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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 15 September 2021

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

PREScribed BURNING — REVIEW

Petition

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [1.04 pm]: I present a petition containing 1 710 signatures couched in the following terms —

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

We the undersigned are concerned that the current practice of broad-scale prescribed burning conducted by DBCA is having severe detrimental impacts on ecosystems. An independent review is needed.

We therefore respectfully request that the Legislative Council recommend that the State Government of Western Australia commission an independent review of DBCA's prescribed burning practices that includes assessment of:

1. environmental objectives,
2. research, monitoring and evaluation of ecological impacts on fauna and flora,
3. application of relevant and recent leading external research,
4. provision and integrity of Fire Exclusion Reference Areas,
5. adaptive management for climate change, disease, drought, and wildfires,
6. transparency, accountability, and public / stakeholder consultation.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

[See paper 608.]

MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM: FINAL REPORT

Statement by Parliamentary Secretary

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.05 pm]: On 28 April 2021, the Attorney General; Minister for Electoral Affairs appointed the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform. The committee's terms of reference were, first, to make recommendations about how electoral equality might be achieved for all citizens entitled to vote for the Legislative Council; and, second, to make recommendations for the distribution of preferences in the Legislative Council's proportional representation system.

The committee was chaired by Mr Malcolm McCusker, AC, CVO, QC, who is well known to members as Western Australia's thirty-first Governor. The rest of the committee was constituted of the following people. The first is Professor John Phillimore, a former Rhodes scholar who has been the executive director of the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy since 2007. Over the past 30 years, Professor Phillimore has advised on and conducted research and consultancy projects for numerous international, Australian, state and local agencies. The second is Professor Sarah Murray, an expert in constitutional law, electoral law and court innovation at the law school at the University of Western Australia. Professor Murray has published widely in Australia and internationally and was recently elected to the Australian Academy of Law. The third is Associate Professor Martin Drum from the University of Notre Dame Australia, where he is the director of public policy and associate professor in politics and international relations. Associate Professor Drum is a member of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group, and has participated in a range of commonwealth and Western Australian parliamentary government inquiries.

The committee published a discussion paper on 14 May 2021 and received 184 submissions from interested members of the public and organisations. The committee also consulted the Western Australian, South Australian and New South Wales Electoral Commissioners and election analyst Mr Antony Green, AO. I would like to thank the chair and each of the members of the committee for their work. They have done an exceptional job. I now table the committee's final report and commend the report to the house.

[See paper [609](#).]

PAPERS TABLED

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

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT*Motion*

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West) [1.10 pm]: I move —

That the Legislative Council notes the continued improvement in Western Australia's economy and financial situation under the McGowan Labor government.

I rise today to talk about the continued improvement in the Western Australian economy. Yesterday, Hon Peter Collier wanted to compare the revenue streams of the Barnett Liberal–National government with the Labor government's funding revenue from iron ore, royalties and the GST. He made a point about increased revenue. I always like to revert to a home situation. My daughters have had part-time jobs since they were about 14 years old. My two elder daughters are now in the workforce, but my youngest daughter is still at school and has a part-time job. She is one of those kids who spends everything as soon as she earns it. My husband always says to her, "It's not what you earn, Ashlee, it's what you spend." In the case of the state budget, it is what you spend it on. There is no doubt that we have increased revenue from GST and royalties, but it is how you spend your money that counts.

I think the eight years of the Barnett government is best reflected in the *Special inquiry into government programs and projects: Final report* that was released in February 2018. For those members who are not across the 312-page report, the review was completed by John Langoulant. I had a quick look at his LinkedIn profile to get a bit of an understanding of his background. He graduated from the University of Western Australia with a Bachelor of Economics with honours. He was the Under Treasurer of Western Australia from 1995 to 2004. He was CEO of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, then CEO of Oakajee Port and Rail. He was a senior adviser at Deloitte Australia, and it goes on and on. It is a very impressive CV and I suspect he is someone who understands the finances of this state quite well. Members will be glad to know that I will not go through all 312 pages of his report, but I have a few highlights from the executive summary. I will read a few sections from the letter John Langoulant wrote to the Public Sector Commissioner on 1 February 2018.

The Special Inquiry examined 31 programs and projects entered into by the former State Liberal National Government between 2008 and 11 March 2017, in response to WA's operating deficits and adverse debt position.

The Special Inquiry started in May 2017. During the following seven months it received 25 written submissions and the Special Inquiry *Transparency in Government Projects Discussion Paper* which was circulated to agency heads, received eight responses for consideration. There were 123 private and public sector representatives providing evidence at 47 formal hearings, and 50 meetings were held with stakeholders across the sectors.

...

The Special Inquiry took into account previous audits and reviews, and as a result focused on specific project management stages for each initiative, providing a comprehensive analysis. The report lists a number of common findings and lessons learned in relation to financial management, decision-making processes, governance, transparency including the use of 'commercial-in-confidence', and contract and project management.

I will not go through the whole executive summary but there are a few highlights. Under the section "Setting the Scene" it reads —

When the Liberal National government was formed in 2008, the economy was strong. The State's finances were in a good state despite Treasury warnings of potential future decline.

The new government set about keeping its promises around Royalties for Regions and the planned new Fiona Stanley Hospital.

The Government embarked on a big spending strategy in its first term.

Remember, this is the Barnett government in 2008. It continues —

The strategy included infrastructure programs to keep pace with the demands of the expanding resources sector and strong population growth. But while revenue growth was also strong, the seeds for future problems were sown with generous public sector pay rises ...

...

In 2013, the iron ore price fell sharply... Despite warnings about the need for restraint, the government continued to spend and in September, Standard and Poor's removed the State's Triple A credit rating.

Members might remember that. I think it might have been the first time ever, or the first time for a long time. Between 2008 and 2013, there was the global financial crisis. It hit in late 2008, shortly after the state election, so the government could not say it did not know about it. China's response to the GFC was a huge infrastructure program, obviously needing lots of steel and iron ore. Demand for iron ore increased, so we could potentially look at a similar

situation today. In 2008, we had a GFC but we were going quite well. However, Treasury—the expert public servants—served a warning to government. In the 2009–10 budget, the Barnett government knew there was a bleak outlook for revenue, but it just kept spending. History shows us that the government was returned in 2013 on the back of some election commitments that were probably not affordable. When I was trying to work out why the government was having so much trouble keeping up with spending, I had a look at the list of Treasurers in the Barnett years. In 2008, it was Troy Buswell. In 2010, it was Colin Barnett. Later in 2010, it was Christian Porter. In 2012, it was back to Colin Barnett for a month and later in July 2012, it was back to Troy Buswell. In 2014, it was back to Barnett, but for only seven days. In March 2014, Mike Nahan was given the job. No wonder the government could not keep track of spending.

When my children were young, I did a little bit of part-time bookkeeping for some small businesses around the south west. When reflecting on Mike Nahan becoming Treasurer in March 2014 after the revolving doors of Treasurers, it reminded me that when I was a bookkeeper, I would sometimes go into a small business and they would say, “Thank God you’re here. We’ve fallen a bit behind” and they would give me a shoebox full of receipts. Worse still, they would give me a big plastic shopping bag full of receipts. They would say, “We’re a couple of quarters behind in our BAS statements and need to get this done by 30 June.” I got a mental picture of Mike Nahan as the Treasurer being handed the box of receipts for the previous years and being told, “We’ve spent a bit of money, but not quite sure how much.”

Hon Dan Caddy: I think there was an Alston cartoon.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Was there? There we go. We will have to find it.

Let me compare that with the McGowan government from 2017. I, obviously, was not part of the 2017 government but I am happy to speak on behalf of my colleagues. From day one, the McGowan government showed disciplined financial management. Members at the time took difficult decisions. One of the first ones was about wages policy. Wages were frozen for politicians and senior public servants, but the government made sure there were modest pay rises for the lowest paid public sector workers. On this side of the house, we really value our school cleaners, hospital orderlies, prison guards and low-level admin staff. We made sure we were responsible with our money. We also fought for a fairer share of the GST. Hon Peter Collier mentioned the difference in GST received under the Barnett government compared with the McGowan government, but let us not forget that it was the McGowan government that fought for that share of the GST by pressuring the federal government. One could perhaps guess that the Liberal–National government did not want to have a stand-up fight with its coalition friends in Canberra, but the McGowan government made a concerted effort to review the GST to make sure we got our fair share. I think we are still getting the lowest GST share of any state. We are doing the heavy lifting for Australia.

We have also reaped the rewards of a global pandemic. Let us remember that COVID-19 was in 2019, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas pointed out. I am pretty sure that when the McGowan government was making these tough financial decisions in 2017, it did not have a crystal ball and say, “You know what? I think there’s going to be a global pandemic; and, if there is a global pandemic, I would bet my bottom dollar that it’s going to shut down Brazil’s iron ore industry and WA will reap the rewards.” We were fortunate, but, again, it is not what we earn; it is what we spend.

There was certainly criticism from a lot of parties about keeping the mining sector open while we shut the border. I think that has proved to have worked in our favour. What was the opposition doing when we were trying to keep the state safe? Of course, it was siding with Clive Palmer. I sometimes had a bit of trouble keeping up with it in the news. I was a mere member of the public then. Sometimes the opposition wanted the border to be opened for tourists—Libby Mettam certainly wanted businesses to have tourists—and sometimes it wanted the border to be closed, but then when Clive wanted to come in, the opposition wanted the border to be open. The rewards speak for themselves.

The McGowan government has a plan to create WA jobs. We created 107 000 in the first term. We have streamlined approval processes. The unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level in over seven years. That does not come without issues and pressures on certain sectors. We have increased consumer confidence. We have reduced debt. A \$5.6 billion operating surplus is expected this financial year and a further \$2.8 billion surplus is expected next financial year. But we have been cautious in our approach. We have recognised the volatility of revenue streams like iron ore royalties. We have based our assumptions on conservative amounts. Again, it is not what we earn; it is what we spend. We are not going to get caught in the same trap as the former government. We are not going to increase recurrent expenditure unsustainably on the back of a temporary windfall.

I have mentioned the time of the Barnett Liberal–National government and the executive summary of the Special Inquiry into Government Programs and Projects. I will not read it all out. It states, in part —

- the public sector lacked a sense of common purpose;
- ...
- temporarily high recurrent revenue growth was used to pay for permanent expenditure promises, leaving behind structural budget deficits;

- decision makers lacked the capacity to act upon signs of unsustainable growth in net debt;
- high volatility in commodity prices was not incorporated ...
- ...
- the government defaulted to confidentiality around major projects rather than transparency.

Last Saturday night, I had the opportunity to attend the Housing Industry Association awards night in the south west. These are the annual awards for residential builders. This year, it was held in Dunsborough and was combined with the midwest, the south west and the great southern. The residential housing sector is, as members will imagine, booming, but it is certainly facing increased pressures, not least of which is labour supply. I spoke to a lot of people at that event. They understand that we cannot magic up people. The residential building industry uses—believe it or not—a lot of backpacker labour. It used to get young folk from Europe who were on a working holiday visa but were also a carpenter, brickie or electrician, or had some other skills, and would bring them into the industry in that way, and that would obviously lead to skilled migration. Although that industry is desperate for bricklayers and other workers, it absolutely values keeping WA safe. They told me that they do not want building sites to be shut down. Yes, they are busy, and, yes, their prices have escalated. When I asked them about their escalating prices, they said one reason was the cost of bricklayers, and the other was the supply of timber. I asked a lot of people about native timber. They said they do not use a lot of native timber. It is all about softwood. It is about the structural pine that comes out of Dardanup in my electorate and at Neerabup from Wesbeam and Wespine Industries. There is a bit of a shortage of timber. I was able to relate to them the figures about softwood plantings. I told them that in the Labor years from 2001 to 2008, we planted on average 1 400 hectares per annum to replenish the trees that we cut down. One would think it would make sense that if we cut down trees, we replant them. I told them that for some reason—I could not explain why—during the eight years of the Barnett Liberal–National government, those great years, the plantings dropped on average to less than 150 hectares per annum. In some years, there were no plantings. The average over that eight-year period was less than 150 hectares. We cannot take trees out and not replant them, especially if we have a state agreement to supply the producers of structural timber. They were really pleased to hear about our investment of \$330 million or \$350 million to replant the softwood estate. I have worked out that that averages around 3 300 hectares over a 10-year period. They understand that we are playing catch-up, but that was very welcome.

What also resonated with these residential homebuilders was our investment in TAFE. If we think about residential homebuilders, most of them are tradies—they started life on the tools. I was able to tell them about the \$121 million in the budget for training initiatives, and the 8 000 extra vocational education and training places for year 11 and 12 students. They were very interested in the VET career placement program for year 9 students. They want to get people into their industry. I took the opportunity while I was at that event in Dunsborough on Saturday night to remind them that our year 12 students are about to finish school, and that they will be at leavers in Dunsborough on 22 November, as I am reliably informed. I suggested that they have a recruitment booth to try to grab some of those year 12 students, who obviously will not be going off for a gap year, and tell them about the great things that are happening in the building industry.

I also told them about the \$32 million in the budget to get 300 new building and construction apprentices and trainees to work on state government projects. That is very important. I certainly know from when I left school 100 years ago that apprenticeships in state government were what people were aiming for. My brother did a mechanical apprenticeship with the then State Electricity Commission, I think it was. They were also pleased to hear about the \$10 million in the budget to support TAFE college lecturers to do industry placements. TAFE college lecturers, particularly in the vocational side of things, generally come from industry themselves, but they need to refresh their skills. There is also \$25 million in the budget for the modernisation of TAFE equipment and facilities. Again, that was a real winner with the people from the Housing Industry Association. Although that industry is struggling at the moment to keep up with the amount of work, they are pretty thrilled with the \$884 million investment in social housing, because they recognise that it will give them a pipeline of work. They are pleased that we have extended our building bonus grants from a 12-month commencement time frame to 18 months, to give them a bit of a breather. Particularly because I was dealing with builders from the midwest, the great southern and the south west, the social housing renewal programs in Geraldton, Albany and Bunbury were also highly valued.

President, this has not been just good luck. It has not been just because the iron ore price has been fantastic. It has not been just because Brazil was not able to mine iron ore for a number of months. It has not been just because this state is now getting back more from the GST than it did in the Barnett years. It is because we have been careful with our money. It is because when we came into government in 2017—I am using the royal “we” again, because I was not here at that time—we took a responsible approach. We are reaping the rewards now.

I have some other highlights. Western Australia is the only state to record growth in its domestic economy. Imagine what would have happened if Clive Palmer had had his way. That has been fuelled by strong growth in the housing construction industry—I have confirmed that myself—and business and government investment. We have had the strongest household spending throughout the pandemic. As a small business owner, I can confirm that. People are holidaying at home and they are happy to spend their money here. We also have to acknowledge the importance of

keeping the WA mining sector open, and also that we said the words, “You need to come and live in WA; no more of this FIFO from other states.” We have ensured that we have a resilient economy. We are taking a disciplined and implemented approach to COVID. As I said, this has not been just good luck; it has been good management. The unemployment rate in this state is the lowest since May 2014. It is the lowest of all the states. That comes with some challenges. We know that, and we are certainly doing our best to ensure that we can get those workers in.

