedy of the Wooroloo fires, numbers are again dropping off. Fairly consistently, only about a quarter of brigade members regularly turn out for training. As a community, we cannot put all the burden for preventing and responding to fires on such a small group of people. I really encourage people to consider volunteering for their local volunteer fire brigades. Interestingly, in the Ellenbrook part of the electorate, the West Swan fire brigade has a really young membership, which I think reflects the demographics of the population in Ellenbrook. Lots of young guys want to get involved and that is fantastic, but we need more young people in the hills part of Swan Hills to volunteer. The minister acknowledged that. True to his word, yesterday he announced the *Western Australian volunteering strategy action plan 2023–2026*, which really encourage people to get more involved. I say to my constituents: get involved. I have lived in my electorate for 17 years now. When I was elected, I was the first member for Swan Hills in I think 25 years to actually live in the electorate of Swan Hills. Our communities in the hills part of the electorate revolve around our volunteer bush fire brigades and the football club, like many wheatbelt and regional towns do. The peri-urban fringe is quite akin to regional areas. I encourage my constituents to get involved in both those organisations as they are a great way to give back. They are a really social group of people who are fantastic to hang around.

The other issue we spoke about was the delivery of new radios. Radios were scheduled to be provided to the volunteer bush fire brigades but they were some years away. This is where the budget announcement last week was so fantastic. As part of the \$444 million that the state government has announced it will invest to fight crime and enhance community safety, \$81.7 million will be dedicated to the state's emergency services network's upgrade. Basically, that expense has been brought forward and the rollout is occurring now. Obviously, it will take a bit of time to manage the logistics of all that, but what was going to happen some years ahead is starting now and we are bringing forward the delivery of those radios. That is essential, particularly in the hills, where radio communication is so important. Our mobile phone reception is notoriously bad. I would like to thank Tania Lawrence for her commitment to try to improve mobile telecommunications towers in the seat of Hasluck. The delivery of these new radios is going to help keep our bush fire brigade members safe and improve their capacity to respond to incidents.

After the round table, we had a big barbecue where we invited all brigade members to join us so that we could say a big thankyou to them for all the work they do. Some people are not happy offering views in a room; they would much rather grab you on the side and say, "Hey, can you come and have a chat about whatever?" or, "Can you come to my fire station and see what I need?" It also gave people the opportunity to speak one on one with the minister and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' representative. It was a really lovely barbecue; the weather behaved itself, which was great. From the bottom of my heart, I am grateful for the great work of our volunteer bush fire brigade men and women. It is pleasing to see an increasing number of women involved and that we have been able to make a commitment in this budget to enhance their safety and improve their operational capabilities. As I said before, macro numbers, micro impacts—these are the things that make a real difference in our community.

In the four minutes I have left, I want to mention one other project that I would be very pleased to speak about, and that is the Sister Project. On 5 May, along with the member for West Swan, Rita Saffioti, I attended the Sister Project, which is located next to my office on Main Street, for the opening of this fantastic facility for which Rita and I were very pleased to commit \$60 000 towards part of the fit-out. It is a fabulous space. I want to acknowledge Annie Hill

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of The Vines for her very generous contribution towards the fit-out of that space, and Joe Passione for making that space available on incredibly generous terms over the last couple of years. What a remarkable person he is for the support he provides to the people of Ellenbrook; we are so grateful. The Sister Project was formed in 2019 and provides support services for cultural and linguistically diverse women and their families. It supports not only migrants, but also refugees, a cohort in Ellenbrook that is large and growing and typically can suffer from isolation and, because of language constraints, can have difficulty accessing services, understanding their kids' school reports, finding their way around, navigating government bureaucracies or knowing how to develop résumés. The Sister Project is designed to provide all sorts of support services for formal things, as well as opportunities for socialisation and social connection, through cooking classes, dancing classes and art classes. It truly is a wonderful organisation. In such a diverse place as Ellenbrook, it is a sorely needed service. It is coming along in leaps and bounds. I take my hat off to its founder, Tracey Cave. The Sister Project has big plans and I cannot wait to see what it does. An expansion of its footprint was just announced. It is a truly wonderful organisation and I am so pleased to support it. I wish the group all the very best in the years ahead.

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

*House adjourned at 8.07 pm*

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