Just in the last minute or so, I will quickly raise something that is very close to my heart—the adult apprentice employer incentive. I caught up with a friend of mine on the weekend whose daughter is a childcare worker who studied in her own time to get an early childhood education degree. She took a placement at Derby Primary School and moved up there with her new husband. They love Derby. He followed her up there and was working at the school as a bit of a handyman. He got a job at the local shire mowing lawns and he has just got his adult apprenticeship as an electrician in Derby. They are rapt and they are about to have their first baby in a few weeks.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [1.30 pm]: I was a bit nervous that the motion was about to fall over after the first speaker. Nobody was leaping to their feet. Come on, we need a bit of enthusiasm. We are only going to get one contribution from the opposition.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Bring it on!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Come on, guys. We want a bit of keenness! Members of the government have to jump up and seek the call. They have to throw themselves up. In his early days, Hon Stephen Dawson would have leapt to his feet three times by now; he would be quicker than Hon Tjorn Sibma in jumping up.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I’ve got weary bones these days.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We cannot do ageist comments anymore, President. It is a dangerous field. It is a bit of a glasshouse that I do not want to engage in!

I want to thank the member for the motion and the opportunity to say a few words about the budget and economics. It is as though the Minister for Mental Health has not heard enough of me recently and needs a little more to try to get him across the line, which is fantastic. I want to make a couple of points about the opening contribution. I have a lot of respect for Hon Jackie Jarvis—we are old friends—but I thought it was interesting that in the first part of her speech, she primarily went through the Langoulant report. There has been a bit of movement and ongoing history, but that was some years ago. That report had some good things in it. There are a lot of things in that report that I agree with, but I thought we were here to debate the current budget rather than go back in history.

I thought that the best part of her contribution, and members should have listened to this bit—I like to listen carefully to the contributions of members opposite, even if I do not necessarily always agree with them—was about the Premier and now Treasurer not having a crystal ball. I wrote the quote down: “He did not have a crystal ball”. I thought that was good. The Premier, who is now also the Treasurer, did not realise in 2017 that COVID was coming. That is true. He did not have a crystal ball to know that the world would engage in this massive infrastructure spend in response to COVID to keep jobs in place, not just in China, although that is the biggest one that has driven things, but also in Europe and North America. Everybody is building things. America has had a bit of a steel cutback on walls that are only half done. Maybe they could recycle those ones; there might be some opportunity there. The reality is that there was not a crystal ball in place. I think that is very true.

No-one would have known in 2017 that COVID would come along and drive a massive increase in the price of iron ore to \$US235 a tonne, that royalties in the 2020–21 financial year would surge to a massive \$12 billion and that on the back of that, the government would be predicting \$15 billion surpluses over five years. There would also be an increase in other taxes, with a \$300-odd million increase in payroll tax, and significantly higher stamp duties. None of that was seen in a crystal ball, and quite rightly not. I do not think the Premier is a psychic. Of course the GST fix has put over \$3 billion into the budget coffers of the McGowan government over two years. None of that could have been foreseen, as the honourable member said. The Premier did not have a crystal ball. The question before the house that we have to ask on the back of this debate is: Why does he then keep claiming credit for it? If the Premier did not have a crystal ball to know that these things were coming, why does he claim credit for it? Why is he telling us repeatedly that this mountain of cash that he is sitting on is the result of his good financial management? Why does he keep claiming that? As the honourable member said, quite rightly, he did not have a crystal ball. He could not know that the COVID crisis would occur and that the government would have a mountain of cash that he would be rolling in—throwing the money up in the air and swimming in it like Scrooge McDuck. He did not know because he did not have a crystal ball.

I think that was a brilliant comment from the honourable member. I think that is great, because he did not know, unless—this might be difficult, because I do not want to speak ill or untowardly of the Premier—for example, he had a shovel and was in Brazil weakening the Vale dam wall in early 2019 so that it would burst, flood and kill people and drive up the iron ore price. I do not suspect he was doing that; I really do not. I cannot see him with a shovel, to be honest—a gold plated one, maybe. Maybe I am wrong. I do not think he was doing that. So why is he claiming credit for the financial position in which the state finds itself? Why is he saying that, when the position that the state

finds itself in is due to a massive mountain of revenue? Members might say that it is trickling in gold, but really it is trickling in iron ore, is it not? Iron ore has moved from \$5.5 billion a year in royalty revenue to \$12 billion in the 2020–21 financial year.

Hon Pierre Yang: Honourable member, would you take an interjection?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: From Hon Pierre Yang, I am happy to.

Hon Pierre Yang: Thank you very much, sir. I just want to remind you that four years ago, the policies and the regimes that the government put in place —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: You cannot stand up. I am taking an interjection, but it better be a good one, because I only have 13 minutes left. You should have interjected last night when I had unlimited time.

Hon Pierre Yang: The policies that we put in place that froze the senior executive salaries, and the salaries for members of Parliament, did you forget all that? We were all here four years ago. It was due to the good management of this government.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The interjection has been made.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, President. I do not think that delivered \$5.6 billion in surplus though. I have been trying to ask questions around the government's machinery-of-government changes for years now, and it is a bit like trying to ask questions about the old, infamous Office of Shared Services, which I am sure Hon Peter Collier would remember. I think the government at the time thought it was a good idea that could save money and make it more efficient, and with good intent. It failed utterly and miserably, but at least we could work out what was going on, because the government of the day, the previous Labor government, would provide us with those sorts of answers. Changes were made, honourable member who interjected, like the machinery-of-government changes. How effective have they been? How much money have they saved? How have they delivered improved services for the state of Western Australia? The government cannot tell us because the answer is pretty horrible and it does not want us to know, because that is what normally happens. When we get answers that say, "You know, here's a two-paragraph non-answer", it usually means the government is a bit embarrassed about the real answer and does not want to give it to us. I would be very interested to see about the machinery-of-government changes. I will try to pick it out in the estimates process. Luckily, I have great faith in the current Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, which I think the mover of the motion is a member of.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I hope you are not reflecting on the previous Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That was excellent. As members who remember that previous committee know, I was quite a fan of the estimates process, and was probably one of the most regular attendees, because I do love a set of estimates, nearly as much as I love a Thursday question and a budget speech, but, you know, some of us can have far too much fun in Parliament. That is probably why the government is trying to get rid of us and scrap the entire Parliament, which was the latest move today. It is not content with taking over Parliament; it is now trying to gut the upper house and remove the representation of regional Western Australia. That is just the latest step.

Let us go back to the budget proper, because I am a fan of it. I have great faith that the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations will be able to wend its way through this obfuscation by the government to provide some answers. Hopefully, at some point we will get an answer to whether the McGowan Labor government's reforms have made genuine and real change or are simply another set of media statements. It was a good and timely interjection from the honourable member because, yes, the government has made some changes, but not all of them were good. In fact, almost none of the outcomes are measurable. There are some good things in every budget and some things that are not so good, but before the government congratulates itself on the value its budget, I will try to define it down to the simplest terms. Here it is in the simplest of terms from my perspective. The government has had a boom, the likes of which has never been seen in the history of Western Australia. The government has had the greatest fiscal boom of any state government in the history of Western Australia. It almost had the biggest budget surplus of any state in history. I am told that it was pipped by one in New South Wales that was adjusted up at the end of the financial year.

Hon Dan Caddy: Was that based on our GST?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, it was not. I am going back many years ago.

The government nearly had the biggest budget surplus in Australian history. The Premier, now Treasurer, is rolling in a massive mountain of cash, but the government has a health crisis, a housing crisis, a skills crisis and a mental health crisis. The government has all those crises occurring at a time when it has more money than anyone has ever seen. How did the government get here? Before we can support a motion congratulating the government, let us find out how the government ended up with more money in the history of Western Australia while having all these crises afoot. It is not the case that this government suddenly landed in a pile of cash in the last few months. It is not as though the Premier, who is now the Treasurer, was walking along the street and tripped over a big pile of iron ore and landed in a pot of gold. That is not the case.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No. We will get back to luck in a minute. The current boom started two and a half years ago. I know that because I asked questions about it, which I will repeat to this chamber not infrequently. I know that the Minister for Mental Health loves to hear me quote my question of 12 February 2019 when I asked what would happen if the price of iron ore stayed above \$US90 a tonne, as it was at that point. I was told that was completely unrealistic and that it would never happen. Wow! Did the Premier, who is now the Treasurer, orchestrate that price rise? I do not think so. Did he take advantage of it? He took advantage of it to the extent that he tipped a whole pile of extra money into the giant money bin to roll around in and now he has taken out some of that money and put it into a few special purpose accounts so that when he is finished rolling in the big money bin, he can jump into a couple of little money bins on the outside. Was this money immediately spent on the needs and welfare of the people of Western Australia? Two and a half years ago, this fiscal economy went boom, and what has happened? Two and a half years later—not tripping over a pile of iron ore and landing in a pot of gold a week ago—this government started to have more money than any government that preceded it, and for two and a half years it has done almost nothing with that opportunity.

Hon Stephen Dawson: And we are still paying back the amount of debt you left. The highest amount ever.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We will get to debt in a minute.

The government has had two and a half years of record revenues, yet we have a health crisis, a housing crisis, a skills crisis and a mental health crisis. Two and a half years of a massive boom and Labor Party leadership has left us with multiple crises. That is the financial legacy of the McGowan government.

Before we complete this motion that congratulates the government on its financial accountability, let us look at the reality rather than the spin. Let us look at where the McGowan government is going with its budgets. What is the government doing? It is not looking after the people of Western Australia; it is looking after the political fortunes of the McGowan government. That is the government's focus. That is why there is a giant money bin and lots of special purpose accounts with money sitting in them. The government does not know what to spend it on. It is sitting out there just in case for potential future projects at the same time as we have a health crisis and a housing crisis. The government has pots of gold sitting out there for the political benefit of the McGowan Labor government.

I know that the Minister for Mental Health is interested in debt, so let us talk briefly about it, because it is a hot topic. If I do not get a question in today, I will get one in on Thursday. Thursday is a better day for it. When this government came to power, what was the debt level? It was \$33 billion and a bit; I do not remember the exact number. According to the budget projections, what will it be in three years, in the 2024–25 financial year? At a time when the government has the biggest fiscal boom in Western Australia, what will it be? According to the budget papers, it will be \$36 billion.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Are we comparing apples with apples?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is billions of dollars versus billions of dollars.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you for your protection, President.

Unless the government is using different dollars and is working with pesos or something, \$36 billion is still \$36 billion, unless it is not in Australian dollars. We can look at Western Australia's debt at the end of the biggest economic boom in not just this state, but also the history of this nation; it is bigger than the Bendigo and Kalgoorlie gold rushes. This is the biggest boom the nation has ever seen. The government has a \$5.6 billion surplus in one year and will have \$15 billion in surpluses over five years. At the end of that period of massive wealth, the Labor Party will be in debt by \$3 billion more than when it came to power—\$3 billion more in debt. I have a lot of respect for the previous Treasurer. I thought he was very clever. I remember him saying in 2017 when asked about debt that the government would pay down debt like it was a mortgage. The government bought a \$33 billion house and it now owes \$36 billion on it. The government is \$3 billion worse off than when it started. If the government told the bank that it had borrowed an extra \$3 billion and, by the way, the debt has gone up even though the government said that it would pay it down but it has not done that, I think the bank would call the government in for a stern conversation. The bank would say, "Jeez, there are some issues with this."

How is this government managing debt? In simple terms, it is adding to it. Read pages 3, 4 and 5 of budget paper No 3. It is not very far in, so government members do not have to read too far or get to the end of it; it is early on. Look at the total public sector net debt in the budget papers. It goes up to \$36 billion. The government is increasing debt. That is not the most interesting part, because sometimes governments have to increase debt. I get that, but the government is increasing debt at a time when there has never been more money floating around. The government has all that free cash at the same time that it is increasing debt, which is the issue. That will be the problem that the McGowan government will have to deal with over time. The government is not showing any interest in debt. It is not showing a lot of interest in anything but the glorification of the McGowan government. I should have started over with another full budget speech; I have got fired up now!

I think I need to summarise this. We need to make it as simple as possible so that government members understand. The McGowan government and the Premier, who is also the Treasurer, did not financially manage the massive

revenue that is flowing into the coffers of Western Australia. The government did not orchestrate the money going in there; it took advantage of a very good set of circumstances. Well done to the government; good luck to it. If it takes advantage of that, fine, but government members should not come in here and tell us that this is about good financial management. They should not come in here, lecture us and say, "Because of our good financial management, this is the result we have got." They fell into it. They fell over and into it. Good luck to them! We, as an opposition, will have to keep reminding people over time that it was by good luck. But guess what: there is one thing that we can inevitably say about luck, and that is that one day, it will run out, and the government will be held to account for its budgetary position.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Mental Health) [1.50 pm]: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of the government this afternoon to speak on this motion. I thank Hon Jackie Jarvis at the outset for bringing such a sensational motion to the house. It is a very important motion because we are very proud to be part of the McGowan government, which has delivered a record budget for this state. Hon Dr Steve Thomas mentioned in his contribution what he thought was the most interesting thing, but can I say that the most interesting part of his speech was when he sat down! He was outrageous and shameful today. I honestly cannot believe that he made such a contribution with a straight face.

Truly, Western Australia has the strongest economy in the nation. Why is that? It is because we have worked incredibly hard. I was a minister in the first four years of this government. Equally, I sat on the other side of the chamber for the four years before that. I cannot hold the honourable member to account for this directly, because he was not in the chamber then, but others in the house today were part of a profligate government that spent like a drunken sailor and left a massive debt for this government to tackle. What did we do for the first four years? We tackled it. We paid down debt. We got us to the situation we are in today, and we can be incredibly proud of that.

Hon Jackie Jarvis's contribution set the scene about the dismal set of books that we were left with when we came to office. I will touch on one thing briefly, and that is the forgetful nature of Hon Dr Steve Thomas. He mentioned Brazil at one stage. Hon Dr Steve Thomas cannot blame COVID-19 alone for the iron ore price, because as he correctly pointed out later, a tragedy occurred in Brazil. China had previously bought from Brazil, but that market was not open to it so it bought more from us. Our budget is not based on iron ore alone. Our budget is based on the hard work that we did right across government during our first four years. The member was right: the Premier did not have a crystal ball, but he had the good sense to act when COVID-19 hit this state. Boy, did we do it! Of course, there was panic in the world and in society. We started to see businesses close down. What did the McGowan government do? It came up with a recovery plan to keep people in jobs and to keep people alive. That, too, has contributed to the economy and our economic fortunes today. There was panic in the community. The government kicked into gear with a recovery program to help keep industry open in Western Australia. The honourable member also forgets what we have seen over the last 18 months. COVID-19 hit around the world. People from both around the world and this nation have acknowledged how well Western Australia has managed COVID-19 thus far. We saw hundreds, if not thousands, of workers come back to Western Australia from overseas, and also fly-in fly-out workers moved to Western Australia. At the same time, the banks were not lending money for housing. Saying that, we were able to continue to have a good economy in Western Australia.

As members will have seen in the budget before us, there will be significant investment in things like housing. There will be an \$875 million investment in public and social housing in Western Australia over the next couple of years, which will deliver about 3 300 new and upgraded houses around the state. At least 297 of those will be in regional Western Australia. More money will also be spent on Government Regional Officers' Housing to help the workers whom we want to move to regional Western Australia have quality housing to move into.

I will touch on my portfolio briefly, because I am very proud of the investment in the health sector in Western Australia. Under this budget, an extra \$1.9 billion will be spent on health services in Western Australia, with about \$495 million of that money to be spent on improving mental health services. That now brings our annual budget for mental health services to over \$1.1 billion. It is a substantial amount that will help us to deliver services to regional people closer to home than ever before. Looking at health at a glance, \$3.1 billion will be spent to expand our health system, with \$1.3 billion to be spent on health infrastructure. Major hospital redevelopment and expansion is underway in both the metropolitan area and regional WA. The health budget will increase by \$960 million so that we can deliver more services. The budget includes \$487 million for COVID-19 response and preparedness measures, including hotel quarantine and vaccination.

We have to keep reminding ourselves that we are not out of the woods yet. We have been fortunate in Western Australia thus far, but COVID-19 is still a real threat. We need only look at Victoria and New South Wales in particular to see how it is affecting those economies and the people in those states, including their mental health. We need to remain vigilant in this state. That extra money will be a significant boost to help us prepare and respond to COVID-19. As I mentioned, there is \$495 million extra in the budget for new mental health services; I will park that for a second because I want to revisit it shortly.

The budget includes a \$311 million increase for contemporary community accommodation and support; extra staff positions for the child and adolescent mental health service; additional investment in mental health and alcohol and

other drug services; funding to improve mental health services in regional WA; funding to open more hospital beds and employ more nurses and doctors; and a \$100 million emergency support package for emergency departments, including a multipronged health workforce attraction and retention strategy. There is \$1.8 billion set aside in this budget for a new women's and babies' hospital, which will be truly nation leading and supported by the general community in Western Australia. That \$1.8 billion will build the new hospital in the QEII medical precinct. Funding has already been secured, but the state budget also includes an additional \$5.4 million to support the development and planning of that hospital.

Money is being invested in Joondalup Health Campus—\$256.7 million—to expand mental health treatment services, emergency department beds and inpatient beds; to build a new theatre, a new path lab and a specialised clinic; to provide parking; and to make upgrades to a range of services. That will be supported by the people of the northern suburbs in particular.

Fremantle Hospital will see the creation of the south metropolitan specialist mental health hub, which will have a more than 100-bed inpatient admission capacity and provide better access to expert care for patients in that region. Fremantle Hospital's buildings will be refurbished and redeveloped, with completion expected in 2023.

Money is being spent on Meekatharra Hospital, with about \$48.5 million to go to that hospital. I acknowledge the good work of my colleague Hon Peter Foster, who has been away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business but has now joined us for this important motion and the acknowledgement of that spend on Meekatharra Hospital in his electorate.

Additional money will be spent on Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus. Over \$200 million will be spent on upgrading services there to enable it to deal with the projected demand.

There is about \$150 million for the Peel Health Campus. That funding will go towards new mental health services, inpatient services and outpatient facilities. It will also return this privatised service back into public hands. That is something we on this side truly support because it will deliver for the people of Western Australia and will mean that Western Australians get proper pay and conditions.

There is an investment of \$82.3 million for Geraldton Health Campus. I know that Hon Darren West, Hon Sandra Carr and Hon Shelley Payne will support that. There is money for Laverton Hospital, Tom Price Hospital and the Newman Health Service, as well as for other critical works and planning and design projects around the hospital system. There is new money in this budget to help emergency departments tackle the increased patient activity and congestion, I have to say. We have to remind ourselves that COVID-19 has played havoc with our health system in many ways, but there is new money for that emergency department support package. There is more money for mental health ED supports, which will include increasing the capacity of existing child and adult community treatment teams. An active recovery team pilot will be implemented to help tailor support for individuals with complex health needs.

There will be \$24.6 million to establish new mental health emergency centres in Armadale and Rockingham. Again, that funding will be supported by those communities and, indeed, the broader community in this state. There is extra money for medical staff, nursing staff and support services. There is more money for the waiting areas for Perth Children's Hospital ED, and, as part of this budget, we are working to expand the virtual emergency medicine system to improve ambulance and emergency department flow. There is more money being spent on health initiatives to support vulnerable patients and young people. There is an investment of \$11.5 million to implement an early childhood dental program that will provide free assessment and oral health promotion to children from six months of age.

There is \$10 million in the budget towards a partnership project with Sister Kate's, which is a fantastic organisation in Western Australia, for a new 80-bed culturally appropriate health and aged-care facility for Aboriginal people, which will be supported by many in our community. There is \$8 million to support the hospital outpatient reform program to deliver contemporary outpatient care. There is more money for a health navigator program, and there is \$5 million to support the implementation of priority work under the sustainable health review.

I quickly turn to the regions, an area of Western Australia that is dear to my heart. I am very proud to represent the regions in Parliament. There is a \$19.7 million investment to expand the patient assisted travel scheme, or PATS. That will expand the nightly subsidy from \$60 to \$100 a night, which is a massive increase. Having served on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs two Parliaments ago, I know that petitions came before that Parliament. This is something that is supported by regional Western Australians, and we are proud to deliver it as members of the McGowan government. That investment will also help maternity patients to access the more acute services that are only available in the metropolitan area, which was previously a gap in PATS.

There is \$10.9 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to refurbish and replace aircraft engines—again, to ensure that our patients in regional and remote Western Australia can get to the bigger hospitals when they need acute care. There is \$4.4 million going to the WA Country Health Service. That will deal with gaps in the system that have been created following the transition to the commonwealth home support program when we moved across from home and community care.

There is money for new dental therapy centres, and that includes \$4.2 million to operate the adult public dental clinic at Narrogin Hospital. There is more money for women's community health services in the Kimberley, including services for women's mental health, family and domestic violence services and sexual violence services. There is more money to establish a women's community health service in the Peel region that will offer health and support services, and information for those experiencing mental illness, family domestic or sexual violence, and those who have experienced sexual assault or childhood sexual abuse. Again, those are vital services, and that will be supported by our community. There is more money to continue regional renal support schemes, \$6.9 million towards the Pilbara health initiative, and \$1.6 million for the Find Cancer Early program.

There is \$2.1 million for meet-and-greet services to help those patients who come from regional remote Western Australia, particularly Aboriginal patients who come to Perth, and do not have family or friends down here and do not know how to navigate our public transport system to get to places. This new meet-and-greet service will connect people from their plane or transport service directly to the medical services. Again, that is a key gap that has existed in the past, and that service will deliver for regional Western Australians.

There is money in the budget to keep Western Australia safe and strong. As I indicated, money has been put aside to ensure that if COVID-19 comes back to this state, we can tackle the issue immediately. But, of course, it is important to pause for a second and remind ourselves of the work that the government did at the height of COVID-19 last year, when we brought into place our recovery program, because that has delivered for Western Australians on a number of levels. We have put money into grants for small businesses and small business industry assistance. We also made a significant investment of about \$190 million or thereabouts in economic recovery and other initiatives. We have kept businesses operating in Western Australia when businesses right around the country and, indeed, around the world have had to close, and that has made a difference.

As we know from the budget papers, Western Australia's economy is not only the strongest in the nation, but also one of the strongest in the world. That is for a variety of reasons, and much of that is to do with our good fiscal management in this state, which is something that the former government failed to do. It is important to remind ourselves how bad the books were when we came to office in 2017.

Hon Dan Caddy: Appalling.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Truly appalling, honourable member. We were left with a shambles. In her contribution today, Hon Jackie Jarvis reminded us of the Langouant report. To the credit of John Langouant, on behalf of the government he looked at how the last government got itself into that situation. There was a variety of reasons, but a lot of it was because the previous government took its eyes off the road, essentially. Since then, we have learnt and fixed. This year, for the first time, there is no need for us to borrow money and pay interest on new borrowings, because we are funding new projects ourselves internally, and we will continue to do that.

I have touched on health and mental health. I again touch on social housing. As I said, a record amount is being spent, with \$875 million of additional spend on social housing. That includes the establishment of a new \$750 million social housing investment fund, and that, too, will help vulnerable Western Australians to get into safe and secure housing. We know that should be a right for people, and we are working towards that in this state. That \$875 million, on top of what we currently spend, will bring the spend on social housing in this state to about \$2.1 billion, which, as I said, will fund about 3 300 homes right across the state. That is a significant investment. Of course, over the last little while, we have had to contend with extraordinary growth in our home-building system, because we made a conscious decision, as did the commonwealth government at the time, to put grants on the table to make sure that those industries did not collapse and close down. We have created a pipeline of work for the next few years to make sure that we are building houses and that the industry keeps going so that we can keep building more and more houses in Western Australia.

I mentioned the regions and some of the hospitals. The regions have not been forgotten. There is money for new paramedics and new hospitals; there is the PATS stuff that I mentioned; and, of course, there is \$19.8 million in the budget towards the regional airfare zone cap. That will truly make a difference right around regional Western Australia. There will be two zones. If you are in zone 1, flights will be capped at \$199 each way, and if you are in zone 2, as I am in the Pilbara, those flights will be capped at \$299 each way for regional residents. That is a significant investment. At the moment, it is commonplace for residents in those communities to have to pay \$700 or sometimes \$1 000 one way for a last-minute flight, and that is a significant limitation. This policy alone will make a substantial difference to regional residents by making regional airfares more affordable for them.

Over the next few years, there is a record \$9.1 billion commitment in the budget for regional infrastructure, as well as the billions more that are being spent on infrastructure around the state, which I think, from memory, is about \$30 billion in this budget. It is a significant investment to keep the economy ticking over.

Twenty minutes goes very fast! There are a few other things I want to touch on briefly. I refer to education and training. This has been a focus of ours over the last couple of years. We have put significant investment into the TAFE system in Western Australia, which was one of the sectors that was decimated by the Liberal-National government. When that government was in power, it closed courses and increased fees substantially. It stopped people going to TAFE in Western Australia because it put TAFE out of reach for ordinary Western Australians.

What are we doing? We are investing \$121.4 million in this budget for training and workforce development initiatives, including things like incentives for mature-age apprentices, to make sure that mature-age people can get back into the workforce, gain skills and get the high-paying jobs. There are also industry placements for TAFE lecturers. There are additional vocational education and training places for year 11 and 12 students in Western Australia. We are also introducing a vocational education and training taster program for year 9 students. Again, we are making further upgrades to TAFE infrastructure. We will also see \$59 million invested to deliver more infrastructure and services for children in our schools. We are seeing career practitioners being placed in 70 schools, and we are increasing industry training for VET teachers. We are also putting an additional 100 school psychologists in our schools over the next few years, and we are expanding the alternative learning settings program to an additional eight sites across the state.

There is money for police. As we know, because we have spoken of it in this place previously, there will be up to 950 extra police around the state.

Police, health, mental health, and education and training—right across this budget, we can be tremendously proud of what this government is delivering. I again thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for this incredible motion she has moved this afternoon. I thank her for her passion and for delivering for Western Australia.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.10 pm]: I would like to reiterate the words of Hon Stephen Dawson when he acknowledged the great motion moved today by Hon Jackie Jarvis. I also acknowledge what a great start she has made to her political career and representation in this place. She is a person who is deeply rooted in the regions. She has an understanding of business and runs a business. She has a lot skin in the regional game. It is great to have members like Hon Jackie Jarvis in the house moving important motions like this so we can discuss probably our greatest responsibility of all in government, the economy. When we contrast the contribution of Hon Jackie Jarvis and Hon Stephen Dawson with that of Hon Dr Steve Thomas from the opposition, we can see how we got into so much trouble here in Western Australia in the first place.

“It’s the economy, stupid”, was a phrase coined by James Carville in 1992 when he was advising Bill Clinton in his successful run for the White House. I want members to picture this scenario and see whether it sounds familiar. In 1992, the US was experiencing an economic recession, and the incumbent President, George H.W. Bush, was perceived as being out of touch with the needs of the ordinary American. Carville told campaign staffers to hammer on the importance of the economy at every chance they got. He even went as far as to hang a sign in campaign headquarters that read, in part, “the economy, stupid”. The phrase became a mantra for the Clinton campaign. Since then, that phrase gets a run at most elections, whether it be an American presidential election or even here in Australia. I am going to use that phrase outside of an election period as the centrepiece of my contribution today, because the most important thing a government can do for the taxpayers whose money it controls is to spend it wisely and use it responsibly.

There is a great contrast, which voters can well see, with the sad days of the Barnett Liberal–National government, when it took debt from \$3.8 billion right up to a projected \$44 billion. We are starting to make some inroads, flatten that curve and reduce that bill. We have had to manage a \$9 billion investment into COVID initiatives. Can members imagine if the Barnett government was still in power and it needed to manage that? We have had to make some difficult decisions. I can say that I have had to front some angry crowds over our time in government about a decision that we made not to fund a residential college in Moora. We made that decision. It was a hard and unpopular decision. We also made other decisions about the public service wages policy. We even made decisions about remuneration for members of Parliament, about which we were all thrilled! But it was the restraint required to get us out of the fiscal mire that was left by the previous government. That 13 per cent spending, year on year, was reckless. It could not be sustained; it could not go on. Eventually, the voters had enough and we were in recession. People were out of work, the economy was tanking and we got a change of government—thankfully. Ben Wyatt was Treasurer and Mark McGowan was Premier. We had a cabinet that was solid and stable through its first four years, and will remain so into the next term. The voters endorsed that again, and it was because of the economy.

Of course, we have had COVID, and we have managed it, but remember why we have managed COVID the way we have: it was to keep the mining industry going, to keep the gold industry going and to keep the oil and gas industries going. We knew that if COVID got into Western Australia, those industries would have been threatened and would possibly have even had to suspend. That would all have happened in a time of unprecedented demand for our projects.

It is not a fluke; it is not luck. Yes, prices of commodities have been higher, but so were they in the Barnett years. We had high commodity prices in the Barnett years. We have always had peaks and troughs in the price of commodities. Of course, we have the benefit from now of getting 70¢ in the dollar—the lowest of any state in Australia—but that was not easy to achieve. Premier McGowan fought and won that fight. The Liberal–National government was unable to convince its own side to give Western Australia, the powerhouse of the nation, some relief, and we got down to 38¢ in the dollar. That was not acceptable. It was not good enough financial management, and the opposition should be ashamed of those times. I know many members here now were not directly responsible, but they are part of the organisation that caused that. I have said before that it is always great to get financial advice from

a WA Liberal—we think in the back of our minds that we will not do something, because that is what the Liberals would do. We have had to fight a difficult fight, we have had to meet that challenge, and we have come out at the end of that stronger and better.

Sixty per cent of Australia's exports in the last financial year came out of Western Australia. Western Australians are contributing \$8 000 per capita to the national economy. The next state is New South Wales, at about \$800, and every other state is registering a deficit. It is a remarkable economic turnaround. If Western Australia were a country—and I know people have a view about that!—we would be the second-fastest-growing economy in the world behind China. That is remarkable from where we came four years ago. During a global pandemic that has brought the United States and many European economies down, ours continues to flourish.

I am delighted that Hon Jackie Jarvis has moved this motion today, because this is something all Western Australians should be proud of. I know it is a little bit hard for the opposition to listen to, but deep down I think it would be happy with the way the government has managed the economy, and if it is not, heaven help us.

I also want to make the point that, whether you run a farming business, a winery or whatever you are involved with, the simple rule of business is that you spend less than you earn. That is the simple rule of business. We did not see that for eight years under the Barnett government; in fact, we saw eight consecutive deficits. Now, we are returning budget surpluses. You spend less than you earn, and that is how you make money. It is a basic economic philosophy. You have to do it in a farming business and you have to do it in the real world. It is what you have to do, and that is what this government is doing. We are returning surpluses for the first time in many years. Then we can have the debate about what we do with that surplus and how we spend those funds. The Western Australian Liberals are not immune to poor economic management. There was a budget emergency in 2013 of \$250 billion debt, and we are going to give \$1 trillion a shake in the next few years. It seems to have become a phenomenon of the modern Liberal movement to spend as much as they possibly can, as quickly as they possibly can, and rack up as much on the credit card as they possibly can. At some point, that strategy will come home to roost.

What can be done when finances are managed well is that money can be invested in things that have needed investment for a very long time. In the agricultural portfolio, the poor old Department of Agriculture, as it was known, was decimated under the previous government, but it is now being rebuilt under this government. We have researchers back in Western Australia. We have kept InterGrain. We are breeding our own grain. We are putting into that grassroots research and knowledge and getting intellectual property owned by the people of Western Australia once again.

We have invested in roads more than any other government in history—more in education, more in health than any other government before us. I remember the inaugural speech of Hon Shelley Payne in which she said that for the first time people had to allow extra time on their trips from Esperance to Perth for roadworks. That is great. That means we are getting stronger, safer and better road and transport networks right across the state.

We are investing heavily in Esperance and Geraldton ports. They are significant strategic assets for our state, and they determine how quickly our economy can continue to grow and how we can create the jobs of the future. In my inaugural speech, I made the observation that in this role we are so honoured to have, we really want the set of circumstances that we inherit made better when we leave. We want to leave the state in a better place than we found it. We can all proudly say we are doing that. Our children and grandchildren depend on us to do that. The opportunities for young people in Western Australia have never been better. The opportunities in agriculture have never been better. In fact, opportunities have never been better in Western Australia. That is because of the McGowan government's good financial management.

I know other members would like to make a contribution to this debate. I have a list as long as my arm of great investments that are being made right across the Agricultural Region, which is such a great contributor to agriculture and mining. There are some gas deposits up in the midwest as well. We have a bit of something for everyone in the Agricultural Region. We are going to strengthen those businesses and strengthen the economy of our Agricultural Region with our strong investment and financial management.

I will let other members talk about the individual projects that we are proudly going to make in our electorate. Members have to remember, "It's the economy, stupid." We have to remember that the economy is the most important focus in the roles we face as legislators and members of government, and as members of the opposition seeking to hold the government to account. The economy should be our number one focus. I thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for another great motion today. I urge everyone to support it.

HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan) [2.21 pm]: I thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for bringing on this motion today. I will start by trying to respond to a question posed by Hon Dr Steve Thomas about how the government can claim credit for our economic performance. He pointed to luck, but the answer comes in two words: "discipline" and "leadership". I was not a member of the government in its previous term but I was an adviser. I remember being an adviser in the Minister for Health's office in the early days of the previous term. Everyone came in all excited about finally getting into government but, unfortunately, we had to make tough decision after tough decision when proposals were brought to the government. We had to spend our time repairing the economy with the disastrous books

we had been left with. The other point I make to respond to Hon Dr Steve Thomas is about leadership. The Premier and our government's response to COVID-19 and disciplined budget management has positioned the government to deliver a range of initiatives for the benefit of Western Australia. Our health response has resulted in a strong economic performance. Our strategy to crush the virus and keep it out of our state has been a major contributor to our economic performance—not luck. This government stood up to the other states and the Liberal–National commonwealth government, which would have preferred the borders to open. The only lucky thing is that the McGowan government was elected in Western Australia to face this pandemic. If the opposition's side had been in charge, tragedy would have swept across the state.

Our economic performance and management has allowed us to respond to COVID by spending \$1 billion to date on frontline services to keep us safe. Members can think about what that has gone to. It is the vaccine rollout, hotel quarantine for international travellers to keep the state safe, COVID testing and equipment, and personal protective equipment. This is all money well spent, which has resulted in the continued growth of our domestic economy. That has flowed on, resulting in over 100 000 jobs being created since the McGowan government came to office. Unemployment fell to 4.6 per cent in July this year, which is the lowest it has been in eight years.

I will refer to more highlights from the budget, some of which have been touched on. One that is worthy of special mention is the \$1.8 billion that has been set aside for the women's and babies' hospital, which is another fully funded hospital for Western Australia thanks to a Labor government. I will also mention Fremantle Hospital, in the South Metropolitan Region, and the creation of a specialist mental health hub, which will have 100-plus beds. That is something we all know is desperately needed. We are always playing catch-up in mental health because of years and years of neglect from all governments. Mental health is a relatively new challenge in the reality that we face. We still do not know the impact that the pandemic will have in years to come in this space. We have also allocated \$100 million in an emergency department support package. One thing that has not been touched on, which is quite sombre but really important, is the \$3.2 million for planning and design of a dedicated children's hospice. I am sure none of us wish to have too much involvement with such a place, but it is a very important thing for this government to be doing.

It is also great to see significant investment in culture and the arts. I am especially excited about the proposed film studio in Fremantle. People in the film industry have significant interest in this project. I shared a post on social media about it and the fact that the money for it is in the budget and there was quite a groundswell of response. I will be meeting with industry representatives in the coming weeks who hope to see this happen as soon as possible.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Are you sure that's not Hon David Templeman's retirement plan?

Hon STEPHEN PRATT: He could certainly perform down there and gather a crowd!

Further in this space, there is an allocation of \$3 million to the contemporary music fund and \$13 million for the regional arts program.

It would be remiss of me not to touch on the targeted action on climate that we see in this budget. It includes \$350 million to expand the state's softwood plantation estate, creating jobs and increasing sustainability; \$206 million will go towards renewable energy initiatives; and there is a \$118 million fund for future climate-related initiatives. Other members have touched on some of the renewable hydrogen initiatives as well.

I mentioned some of the health initiatives that this government will be funding but mental health is also very important. I forget we have the Minister for Mental Health in this house and he touched on the \$495 million additional investment in that space. That brings the total investment to over \$1.1 billion. This is significant money, which is very welcome in that space. Mental health is a growing area of need and this government keeps coming to the fore with strong investment. One item I would like to point to that is covered by that budget allocation is the youth step-up, step-down service. I assume it will be the first of its kind in Western Australia. Obviously, this government has rolled out step-up, step-down services across the regions, but a youth-specific one will add great value and support for people who are in desperate need of supported accommodation.

That leads into the social housing investment. I am sure Hon Dr Brad Pettitt has already welcomed this record investment of \$875 million for social housing. I look forward to seeing the result of that in future years. There is also the expansion of Home Stretch WA, which will allow children to remain in foster care, if they wish, until the age of 21 years old. That is an important allocation of funds, which was called for by stakeholders in that space. A sum of \$41 million has been committed to this initiative, as well as increased funding for Youth Futures WA to deliver crisis accommodation. They are two really important areas of investment.

There are some others that I was going to touch on, but I think they have been raised. Some other highlights that I want to touch on that have not been raised are the \$50 million plan and seed funding for the Aboriginal cultural centre. That is an exciting project for Western Australia. There is also \$30 million to commence delivery of the Perth Zoo master plan. I know that my kids, Imogen and Phoebe, will be very excited to see this come to fruition. The Zoo provides an exciting new experience every time we go there. I look forward to seeing what comes out of the delivery of that project.

While I have a bit of time left, I will touch on some of the items in south east metro. There is a funding allocation of \$400 million for the Westport and outer harbour project. That will be a significant contribution for land acquisition and for setting up what will come out of that future plan.

I was lucky enough to represent Minister Ellery at All Saints College last week. The students were putting together a hypothetical plan for what could happen at Fremantle harbour and port in future years. I can tell members that although it has been a while since I have been in a school, some of the concepts and ideas that they came up with were not what students in my year would have come up with. It was interesting to see how the thinking has changed about how a locality could be planned to enable us to deal with future pandemics, if that were to happen, by designing properties for the purpose of being able to isolate people. That shows us the impact that the pandemic has had on that age cohort. The students are also looking at the use of solar power and renewables in that space. The future will be in good hands if some of those students end up in town planning or other areas.

I will now touch on a few of the education commitments that will benefit our hardworking members. Yaz Mubarakai in Jandakot will see the delivery of Treeby Primary School and Riva Primary School in Piara Waters in 2022. I know that Terry Healy is excited about the second stage of Yarralinka Primary School in Southern River in 2023. There is also an allocation of \$35 million for STEM infrastructure at Rossmoyne Senior High School.

I will leave it there. There is also a long list of Metronet projects that are pretty exciting. It is good to see a Labor government that is delivering more public transport for Western Australians.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [2.32 pm]: I stand in support of this motion. I would like to thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for moving this motion, which acknowledges the continued improvement in Western Australia's economy and financial situation under the McGowan Labor government, and I thank her for her contribution. I would also like to thank Hon Stephen Pratt, Hon Darren West and Hon Stephen Dawson for their contributions, and also the entertainment from Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

Since coming into government, and throughout this pandemic, it has been clear that this government has made the responsible decisions to place this state's finances on a solid footing. We brought spending under control, turned deficits into surpluses and put our debt on a much more sustainable trajectory. Our fiscal capacity has been bolstered by our strong economy, and our efforts to keep the mining sector and, indeed, the whole economy, operating safely throughout the pandemic.

The budget that we released last week shows that the Western Australian economy is one of the strongest in the world, highlighting the importance of a strong COVID response for economic success. In fact, Western Australia is the strongest state in the country, with the brightest future.

Net debt is predicted to fall for a third consecutive year to \$32.1 billion in 2021–22. That is more than \$11 billion lower than when we came to government in 2017. When we came into the election in 2017, debt was forecast to reach over \$41 billion. It is true, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas talked about, that iron ore royalties are highly volatile. But Hon Dr Steve Thomas also failed to paint us the full picture yesterday, because he provided only part of the iron ore price history. Iron ore price troughs and highs have occurred in the past. In 2008, the iron ore price reached \$US195 a tonne. In 2010, it reached \$US184 a tonne. In 2011, it reached over \$US188 a tonne. As we know here in WA, the whole mining sector is volatile. I have seen personally the impacts of this on the ground in many of our small mining communities across the state. That is why it is so important to have good financial and economic management in this state so that we are able to smooth our economy.

Our strong economy, combined with our efforts to keep the mining sector operating safely through the pandemic, is significantly bolstering the state's fiscal capacity. It is also funding our nation. Western Australia is providing the largest net revenue contribution to the Federation. Keeping our economy strong is vital to the whole nation's wellbeing. Western Australia is estimated to have contributed over \$20 billion to the Federation in the last financial year, 2019–20, at an average of over \$8 000 per person. This is more than any other state—it is over 10 times more than the next state, New South Wales, which is the only other state that is making a net positive contribution.

We are also showing strong surpluses, from 2018–19 when we had a \$1.7 billion surplus, and then 2019–20 when we had a \$2.19 billion surplus. This financial year, 2020–21, we have a forecast \$5.6 billion surplus. That is expected to continue in 2021–22 to \$2.8 billion. The McGowan government is using its strong surplus position to fund key services, maintain a strong response to the COVID pandemic, and fund important projects and initiatives that will set up Western Australia's long term future.

Our strong financial position means that we can invest in our future. This budget has a record infrastructure investment of \$30.7 billion. In a continued commitment to our sound economic management, and in response to our record-breaking economic conditions, resulting in workforce and skills pressure, WA's infrastructure program has been reviewed to smooth the pipeline of work to help ease economic pressures, as identified with industry leaders at the recent skills summit. Government projects are competing for the same resources as the private sector, including workers, equipment and supplies, adding to project pressures. This smoothing of work will ensure a sustainable pipeline of work that will promote greater certainty, industry confidence, training, and job security. This smoothing is on the back of consultation with industry, with a focus on extending our economic boom.

Our strong economy is allowing us to make important investments that we might not have had the opportunity to make if we had had a poorer financial outlook: investment in our social fabric, improving the wellbeing of all Western Australians and further building community. This budget will deliver a record \$495 million boost to the Mental Health Commission. We heard Hon Stephen Pratt talk about that just now. More importantly, this funding includes \$129.9 million towards youth mental health services and initiatives, something that is really important in this day and age. Youth mental health has been a key focus of this budget.

The state government is also delivering a record boost for housing and to tackle homelessness. The latest investment will lift the total amount allocated by the McGowan government to social housing and initiatives to prevent and tackle homelessness.

The budget also delivers on our election commitment on cost of living, with an allocation of \$397 million to keep the basket of household fees and charges below inflation and increase concessions for Western Australians in need. Household electricity and water tariffs will only increase in line with inflation, after being frozen last year.

This budget will also allow us to properly tackle the important issue of climate change. The McGowan government is creating a \$750 million climate action fund in the 2021–22 state budget to develop climate-resilient communities and help build a prosperous low-carbon future. The climate action fund will invest in sustainable Western Australian jobs and industry innovation, while protecting and enhancing the state's unique environmental heritage values and assets. The McGowan government is committed to transitioning the WA economy to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

With our strong economic position comes the ability to plan and invest in our future. We are securing our future water supply with a \$1.4 billion commitment to help fund Perth's next desalination plant, which will be powered by renewable energy. We are also investing to diversify our economy, for example, with a \$100 million investment attraction and new industries fund, and an investment in the renewable hydrogen industry.

Our strong economic position will allow us to set aside \$800 million for unforeseen costs associated with the current COVID-19 pandemic and ensure that we will have the capacity to continue to manage this pandemic as needed. A number of government trading enterprises will retain their dividends this financial year, which will help to fund future infrastructure development.

The state budget is delivering a strong surplus, which will enable the McGowan government to invest in major initiatives for all Western Australians regardless of where they live. This budget is making the biggest investment in regional WA of any other government in history. This budget is investing a record \$9.1 billion in regional infrastructure, including \$4.2 billion for royalties for regions over the next four years. The budget will fund \$627 million in regional election commitments and initiatives, with significant investment in education, health and mental health, growing regional industries, upgrading tourism infrastructure, road safety, promoting Aboriginal wellbeing and much more, as Hon Darren West discussed. For example, there will be \$200 million for agricultural supply chain improvements to help get our agricultural products to market more effectively; \$50 million for regional school infrastructure projects; \$45 million for the Aboriginal ranger program, which has been highly successful; and \$44 million for upgrades to national parks, reserves and tourism infrastructure.

The state government's work to keep regional Western Australia safe has kept country economies open and delivered the biggest intrastate tourism boom the state has ever seen. There is \$20 million to increase the patient assistance travel scheme subsidy to \$100 a night. This much-needed subsidy helps people to stay in Perth when they need to seek medical attention. There will be \$20 million for the regional airfare zone cap, as Hon Stephen Dawson discussed. Coming from Esperance, that is a great initiative. The cost of an airfare to come to Perth from Esperance has historically cost more than an airfare to Bali or over east, so I commend the government for that initiative. Our government is continuing to build strong and resilient regional communities and working to diversify our regional economies and to create local jobs.

We are also tackling road safety in this budget, a really important issue in the regions. The state budget will deliver \$4.5 million in road projects and programs throughout regional WA, including \$149 million for the regional road safety improvement program. A commitment of \$40 million will continue the successful regional economic development—RED—grants program, a program that has helped to build many varied and diverse regional businesses, from breweries and distilleries, to value adding in the fishery industry, to diversifying agricultural products.

A strong economy will allow us to continue to invest in great regional community-building initiatives, such as \$30 million for the regional arts program. On Monday, I met with representatives from Rave About Arts, the arts council in Ravensthorpe, a small town on the south coast, which recently received funding under the Creative Communities COVID-19 Recovery Program: Artist-in-Residence Program. I saw firsthand the benefit of this arts funding to that small community. It provides an after-school art program for children in Ravensthorpe, in a small community where children have limited choice in after-school activities. I also attended the opening of the Ravensthorpe Wildflower Show and Spring Festival, the largest festival of its kind in the world, with more than 700 species of wildflowers on display. The amazing Fitzgerald River National Park is nearby to visit and has spectacular wildflowers for viewing.

The festival is supported by the McGowan government's regional events scheme and will be supported again in 2022 and 2023. A strong economy allows us to support these types of important community-building events that attract people to the regions.

Another commitment that I am really excited about—that is happening as a result of a strong economy—with regard to investment in diversifying our economy, is the investment of \$105 million to build a state-of-the-art film studio and screen production facility at Fremantle's Victoria Quay. This facility will take WA's film industry to the next level. There will also be \$20 million for a screen production attraction fund to attract job-creating production to WA. I have seen firsthand the benefits of this pandemic on our film industry. It has provided opportunities for Western Australians to step into producer and cameraman roles—roles that they would otherwise not have had an opportunity to take up. I have been involved in helping to produce two documentaries for Discovery Channel over the past two years. The second documentary, which will air later this year, was much more challenging this year with our closed borders. Because only two people were permitted to enter WA from overseas as special personnel to work on the production, Western Australians were able to move into roles that in the previous year had been taken up by people coming in from overseas. Strong involvement in the production meant that we achieved things like having an acknowledgement to traditional owners at the beginning of the credits in the documentary and more input on what was happening on the ground, which enabled us to achieve a global sustainability star rating for the film.

In line with this is the \$695 million investment by the state and commonwealth governments and Edith Cowan University to build WA's first inner-city university, which will include the world-class Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. This will help to further support the development of the film industry, providing further diversification of our economy. This probably could not have been done without such a strong economy.

I commend Hon Jackie Jarvis for moving this motion today, noting the continued improvement in WA's economy and financial situation under the McGowan Labor government. A strong economy has allowed our budget to utilise the financial capacity that we have created, combined with the benefits of our strong economy, to address the challenges we face now and to invest in our future.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [2.46 pm]: I thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for raising this motion. I think that my colleagues in the chamber have made it very clear that the Western Australian economy is one of the best in the country, and it certainly has one of the brightest futures. It is worthy to note that Western Australia's contribution to the national economy is unsurpassed by any other state or territory. Each and every person in Western Australia contributes \$8 022 more than they received in the 2019–20 financial year. That is more than 10 times in the state with the next highest personal contribution. Our state is essential to the national economy and our economic performance has essentially held up the national economy during a very difficult time—that is, the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why it is particularly admirable that Premier Mark McGowan has fought so hard for our share of the GST. I note that when an honourable member mentioned that before, Hon Dr Steve Thomas mumbled and quietly thanked our federal Prime Minister. But I note that it took a Labor Premier to secure that fair share, or something approaching our fair share, of the GST.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Thank you, Scotty!

Hon SANDRA CARR: Thank you, Mark McGowan, for that excellent effort. It is a pity that one of Hon Dr Steve Thomas's team could not have secured that for us.

I also note that it is our response to COVID-19 that has allowed us to perform so well in this budget. It is particularly prudent of our government and Mark McGowan's leadership that we heeded the expert health advice. We took a steady and measured approach to protecting our state. I am still haunted—I think "haunted" is the right word—by the images of the member for the federal electorate of Durack, who was urging us to open the borders and not to worry about protecting people. Whereas, our government took a steady, measured and pragmatic approach and protected our greatest asset, the Western Australian people. Who do you think supports our workforce? Who do you think works in iron ore industries? We made sure that there were people in our state and that our people were safe, and, consequently, our state is safe and strong.

This year's budget adopts the same safe and pragmatic futureproofing approach. We are looking at and using the success that we created today and making sure that that moves forward into the future. That is why I find it particularly rich, if members excuse the pun, for Hon Dr Steve Thomas across the floor to keep on insisting and repetitiously making his outdated cartoon reference to the Premier. It will not sit. Consumer confidence is high. This government has a track record of good financial management, one that is using today's success to ensure the state's long-term security. It is called sensible budget management and planning for the future. On the one hand, it seems that across the board Hon Dr Steve Thomas would prefer a mindless, rapidly executed spending splash. It is all sounding a bit like the Barnett budget blow-out school of management to me and the sort of excess of the 1980s—all bad hair, bad habits and fast living. It is as outdated as the cartoon references that he insists on making. On the other hand, on the steady left hand, we have a recently announced state budget that makes use of a strong operating surplus to set up WA's long-term future. That is what a good budget does.

I have some simple working examples that have been touched on. I will relate them to my area of the Agricultural Region and around Geraldton. We have talked about the spend on social housing, which is an \$875 million boost in the

2021–22 state budget. That will take our total social housing spend to \$2.1 billion, with 3 300 additional social houses. This spending comes in the form of steady, planned, strategic management. If we look at the \$9 million that is to be spent in the suburban precinct of Geraldton, we can see that it is not just whacking up houses and quickly addressing the problem; it is a strategy. It is about looking at what builds a community and it is focused on the word “social”. It creates access and a connected community while also ensuring that the community is safe. It is planned, strategic and forward thinking.

We have seen the same thing occur in the spending on education. The McGowan Labor government is investing by delivering \$6 billion in education. We know that education is one of the foundation stones upon which we build a strong economy, and that is what we are doing. The government has allocated \$449.5 million for new and improved school facilities and \$104 million to support student mental health and wellbeing over the next four years. This is crucial spending. As someone who has worked in schools, I am acutely aware of the need to provide well thought out, well planned and well considered mental health support for students in schools. We know there is an issue with that, and this budget addresses that issue. The government has provided \$44.2 million for 100 additional full-time school psychologists and \$38.5 million for the proven model of alternative learning setting programs for students who demonstrate behaviours that make them inappropriate to function in a school setting. That helps develop the capacity of those students and provides a protective learning environment for the students who remain in the traditional school context. There is also \$21.8 million for additional chaplaincy services in schools if the schools choose to accept them because they would like to provide chaplaincy services in their schools. That is designed to provide for the emotional wellbeing of not only students, but also staff. Importantly, we are looking after the whole school environment in that context. That shows planning, thoughtfulness and forward thinking. We also want our staff to stay and continue to provide good-quality education, and this kind of spending does exactly that. It is smart, sensible and considered budget planning.

We are also investing in TAFE and training. Even that has been done in a very strategic and well-planned way. It is not just an announcement of a large splash of cash, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas seems to be advocating for; it is about listening to what the industry and the key stakeholders are telling us they want. We are investing in making sure that the TAFEs have up-to-date and relevant services and equipment. When I talk to industry in Geraldton, they say that they want the TAFE institutions to have the kinds of equipment, machinery and mechanisms they use on the floor so that when the institutions get apprentices in, the apprentices are familiar with and know how to use the equipment. This spending reflects that demand from our key stakeholders in those industries.

The year 9 career taster program is also an excellent spend in this budget. It is well thought out and well planned. We know that come year 10, our students are choosing subjects and planning for their future. Spending on those taster programs for year 9s allows them to make informed, planned and strategic decisions for their future in much the same way as we are creating an informed, planned and strategic budget. It is a budget that is measured, considered and designed to keep the state safe and strong well into the future and ensure that we have a resilient and strong economy.

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [2.54 pm]: I thank Hon Jackie Jarvis for this fantastic motion. This is not the first time I have risen to speak in this place on the strength of the Western Australian economy.

Hon Jackie Jarvis: And it won't be the last.

Hon DAN CADDY: It will not be the last.

Nor is it the first time I have spoken about the way this government has turned around the fortunes of Western Australia. Hon Dr Steve Thomas and I had a great conversation about the way this government saved Western Australia with the GST, but I want to talk briefly about the previous government's history. Hon Jackie Jarvis has already outlined the fairytale of Colin Barnett and the seven Treasurers. That is the modus operandi for those opposite and was a common theme when in government. One of the makings of the disaster that we inherited was cabinet instability. It is not lost on me that housing is often brought up in this place. Those opposite want to tell us what we should do better in housing. In the last four years, in the first term of the McGowan government, we had one solid housing minister. In the eight years prior, much like the fairytale of the seven Treasurers, we had Troy Buswell, Bill Marmion, Troy Buswell again, Terry Redman—as they shared it around with the alliance—back to Bill Marmion, Colin Holt and Brendon Grylls. It was a real tennis match between the Liberal Party and Nationals WA as to who they could bat housing off to because no-one took it seriously. That was the attitude of the previous government to everything. There were ministers all over the place and there was no commitment—born to rule but failing to lead.

I will get back to the economy and the crux of the motion. It is important to realise that all the growth in the last 24 months has been achieved despite COVID-19. Under the shadow of COVID, which has affected almost every nation in the world, we have managed a great amount of growth in this state. Hon Dr Steve Thomas, as he has done in the past, yet again invoked the image of Scrooge McDuck. I find that interesting from the side that cried a foul fowl when I mentioned a fictional paltry character in this chamber a few weeks ago. Let me tell members about Scrooge McDuck. Scrooge McDuck did not build hospitals, roads, railways or police stations, and nor did he put almost \$1 billion into housing for his people. The image of Scrooge McDuck is a little overused and inaccurate.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Can I make an interjection?

Hon DAN CADDY: The member can. Is it about Scrooge McDuck? I am not a big Disney fan, but go on.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Who was the housing minister you were talking about in the previous government?

Hon DAN CADDY: That was Hon Peter Tinley.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: And what happened to him?

Hon DAN CADDY: He is the member for Willagee and he was a fantastic minister.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: He got dumped.

Hon DAN CADDY: The member is a bit late. If he had been a couple of minutes earlier, it would have been quite witty, but it was way too late. The member was lost in his own thoughts about the \$40 billion debt that he left us.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas asked—Hon Stephen Pratt addressed this—how the Premier could claim this economic growth when he did not have a crystal ball. I will further the explanation of Hon Stephen Pratt. The Premier can claim credit because he and this government protected this state and allowed it to remain open. Hon Dr Steve Thomas talked about the dam wall in Brazil. The dam wall coming down and the tragedy involved in that event would not have made an iota of difference if this state had been shut for business. The fact is that this state was not closed for business, which it might have been if we had taken the advice of the former Liberal leader and opened up the borders willy-nilly. Not only were we not shut for business, allowing us to stay open and be successful as a state, but also we have basically carried the whole nation. Saying that we are the recipients of luck because something happened on the other side of the world is an absolute fallacy. We are in a strong position because we kept the state open. We certainly would not be in this position if we were in the same circumstances as the gold-standard state of New South Wales. This is just in reference to COVID before I have even talked about economic management. Not only is Western Australia the envy of all the other states because of its economic management and budget surplus, but also it is actually propping up the entire country. The way that COVID-19 and the economy have been managed in Western Australia means that our state is not economically burdened as the other states are. They have all had to put in money because they have not managed COVID properly. I also point out that in 2021, Western Australia has not been the recipient of any of the federal funding that the other states got.

I will go to some facts on the economy and jobs. The WA domestic economy grew by 4.3 per cent in 2020–21; it is the strongest growth of all the states for the second year running. As Hon Darren West pointed out, this result places the WA economy at the very top of the world. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, our domestic economy has grown by 5.7 per cent—the strongest growth of all the states and, once again, a leader around the world. That is on the back of sound health and COVID management and sound economic management. Further growth will be fuelled by the almost \$1 billion that Hon Stephen Dawson mentioned we are putting into housing. We are taking all the steps that we can to ensure that this state remains strong and continues on the trajectory that it is on. But we should not forget about jobs or the Western Australian Jobs Act, and let us not forget the disaster that the McGowan government inherited in 2017 from the previous Liberal–National government. Despite the biggest global economic shock in decades, more Western Australians now have a job than at any time in our history. There was record employment in July. Over 107 000 jobs have been created. I mentioned in my inaugural speech in this place all the jobs that had been created. I cannot remember the figure, but it was in the 90 000s; now, we are up to 107 000 jobs. That has also happened in the shadow of COVID. The world as a whole was pretty much shutting down, but the fantastic economic management of this government kept our economy going and has allowed us to get to that figure of 107 000 new jobs. It is a direct result of the fantastic management of the health crisis and the economy in this state. It is that management that Hon Dr Steve Thomas, as eloquently as he speaks, chooses time after time to ignore. I have a Midnight Oil song from the early 1980s going through my head, called *Short Memory*. Those opposite would appear to have extremely short memories.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Do a Templeman and sing it.

Hon DAN CADDY: No. I would love to be able to sing it. Hon Darren West could play it; he is mean on the guitar. I once could sing, but I cannot profess to be able to do so these days, and especially not like Hon David Templeman.

Members opposite do have short memories. They could not manage a single surplus in their time, but despite that, they feel qualified—in fact, they feel it is their job—to tell us how to spend our surplus.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: That is our job.

Hon DAN CADDY: That is the definition of irony. They could not manage a single surplus for themselves, yet they want to sit there and tell us how we should spend the surplus that we have as a result of our management. How about they let the people who have done a good job and have created the surplus decide how it is going to be spent?

Hon Tjorn Sibma: We do not begrudge you your good luck in having a surplus.

Hon DAN CADDY: No, it was good economic management.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: What proportion of revenue is down to your good management?

Hon DAN CADDY: Let me tell you —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is becoming remarkably unruly in the chamber at the moment and I am struggling to hear the member on his feet. I wonder whether we might return to the proper debate.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Members, the Leader of the Opposition is right; I am struggling to hear the member on his feet. The member has very limited time left before I return to Hon Jackie Jarvis.

Debate Resumed

Hon Stephen Dawson: Yeah, Tjorn!

Hon DAN CADDY: Deputy President, it has started again! It did not take long.

I will finish my remarks by pointing to the contribution that Western Australia provides to the nation, just to reinforce this for Hon Dr Steve Thomas. Only two states make a net contribution. One is New South Wales, which is barely providing a net contribution—this is, in dollars per capita; these figures are from 2019–20—and Western Australia is the other, at nearly 12 times that amount.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order, members. I need to interrupt debate to offer the opportunity to reply to Hon Jackie Jarvis.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West) [3.05 pm] — in reply: Thank you, Deputy President.

I want to reflect on the comments we have heard today. I thank Hon Dr Steve Thomas for reminding me about 20 times that I used the term “crystal ball”. He said it so often that he reminded me of a joke I know about fortune tellers walking funny, but that is a joke for another time!

I also note that Hon Dr Steve Thomas is incredibly excited about the upcoming estimates hearings. There is not long to wait now. I am sure Hon Peter Collier will be able to fill him in about that. Hon Dr Steve Thomas is a little more excited about that than I am.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You will get excited; it is good fun.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I am learning.

We have heard a lot about Scrooge McDuck. I have done a bit of research; I have gone to the Disney Fandom page. Scrooge McDuck has a whole back story, but what I did like was that it said that he earned the title of richest duck in the world through years of hard work, well-utilised intelligence, honesty, perseverance and thriftiness.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It’s funny; I’ve got you all talking about Scrooge McDuck now.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: Hon Dr Steve Thomas has. Well done; bravo.

I thank Minister Dawson for the great overview he gave of the budget. I tried to take notes, but there is just so much money going into the health and mental health systems. I acknowledge that Minister Dawson came to Busselton in the weeks leading up to the budget and spent three or four hours with me at a mental health workshop to listen to the community and to understand the needs in the south west. That will certainly inform our policies moving forward.

I also want to touch quickly on a few things that tie in together for regional families. The budget includes \$1.8 billion for the new women’s and babies’ hospital in Perth. What members might not realise is that it will be a world-class neonatal unit that any woman, anywhere in Western Australia, who is at risk of going into labour early, will invariably end up at if there is time. Indeed, I was in that situation myself in 1999; I utilised the services of the Royal Flying Doctor Service to get to King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. The investment in the women’s and babies’ hospital in Perth will impact all women across Western Australia, because it will be absolutely world class. There is \$10 million in the budget for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which is a hugely important service in regional Western Australia. Of course, the investment in the patient assisted travel scheme is amazing. I am really fortunate because when I have come to Perth in the past, I have had family or other people to stay with, but not everyone is as fortunate as that. It is really important that we support regional families when they need to access specialist services.

We talked about social housing. I think everyone who spoke mentioned social housing and the amazing investment that is being made. I keep hearing from the opposition about health and housing, yet we try to fix it and it still criticises us. Let us maybe wait and see what the outcome is. Hon Stephen Dawson mentioned the cap on regional airfares, which is incredibly important.

I thank Hon Darren West for his kind words. I liked it when he said, “It’s not the economy, stupid.” I know that they are not his own words, but he was at the coalface when tough decisions were made. He had to front his regional community when the government made hard decisions, and he certainly remembers that. Darren’s hard work and the example he has set is why Labor has so many regional members in the chamber today. WA Labor is well and truly the party of regional Western Australia. I think we now have 22 Labor members of Parliament who live and work in the regions. I can assure the house that we are not going anywhere.

In this house, we often reflect on diversity. Believe it or not, I believe that my colleague Hon Stephen Pratt represents diversity. He is a young man with young children; he represents a large proportion of our electorate. He said that

it has been a long time since he went to school, but I do not believe that. It is all relative! He spoke about climate change and renewable energy and those wonderful policies that we would expect from a man who looks so young, fresh and vibrant.

I thank the rest of my colleagues for their contributions. I want to end by repeating some of the words of Hon Sandra Carr. These are her words, according to my notes. She said, “Safe, strong, pragmatic, futureproof.” There was something about bad habits and bad hair, but I do not think she was talking about anyone on this side. As a former teacher, she really focused on education. She understood what these programs meant. She understood that they had been well thought out and are forward-thinking. When she talked about the TAFE initiatives, she said that they are smart, sensible, considered and welcomed by industry. That was certainly my experience.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS — CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Chair of Committees (Hon Martin Aldridge) in the chair.

The CHAIR: Members, we are in committee, considering committee reports. I remind members that there have been amendments to the standing orders with effect from this week that reinstate parts of the temporary order. For now, the most important one is that members will have unlimited periods of 10 minutes to speak on each report, and each report will be limited to one hour’s consideration before it rolls on to the next committee report.

Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission — First report — Annual report 2020–21

Resumed from 9 September.

Motion

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I move —

That the report be noted.

I am delighted to move this motion, as I find myself in the circumstance of being the Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, which is a very interesting role that we will discuss not at all when discussing the current report.

This is simply a report of the activities of the committee, mostly the previous committee, and the reports that it tabled over a number of years. There are only three reports being tabled. One of those, *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission’s oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*, is the sole target of the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, so I propose to put that report aside for the time being. When we get to that report, we can focus on those issues in more substance and detail. But in relation to the *Annual report 2020–21*, I want to mention one of the other reports tabled, which is titled *Meaningful reform overdue: The Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*. That was the seventeenth report, which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 19 November 2020 and the Legislative Council on 26 November 2020. Honourable members, this was a report from late last year and reflects the serious concerns of a number of people and organisations, including the Corruption and Crime Commission itself, that the legislation that underpins the CCC is not up to date and perhaps not necessarily fit for purpose. Concerns have been raised that the focus of the CCC would potentially benefit from a review of the legislation and the act that underpins it. It is interesting that in various forms, including in a recent publicly available hearing that the new CCC undertook with the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, this was one of the principal issues that was raised and discussed—that is, that the legislation needs to be looked at and some upgrades may be required.

We need to have a general conversation about what the specific role of the CCC is and what it should target. It is, of course, an organisation without an unlimited budget. I might note, since I have the representative minister of the Treasurer here, that in the budget papers the CCC did not receive a significant increase in its revenues. On behalf of the commissioner and the members of the CCC, perhaps the government might consider a little more largesse for the CCC to be able to do the job that it is currently required to do under the legislation that currently underpins it; however, if the government or the Parliament or anybody else wants the CCC to extend or expand its duties, which happens from time to time, it is absolutely the case that some more support and a review of the act is going to be required. The Corruption and Crime Commissioner made this quite clear in the public hearings that were conducted a week or so ago. If my memory serves me correctly, the view of the commissioner was that, in effect, we might as well throw the entire act out and start again rather than simply amend it, because so much has changed since 2003. The focus of the commission is not what it used to be. Things have been added, like unexplained wealth and organised crime roles. Those things have been added in, and my view is that I and the committee—I speak carefully on behalf of the committee—agree that review and upgrade is required; it is perhaps getting to the point of being urgently required.

There is an understanding, which was written into the first report of the joint standing committee, that in June 2021, the government advised the Legislative Council that the Department of Justice is currently undertaking a major review of the act. Although at the time of adopting this report the committee is not aware of the details of the review, it is encouraged by this announcement. It is good, but if the Department of Justice is working on a significant review of the act, it would be useful for the purposes of the committee if we could be updated on that process. This issue is not related to one side of politics or the other, but I have been around long enough to know that some reviews of acts run into decades. Although the government might be reviewing the act at the moment, it is probably reviewing a number of acts, and a statement that simply says that it is under review is a bit like saying “The cheque’s in the mail.” In my view, it would be useful for the functions of not only the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission but also the CCC itself if the government could update the Parliament and the committee—it would probably be appropriate to do that through the committee—on the progress of that review. I would have thought that updating the current legislation just to take into account the various roles that are expected of the CCC would require a significant upgrade. Any alteration of that would be a more significant upgrade.

It would perhaps be pertinent if the government or the Parliament or the Legislative Council gave a role to the joint standing committee to oversee the process of that review once we get the first drafting process in place from the Department of Justice. I think there is probably a role for the committee, bearing in mind that it is a joint standing committee. Both houses are represented on the committee; there are two alliance and two Labor Party members, and the chair is a member of the Labor Party. I think that the committee is working remarkably well, I have enormous respect for all its members, and I think that the committee is capable of making a significant contribution and overseeing that legislation.

It would perhaps be useful at some point for the government in the first instance to inform the committee about the progress of the review, and that could happen in a number of ways. It could simply be communication from the Attorney General through the Department of Justice to the committee. It does not necessarily have to be made public. I am pleased to say that, certainly in the current Parliament, I have not seen any comment from the current Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission that has been made public and I certainly intend as the deputy chair to ensure that continues to be the case. The committee members are to be commended for taking that role very seriously. It should be the case that the government updates the committee at the very least, or possibly the house, on the progress of the review of the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act. I therefore urge the government, in one way or another, to let the committee know. As I say, I think there is a useful role for the committee to overview what the act might look like to best serve the community of Western Australia. It is no small task. I think it would be a major undertaking if the committee took on that role. Most anti-corruption commissions or entities are very different. In most cases, their underpinning of legislation is very varied. Expected outcomes are quite different and it is no simple task. Comparing what happens in this state with what happens in other jurisdictions is quite complex, so it would be a complex investigation. Having said that, getting the anti-corruption legislation in Western Australia right is a particularly important exercise, so I think it would be good if we had a mapped-out process for how this would now proceed—whether the CCC act is simply to be redone and presented. If that were the case, I think it would be a lost opportunity, potentially, to make improvement. At the very least, I think the committee needs to know the process that the government has in mind for the review of the underpinning legislation. I would hate to see that there was not a reasonable conversation around that.

Having said that, I think I will give other members an opportunity to speak before I continue. This is very important legislation that underpins the operations of the CCC. It behoves us to be quite serious about how we manage it. I think that is probably the single most important thing that we can discuss in this report, the first annual report of the CCC.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: As the new member appointed to the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, I welcome this opportunity to speak to the committee’s *Annual report 2020–21*. As members may be aware, the committee’s role is to monitor and report on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, to commence own-motion inquiries relating to means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector and to carry out functions under the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003.

As the annual report notes, between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, the committee held 11 deliberative meetings and nine formal evidence hearings with 26 witnesses. The previous committee undertook one formal inquiry and tabled three reports during the reporting period, as Hon Dr Steve Thomas mentioned earlier. The three reports include —

If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission’s oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force, the Annual Report 2019–20 and the third report Meaningful reform overdue: The Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003.

As mentioned by the honourable member, the report noted that over the course of the fortieth Parliament, the committee observed a range of areas in which the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act is either deficient, obsolete or unclear. I, too, look forward to the comprehensive review and much-needed reform of the act. The second report recommendation that the Attorney General ensure that the CCMA is redrafted as a matter of priority is something I agree with and look forward to hearing back on as well.

The Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission is different from most parliamentary committees in that it was established by legislation in 2003. As such, tasks and issues that one committee addresses may carry over to the new Parliament. I want to acknowledge and welcome the new Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, Mr Matthew Zilko, SC. It is worth noting that his appointment in November 2020 was the first new appointment to this office since 2013. I also welcome the reappointment of the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, QC. Both agencies play a vital role in ensuring the integrity of the public sector for the benefit of all Western Australians.

I am privileged to work with my fellow committee members, committee chair, Matthew Hughes, MLA, member for Kalamunda; committee deputy chair, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, member for the South West Region; and Shane Love, MLA, member for Moore. I thank them for their support and contributions. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the committee staff in the forty-first Parliament: principal research officer, Ms Suzanne Veletta, and research officer, Ms Jovita Hogan. I want to thank them for their support and hard work in making sure that the committee runs as well as it does. I agree with Hon Dr Steve Thomas that we work very well together and look forward to that continuing.

As mentioned, I look forward to playing my part in progressing the important work of the committee in this Parliament. Thank you.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This first report by the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission is the annual report for the most recent financial year. It is the type of report that can easily be glossed over by members because it is a report that is not customary for committees running under the auspices of the Legislative Council. This tradition of annual reports being tabled finds its genesis in committees run under the auspices of the other place. This Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission is one such committee. This report, brief as it is, makes mention of the fact that in the last 12 months—in the last financial year—this committee tabled three reports. The previous two speakers, quite appropriately, made some comments about at least two of those reports—the fifteenth report and the seventeenth report. At this time, I do not intend to comment about the fifteenth report because I note that the very next report to be considered by this house is the second report, a report that sets out the findings and recommendations from that fifteenth report, so we can deal with those matters when we get to that report.

At this time, I want to draw to members' attention that one line contained in this report, about halfway down page 2, draws to our attention that in the last financial year, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission tabled the sixteenth report on 12 November last year. It was its *Annual Report 2019–20*. Again, this is the type of report that can be easily glossed over. When we take a moment to pick up the report and read it—it was the sixteenth report of that committee in the fortieth Parliament—we can see that one key difference between the annual report in the previous financial year and the one before us is the section that sets out ongoing matters before the committee. As at 30 June 2020, we were informed that there were a number of matters that were expressly before the committee and that the committee was recommending be continued to be pursued in the following financial year—in other words, the period from 1 July 2020 until 30 June 2021. That is exactly the period that is addressed in the first report. The very first of those ongoing matters before the committee are set out at page 9. It says —

This annual report is the final one for this Committee in the 40th Parliament. For the sake of posterity, the Committee outlines in this section several pertinent and ongoing issues which were currently before it as at 30 June 2020.

It then goes on in the report to discuss four different areas, and it is the first of those four areas that I want to draw to members' attention. Under the heading “Actions in relation to the Committee’s Report No. 2”, the committee says —

Report No. 33 of the Joint Standing Committee in the 39th Parliament was tabled on 17 November 2016. Titled *The ability of the Corruption and Crime Commission to charge and prosecute*, it contained 48 findings and two recommendations.

Due to the prorogation of the 39th Parliament and the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly on 30 January 2017, the previous Attorney General did not have the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the 39th Joint Standing Committee.

Given the importance of the recommendations made by the 39th Joint Standing Committee, this Committee resolved to bring them to attention of the current government by tabling them in the 40th Parliament. The Committee did this by tabling its Report No. 2 on 14 September 2017.

Relevant here is Recommendation 2 of this report, the intent of which was to have the Attorney General undertake a review of, and table a report on, the efficiency and effectiveness of the commencement and conduct of prosecutions arising from CCC investigations.

The Committee was advised by the Attorney General in September 2019 that the Department of Justice was assisting him in carrying out the review, which involved consulting key officeholders. However, he also advised that it was taking some time to complete. As at end June 2020, this recommendation remained outstanding.

The Committee has received evidence that the current arrangements between the CCC, State Solicitor’s Office and the Department of Public Prosecutions —

I think that should say “Director of Public Prosecutions”; nevertheless, I am quoting from this document —

to charge and prosecute based on CCC investigations were not working as well as they could be. Thus, the Committee considers this issue to be of continuing importance.

What has happened here is that the current committee in the forty-first Parliament makes no mention of this particular issue in the annual report. I want to draw to members’ attention that I have been pursuing this issue with the Attorney General for some time. As has just been outlined, it had its genesis in the thirty-ninth Parliament, let alone the fortieth Parliament, and now we are in the forty-first Parliament. The most recent occasion when I asked the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General about what was happening with this matter was on 27 May 2021. Question without notice 172, asked on 27 May this year, states —

I refer to the answer to question without notice 973, answered on 5 September 2019 in the fortieth Parliament, in which the Attorney General informed the house of his commitment to table a review into the efficiency and effectiveness of the commencement and conduct of prosecutions arising from Corruption and Crime Commission investigations by 20 September 2019.

- (1) On what date was the review report completed?
- (2) On what date was the report tabled?

The answer was —

- (1) It was completed in May 2020.
- (2) Not applicable.

In the thirty-ninth Parliament, work was done by the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission into the appropriateness of whether the Corruption and Crime Commission should be able to charge and prosecute individuals. Members who were here at that time will remember that there was a great amount of consternation around that and it ultimately manifested itself in the Supreme Court saying to the CCC, under the headship of the current commissioner, the recently reappointed Mr McKechnie, “No, you can’t do that; you don’t have the power to prosecute.” At that time in the thirty-ninth Parliament, I was chairing the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission and we looked into that matter, we took evidence and we tabled a report. One of the recommendations was that this new arrangement whereby the CCC no longer had the power to charge and prosecute and was effectively outsourcing that job to the State Solicitor’s Office to be reviewed. I followed this up in the fortieth Parliament with the new Attorney General, when I asked his representative in this place, the Leader of the House, on 5 September 2019, what was going on. The response to question without notice 973 from the Leader of the House was —

Due to the prorogation of the thirty-ninth Parliament in January 2017, the previous Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission did not have the opportunity to receive a response to this recommendation. Accordingly, an identical recommendation was included in the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, tabled on 14 September 2017. Subsequent to the tabling of that report, the Attorney General, with the agreement of the joint standing committee, committed to tabling the review within 12 months of the tabling of the CCC’s annual report for 2017–18. The CCC’s annual report for 2017–18 was tabled on 20 September 2018. The review commenced in December 2018.

The CHAIR: The question is that the report be noted.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: I want to thank the committee for this report. It is great to hear from members of the committee that the committee is working well in this Parliament. One of the matters that was raised by one of the committee members was expenditure. I just wondered whether I could ask a question that a committee member might be able to answer during this debate. With regard to the expenditure, I note that it is not a great amount of money, but I just want to ask whether that inhibits the operations of the committee at all.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: If I can just directly address the member’s concerns, the committee operates entirely on a shoestring budget. The staff are provided out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly, so it is not the case that we try to operate on \$1 908 a financial year, including staff et cetera. Yes, the committee could use more funding, and if the member is happy to take that to the Premier and the Attorney General, we would appreciate it. It is absolutely the case that the commission could use additional funding to do the job that it needs to do properly. But in terms of the operations of the committee, the funding effectively comes from the budget of the Legislative Assembly, and, frankly, the more we can make it pay for, the better!

I think we manage adequately with the budget we have. That might come into question if a significant piece of work is required to be done. A complete review of the underpinning legislation of the CCC might require additional resources, additional researchers et cetera, and that would have to be negotiated mostly with the Speaker. If the member has any influence over the Speaker of the place that shall not be named, any support he could give us in that regard would be appreciated. The work of the committee to date simply reflects that small amount of stationery. It is not the bulk of the cost of the operations of the committee. I understand that that is just the way it has always been done.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Thank you, Mr Chair, for the opportunity to make a contribution to this item, the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, *Annual report 2020–21*. From the outset, I thank committee members from the fortieth Parliament—Hon Jim Chown and Hon Alison Xamon from the Legislative Council and Mr Matthew Hughes and Ms Margaret Quirk, who was the chair of the joint standing committee, from the Legislative Assembly. I also wish to congratulate the honourable Leader of the Opposition, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, deputy chair, from the Legislative Council and, of course, my parliamentary colleague from the Labor Party Hon Klara Andric, who is a new member of this very important joint standing committee that is providing oversight of the Corruption and Crime Commission. I want to acknowledge the now chair of the joint standing committee, Mr Matthew Hughes, the member for Kalamunda; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Mr Shane Love; and, of course, the committee staff, who provide very important assistance. As members of this place all know, when we work on a committee, we rely heavily on the assistance provided by the committee staff and clerks.

It is important to look at the work that the Corruption and Crime Commission does. I want to echo the words of Hon Klara Andric in congratulating Hon Mr John McKechnie on his reappointment as the Corruption and Crime Commissioner. I will go back in history and draw members' attention to the important work that the CCC has done since it was established in 2004. The commission was established with the aim to improve the integrity of, and reduce the incidence of misconduct in, the Western Australian public sector and to assist the Western Australia Police Force to combat and reduce the incidence of organised crime. I am looking at the CCC website for this information. It is important that we acknowledge the important work that the commission does in ensuring integrity in the public service and in our political discourse. As we have seen in other democracies, trust is absolutely a fundamental pillar of our society. If we can uphold the public's trust in carrying out our duties, we will build support in our community, political establishments, judiciary and police force. Any incident that erodes that trust is very bad for our community. Therefore, I think the CCC has a very important role in our community and our democracy.

At the same time, the strong standing committee on the CCC also provides a very important function. I will read the committee's terms of reference to emphasise the importance of its functions, which are to —

- a) monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission
- b) inquire into, and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector
- c) carry out any other functions conferred on the committee under the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003.

As Hon Klara Andric mentioned in her contribution, the joint standing committee was established by legislation. The function of the committee is enshrined in its terms of reference. As I said, it provides the very important function of ensuring the integrity of our democratic system. It is our mechanism to fight against corruption and misconduct. It is really important for all of us to reflect on the work involved in the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. That work can be very difficult, as we have seen on many occasions, including during the last Parliament. I remember Hon Alison Xamon giving contributions on a number of reports that she was involved in. She was definitely a very passionate member of this place and a passionate advocate for her constituents. I take this opportunity to acknowledge her and her work in carrying out her duties as a member for East Metropolitan Region in 2009 and 2013 and also as a member for North Metropolitan Region between 2017 and 2021. Who knows, she may return to this place in 2025.

I acknowledge the good work that the Corruption and Crime Commission has done over the past 17 years. I also acknowledge the members of the fortieth Parliament who were involved in the joint standing committee on the CCC.

I want to acknowledge the number of hearings, deliberative meetings and tabled reports of the joint standing committee. I have a copy of the fifteenth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, which was tabled in the fortieth Parliament, titled *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*. It is the substantive report of the second report of the current Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, which was tabled last week by the Leader of the Opposition, who is on urgent parliamentary business. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, the standing committee had 11 deliberative meetings and nine formal evidence hearings with 26 witnesses and it tabled three reports. It is important that we acknowledge the work done by the joint standing committee. I add my best wishes to the Legislative Council members of the committee in carrying out their duties in the forty-first Parliament. It is important that we have a functioning agency that fights crime and misconduct but, at the same time, it is important that Parliament has a joint standing committee that provides oversight of the agency that helps us to ensure integrity.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The chronology that is relevant at this time begins in the thirty-ninth Parliament. The key date is 17 November 2016. That is the day that the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission of the thirty-ninth Parliament recommended that this arrangement with prosecutions be reviewed. The Supreme Court

said to Commissioner John McKechnie that he did not have the power to prosecute. He was told that he needed to cease and desist from acting outside the powers that were granted to him by the Parliament of Western Australia. That is effectively what the Supreme Court said to Commissioner McKechnie and why we undertook an inquiry in the thirty-ninth Parliament to ascertain whether this type of power to prosecute should be granted to the CCC. The arrangement that was developed at the time was for the CCC to outsource the work to the State Solicitor's Office. In the thirty-ninth Parliament, we said that it needed to be reviewed by the Attorney General within 12 months of the annual report having been tabled.

In the fortieth Parliament, the committee, of which I was not a member, agreed. It felt so strongly about it that it re-tabled that particular recommendation on 14 September 2017. The due date would be September 2018. During the 2018 calendar year, the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley, realised that he had run out of time to comply with the requirements of the joint standing committee. He renegotiated a new deadline with that committee in the fortieth Parliament. The new deadline was to be 20 September 2019. In other words, the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley, bought himself an extra year. He said to the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission that he knew that the review was due to be completed in September 2017 but he asked for an extra year. Essentially, according to the answers provided by the government in the Parliament, the committee said yes. The time to provide the review was extended. He negotiated a new deal, and the review would be done by 20 September 2019.

On 12 November 2020, more than a year later, a report from the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission told us that the recommendation remained outstanding. The report before us starts on 1 July 2020. That is the reporting period. Up until the day before that, 30 June 2020, the committee told us that the recommendation remained outstanding. That language means that the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley, had not done his job. Remember, he was supposed to do his job by September 2018. He asked for an extension of one year and was granted it. We found out that he still had not complied by 30 June last year. This is no trivial matter. The committee told us that it received evidence that the current arrangements between the CCC, the State Solicitor's Office and the public prosecutor were not working as well as they could be. After all that time, the most recent information that we have is that it was not working well. When I asked the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General in May this year what was happening with this matter, the response from the arrogant Attorney General was that it was not applicable. I asked: on what date was the report tabled? The answer was "not applicable".

We have a requirement by a joint standing committee, comprising two members of Parliament from the other place and two from this place, that a piece of work be done by the Attorney General of the day by September 2018. The Attorney General said he could not comply with that time frame and he asked for another year. The committee agreed to that. The date was extended to September 2019. Here we are now—in 2021, mind you—with the Attorney General saying to the Legislative Council that this is not applicable. When will the review be done?

The last Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission told us that the arrangements were not working as well as they could be. It went on to say —

Thus, the Committee considers this issue to be of continuing importance.

This is the point of these annual reports. A committee in the last Parliament alerted a committee in the new Parliament to watch out for this stuff and keep an eye on the tricky Attorney General. The committee was told that he will tell it that he needs an extra 12 months. He will not comply with the time frames that it gives him. It should keep an eye on him. That is the subtext of what the report says. Now we have the first report of the committee in front of us. Under "Reports tabled", it simply states —

Annual Report 2019-20, Report 16, tabled in both Houses on 12 November 2020

That is a statement of fact. What is happening with the matters that that committee said were ongoing and needed continual monitoring because they were of continuing importance? It would be good if somebody within government could provide a response on behalf of the Attorney General and let us know what is happening with this matter. Does the Attorney General in the McGowan government have any intention whatsoever to comply with the undertakings that were previously negotiated with the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission? Does the McGowan government and the Attorney General have that much disdain for the committee, the Parliament and Margaret Quirk, MLA, the chair of that committee in the last Parliament, and the recommendation that her committee made to the government to generously provide the Attorney General with an extension of time to September 2019, that they continue not to comply with that? That review is now almost three years overdue. The report was re-tabled on 14 September 2017. The new deadline was 20 September 2019. That was the extended date. If we assume for a moment that the extension was exactly 12 months—it will be approximately 12 months—that means that we are five days away from the review of the Attorney General of Western Australia being three years overdue.

What is the substance of the matter? At the heart of this matter is whether it is appropriate for the Corruption and Crime Commission to continue to use the State Solicitor's Office to facilitate its prosecutions. According to the previous committee, that arrangement is not working well. We are no further informed because the current committee

has not updated us on that. More importantly, the real criticism sits with the Attorney General and the McGowan government, which is almost three years overdue in providing information. Is it working well as far as the McGowan government is concerned? Maybe it does not have time for all these important undertakings that it has provided to the Parliament because it is too busy running around dealing with other priorities, like electoral reform and the like—things that it specifically said prior to the election were not on the agenda but all of a sudden have become a top priority. It should not worry about its commitments to the Parliament of Western Australia. It should not worry about its undertakings to the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. They are mere inconveniences as far as the arrogant McGowan government is concerned.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON: I rise to make a brief contribution on the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission's *Annual report 2020–21*. Given that I do not represent the Attorney General in this place and therefore it is not my portfolio, I have not paid much attention to annual reports from the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission previously. I find it curious, in a sense. From having previously been the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs, a couple of Parliaments ago, I am aware of that committee reporting to Parliament annually. From time to time, that committee was sent petitions from the Legislative Council for the committee to inquire into, and then after the inquiry was undertaken and the petition was closed, the committee reported to the Legislative Council once a year and outlined the various petitions that had come before it, the actions taken by the committee and whether petitions had been closed or what had happened to them. That was a thick document, because we would have 20 or 30, or indeed 40 or 50, petitions before us.

I find the report before us curious. I was trying to look briefly at the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly, because obviously this committee operates under the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly, to work out where it says that an annual report needs to be made and tabled in the house. I note, of course, that if a report is tabled in the Assembly, the practice is always that it is tabled in this place too. If the chair is in that house, the deputy chair is in this house and they both present a report to be tabled.

Page 1 states —

Consistent with the practice of the Legislative Assembly, this report includes statistics and publicly available information relating work of the committee in the 40th Parliament.

Under “Committee functions”, the report states —

Under Legislative Assembly Standing Order 289 it is the function of the committee to:

- a) monitor and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission
- b) inquire into, and report to Parliament on the means by which corruption prevention practices may be enhanced within the public sector
- c) carry out any other functions conferred on the committee under the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003.

Perhaps the report before us falls under the first committee function listed.

It is not a very lengthy report and it refers to the hearings that were undertaken by the committee in that last annual report year. I note, of course, that the committee has changed from the fortieth Parliament to the forty-first Parliament, which we are in now. It identifies the three reports that it tabled in the fortieth Parliament and one, of course, is *If not the CCC ... then where? An examination of the Corruption and Crime Commission's oversight of excessive use of force allegations against members of the WA Police Force*. Of course, at some later stage, we will have a debate on an updated report, the second report, in relation to that issue.

But I am perplexed at things in the report. For example, the committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly, so it needs to apply to the Speaker for expenditure. It says that for major expenditure, the committee is required on a case-by-case basis to seek approval, and it is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker. The report lists a number of expenditure items on page 3 of the report where it refers to printing, which is \$1 549; couriers, \$283; and miscellaneous, \$76, totalling \$1 908. I find it extraordinary that for a committee to simply print the report on a matter that has most likely been referred to it by one of the houses, or on an issue that it has decided to tackle on its own motion, it has to go to the Speaker to seek approval to pay for couriers or indeed for printing. Perhaps I am misplaced and this is for only major expenditure; printing and couriers and miscellaneous may well not be major and, therefore, that money can be spent without the Speaker's approval. I do find it extraordinary that a committee of this Parliament—it is a committee of both houses—has to undertake such activity to carry out its work.

Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition is away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. I will read the draft *Hansard* when it comes out tomorrow, but I was not sure whether he said in an earlier contribution that the Corruption and Crime Commissioner had suggested that the commission was not properly resourced or did not

get the appropriate funding to carry out the work that it needs to do. As a minister in this place, or the minister on duty this afternoon, I will first undertake to read *Hansard* when it is available, and then I will undertake to follow up the matter, if that was indeed what the Leader of the Opposition said. It is funny because I had thought earlier that he had said this agency was able to spend what it needed to spend to undertake the course of action that it needed to carry out the laws of the state. I will follow that up.

I go back to the annual report. It identifies, as I said, three reports that were tabled in the last Parliament. The first one I spoke about was *If not the CCC ... then where?* The annual report was tabled in November of that year, so I note that this year it has been tabled earlier than the previous one. The third one, *Meaningful reform overdue: The Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*, was tabled in the Assembly on 19 November and in the Legislative Council on 26 November. I note that page 2 of the annual report does suggest that the committee will table a follow-up report in relation to *If not the CCC ... then where?* requesting a government response to the recommendations in this report. I note that because of prorogation of the previous Parliament, a response had not been provided by the date that ordinarily it would have been provided by had Parliament not been prorogued. I am certainly happy to undertake, on behalf of the committee, to raise the matter and bring it to the attention of the Attorney General. His parliamentary secretary is in this place so he will, of course, know that the second report has been tabled, but I will certainly bring it to his attention and ensure he is aware that a follow-up or a response is needed by government. This report in front of me has piqued my interest, and I will certainly do some further work to find out whether there are other reasons why a report like this needs to be tabled in this place annually, and whether there is anything else of interest in the report and indeed the dealings and the work of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission.

I raised some points in response to Hon Dr Steve Thomas's contribution. Obviously, he was away from the chamber on urgent parliamentary business. I said that I would read *Hansard* tomorrow, but had the member suggested that the commissioner in a hearing—I presume a public hearing—said that the commission did not have enough resources to undertake its work?

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: No; I suggested they could always use more to do additional work.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Okay. I was not sure whether the member suggested in his contribution that this agency could actually keep doing work because it was able to spend beyond the parameters of a normal agency.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: No. I noted that in the budget there was, I think, a \$300 000 addition to the operating of the whole thing. But like every agency that deals with compliance, there's always more that you could do.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: That is what I was trying to clarify.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I would not lose too much sleep over it.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: No, but in your absence I also said that I will make sure that the Attorney General is aware of the reports that are before us.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: There are only a couple of minutes left, so for members of the committee I will just take the opportunity to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his response—I do appreciate that—and to pass on my thoughts and congratulations to the committee. It seems to be working very well.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am pleased that the Deputy Leader of the House is going to take up this matter with the Attorney General. I thank him for that. What has happened with the Attorney General is completely unacceptable. It has taken nearly three years for something to be done about this. If it takes the power of the Deputy Leader of the House in this place to see some form of response from the Attorney General —

Hon Stephen Dawson: If only I had power, honourable member.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We will see what happens. I know that when the deputy leader says that he is going to take on some matter, he will do it. Past history tells us that to be the case. I look forward to the response we get from the Attorney General, in particular, why we have had the massive, extraordinary delay. Not everything can simply be landed at the feet of the COVID-19 pandemic. If it was good enough in 2018 to renegotiate an extension with the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission for a new deadline in 2019, the question that needs to be asked is: why was further renegotiation not undertaken? I look forward to hearing about that in due course.

Just quickly, in the remaining time that we have, I want to acknowledge that during the reporting period in question, there was the untimely passing of the previous Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. We had an incredibly talented individual and experienced former judicial officer in Hon Michael Murray. He served with distinction in the role as Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. He was not afraid to take on the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, if needed, exactly as is required under the statute, and I want to acknowledge that.

Consideration of report adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, on motion by Hon Stephen Dawson.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE*Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from 14 September on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Mental Health) —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 534A–D (2021–22 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 9 September 2021.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.13 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on the motion to note the budget papers for this year. I will not wax lyrical or lecture on economic issues or talk about specific items necessarily in all the budget papers. I want to focus my remarks on a particular area for which I have a passion and in which I am keen to see improvements. I know that the government has made some commitments in the area of mental health. It is incredibly important and perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing our community and the generation of my children. I do not think that any generation prior to this has really faced the challenges of mental health that this generation faces and the issues that then presents them in their life now and as they grow older. It is a challenge for us as a state and as a nation—it is not a challenge unique to Western Australia—in how we address mental health issues and what exactly we put in place to try to do that.

We all know that mental health services require inpatient beds and those types of resources to be provided, but, ultimately, we all need to aim for those resources not being needed. We need to keep the vast majority of people out of the system in the first place. The great challenge is how we deal with the mental health issues facing our society and how we keep people out of the mental health system so that we have a healthier society. I am sure that the minister is no doubt very passionate about this as well and that is the reason a sizable chunk of money has been allocated in the budget towards mental health.

I want to start by acknowledging that I am not a doctor, a psychologist or a psychiatrist. I am a dad, a brother and a son. Over two decades, I have watched various close family members and children as they have struggled through their mental health issues. It is that experience that has informed me today in talking about these issues. I have seen various aspects of the system over the years at a regional and a metropolitan level, and with adults and children, and that is what I want to talk about today. As I said at the start, this is really about our kids and ensuring that we do all we can to address this crisis of mental health that besets the current generation of children and to keep them out of that system.

Over the years, there have been a number of reports into mental health. These challenges that we face are not new. Some of the challenges that we face today are indeed greater than previously. The number of children, and people in general, who require assistance has certainly changed as a result of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. But our societal changes have also led to increased pressures on our kids that they would not otherwise face, and that, in turn, has led to an increase in mental health issues. Members would be aware that I am a dad to five amazing girls and, by happenstance, they attend five different schools. I have my fair share of experience with how different schools manage mental health and how they deal with our kids when they are going through these particular issues. Some schools are better than others. It is not always about resourcing; I am not sure exactly what it comes down to. In particular, I acknowledge the amazing people at John Curtin College of the Arts who were unbelievable when my eldest daughter was really struggling last year. I have to pass on my heartfelt thanks to them for the amazing work that they did in helping her to manage her issues and for providing incredible support for her in that situation.

A number of reports have been written. No doubt many members are well aware of these reports, but I feel it is important to get on the record many of the recommendations of those reports and the common themes because it is incredibly important that we understand that those issues are not new, they are not unique, and we must do all we can to address them.

On 14 August 2019 the Western Australian Auditor General released her fourth report of 2019–20 titled *Access to state-managed adult mental health services*. One of the more interesting parts of this—more for background, I guess—was some information provided in the executive summary. I will read it into *Hansard* —

Mental health issues range from severe and persistent mental distress to mild and occasional incidents. Severe mental illness can be debilitating, and can require ongoing care and support. It often increases a person's vulnerability to homelessness, unemployment, poverty, discrimination and isolation. Lower levels of distress can range from people needing to seek their own intensive treatment with a clinician to needing low intensity care every so often.

In 2017–18 the National Health Survey found that around 1 in 5 Australians, or 4.8 million people, had a mental health or behavioural condition that year. This had risen from 4 million people in 2014–15. Almost half of the population experience a mental health disorder at some point in their life. Anxiety and affective disorders like depression are the most common mental health disorders.

Efficient and effective mental health services should help people stay in the least intensive care possible to manage their condition and then provide accessible pathways to more intensive care when they need it. This approach is beneficial for people who seek care, and is also more cost effective.

The delivery of mental health care in Western Australia is complex. It involves Commonwealth and State government effort as well as individually-funded services, from general practitioners to hospital care and private professional care.

As I said earlier, a number of reviews have been undertaken. I have four reports in front of me today, going back as far as 2012, which I will use at various times in my contribution to highlight some of the issues. The key point is that many of those reports have disturbingly similar findings and recommendations. Some of the problems we are facing are not that new; it is probably the scale and acceleration of mental health issues in our community that is a real worry. In 2019, the Chief Psychiatrist of Western Australia, Dr Nathan Gibson, released a report titled *Targeted review: Homicides allegedly committed by people who have had contact with, or were being treated by, WA mental health services during 2018*. It is a very good report and is particularly interesting in that it shows some of the issues and challenges within our mental health system. One of the points made in the foreword is —

What we have seen from previous reviews is that their recommendations have rarely resulted in sustainable change.

It is important that the changes we make are sustainable and are continued, that they are not determined by budget cycles as much as anything and that the changes that are made are made for the long term. I hope that is the commitment from the Minister for Mental Health and that any changes made to our mental health system are sustainable and sustained for the longer term.

Some of the common findings of these reports are that the system is under considerable pressure. Even going back to 2012, an infamous report in the mental health world is that of Professor Bryant Stokes. The Stokes review of 2012 makes the point —

In the context of limited resources, the mental health system is under considerable stress, particularly in relation to staff already stretched, endeavouring to adhere to formal policies, procedures, legislative requirements and their own professional expectations and the expectations of patients and carers.

That is not a new problem. In 2012 Professor Stokes talked about the challenges facing the system then. I move on from there to the report by the Chief Psychiatrist, *Targeted review: Homicides allegedly committed by people who have had contact with, or were being treated by, WA mental health services during 2018*, which states —

The Review found that the mental health system is under significant pressure, across Emergency Departments, specialist clinical community mental health services and inpatient facilities.

It is a similar finding to that of Professor Stokes in 2012. Further to that, the Chief Psychiatrist in another targeted review in December last year into the tragic death of Ms Kate Savage, titled *Targeted review: Chief Psychiatrist's review into the treatment of Ms Kate Savage by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services* states that development has not kept pace and that has placed significant pressure on clinical staff and the Western Australian community. That common theme of a system under pressure is, sadly, not a new problem. It has been under pressure for many years. What we are seeing now is that increase in mental health issues in our society and the great challenge that presents for a system that has been under pressure for many, many years. It obviously adds to the pressure that exists when more people are coming into the system.

The second key theme of those reports is the lack of a coordinated and strategic approach. I will go through some of the comments from the reviews on this issue. In the 2012 Stokes review, Professor Stokes said —

This Review notes that within the hospital and clinic situations there appears to be an absence of a single point of authority with a described responsibility for accountability for patient care and for consistency of process and practices. Best practice demands clinical and corporate governance remain separate entities, while a single point of authority must ensure linkages across a mental health system to deliver patient-focused care.

The Auditor General in 2019 when talking around this lack of coordination and strategic approach made the observation —

Although the MHC has developed a number of strategies for engagement and service design, it has not yet developed a system-wide implementation plan or funding strategy that would support a coordinated approach by all entities. This has led to ad-hoc changes to services, with limited progress in overall mental health service reform.

There is a clear message that the system is fragmented and there is a lack of coordination, which is one of the key issues that faces our mental health system. In 2020, the Chief Psychiatrist's *Targeted review: Homicides allegedly committed by people who have had contact with, or were being treated by, WA mental health services during 2018* states —

Two of the themes identified above, namely the **lack of a long-term perspective in delivering care** and the **lack of coordination of care** appear to be part of a common problem; the 'fragmentation' or 'siloing' of treatment and care, with each service focusing on its own particular part in a patient's 'journey', with little attention to the other parts of the system. Hence, we see a cross-sectional approach to assessment

and formulation, with little learning from a patient's earlier treatment history, failure to recognize the patient or carer's lived experience, inadequate recognition of the needs and pitfalls for transfer of care or for longer-term planning. In the words of the independent investigation into the care and treatment of Daniel Gonzales ...

We are again talking about the fragmented system we have at the moment.

There is another quite important issue in respect of health spending in general and the desire to make things easier to digest and understand, and that is the metric that is often used when talking about funding for mental health: beds. It is a metric that people understand; people understand what a hospital or mental health bed means, but is it right to focus on beds rather than services? That is one of the other common themes identified in these reports. The focus on beds rather than services is actually more of a problem for the provision of mental health services.

I turn to the Auditor General's fourth report of 2019–20, *Access to state-managed adult mental health services*.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 3935.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

RECOVERY PLAN — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

716. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Treasurer:

I refer to the answer to question without notice 693, asked yesterday, 14 September 2021, on the nearly \$9 billion budgeted COVID recovery initiatives.

- (1) Will the Treasurer please provide a breakdown of the \$1.541 billion budgeted for infrastructure spending as a COVID response by project?
- (2) Over what time frame will those projects be delivered?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The main part of the answer to (1) is in tabular form. It lists the projects, the amount and the total infrastructure spend. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

(1)–(2)

Infrastructure	\$m
Building Schools for the Future	493
Transport	267
Investing in Government Assets	222
Rebuilding TAFE	177
Building Community Infrastructure	171
Sporting Facilities Package	148
Maintenance Blitz	64
Total Infrastructure	1,541

Due to the significant scale of the McGowan government's investment in infrastructure throughout Western Australia, it is not possible to provide a time frame for individual projects in the limited time provided. Questions about specific projects should be put on notice.

NET DEBT — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

717. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Treasurer:

I refer to the 2021–22 budget papers, which indicate that total public sector net debt is expected to drop to \$32 billion this financial year but rise to \$35 billion by 2023–24 and \$36 billion by 2024–25.

- (1) What was the total public sector net debt when the McGowan government came to power in March 2017?
- (2) Is total public sector net debt budgeted to be higher or lower in 2024–25 than the level the McGowan government inherited in 2017; and, if so, by how much?
- (3) Has the government therefore paid off debt responsibly, just like a mortgage, as per its 2017 commitment?
- (4) Why has the Treasurer not paid down debt during the biggest state-based economic boom in our nation's history, which has given the government \$15 billion worth of surpluses over five financial years?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

It is not even Thursday! I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Treasurer.

- (1) Under the previous Liberal–National government, net debt was budgeted to reach \$43.7 billion in 2019–20.
- (2) Debt is more than \$11 billion lower in 2021–22 than budgeted under the previous Liberal–National government, and it will remain lower across the forward estimates.
- (3) Yes, for the third year in a row, net debt is expected to decline in 2021–22. As Hon Dr Steve Thomas told the Legislative Council on 5 August 2021, net debt —

...has not risen to the point that was predicted under the previous government ... I acknowledge that. Some of that money has gone into not going into further levels of debt ...
- (4) Debt is more than \$11 billion lower in 2021–22 than what was budgeted under the previous government. In stark contrast, the previous Liberal–National government increased debt from \$3.6 billion when it came to office, to \$43.7 billion, with the largest operating and cash deficits in the state’s history.

BUCCANEER ARCHIPELAGO MARINE PARK**718. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the establishment of the proposed Buccaneer Archipelago marine park.

- (1) What proportion of the proposed BAMP will recreational and professional fishers be excluded from accessing?
- (2) Have negotiations commenced with affected fishers regarding compensation as a consequence of loss of access?
- (3) If yes to (2), when will those negotiations be completed?
- (4) Has the state undertaken a social and economic impact assessment on the local and regional economy specific to the loss of access by fishers?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer on behalf of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries.

- (1) Zoning arrangements, including areas where recreational and commercial fishing access is excluded, are yet to be determined. Following receipt of public submissions, amendments to the draft BAMP management arrangements, including the zoning scheme, are being further considered. This process is being led by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.
- (2) The compensation process for the BAMP will be triggered by gazettal of section 62 notices under the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Impacts are not able to be determined until the zoning scheme is finalised.

MINISTERIAL EXPERT COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM**719. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs:**

This question was submitted at 11.00 am, and things have moved on a little, but I will ask it as submitted. I refer to the final report of the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform.

- (1) Has the government commenced drafting the bill that will give effect to the report’s recommendations?
- (2) If yes to (1), who has assisted with the drafting process?
- (3) Will the government consult with regional communities before introducing the bill?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: Why are you laughing?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: Because you raised the issue of when you issued this question, and as you pointed out, time has moved on. I am pointing out the irony of it.

Hon Martin Aldridge interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order, members. The parliamentary secretary will continue with his answer.

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: Thank you, President.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Parliamentary Counsel’s Office drafted the bill.

- (3) All Western Australians were consulted via the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform, which elicited 184 submissions from across Western Australia, most of which were published online. The Attorney General announced the review and called for submissions on 30 April 2021. Submissions were open to interested members of the public on Friday, 30 April 2021. Advertising was placed into *The West Australian* on 1, 28 and 29 May 2021, calling for submissions. The committee discussion paper was published online and sent to regional news outlets on 14 May 2021. Submissions closed on 8 June 2021.

SEXUAL ASSAULT LAWS — RECOMMENDATIONS — COMMISSIONER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

720. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the Attorney General's answer on 17 June 2021 to my question without notice 300, in which he advised that a working group had been convened that included the Director of Public Prosecutions and relevant agencies; and further, to his joint media release of 4 September 2021, in which it was announced that a sexual violence prevention strategy would be guided by a reference group.

- (1) Is the working group and the reference group one and the same?
- (2) Who are the members of the working group; and, if different, who are the members of the reference group?
- (3) Will the Attorney General table the terms of reference or similar documents setting out the objectives of the working group; and, if different, the reference group?
- (4) Is it intended that the work of these groups will result in the publication of a report?
- (5) If yes to (4), when is this scheduled to occur?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide the following response on behalf of the Attorney General.

- (1) The working group and reference group are separate.
- (2) The working group is made up of representatives from the following agencies: the Department of Justice, Department of Communities, Department of Health, Department of Education, WA Police Force and Director of Public Prosecutions. The reference group will be chaired by Nicole Lambert, chief executive officer at Allambee Counselling and vice-chairperson of the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence. However, the membership of the reference group is still being determined.
- (3) The terms of reference for both groups are not yet finalised.
- (4) Given the early stage of the project, the sensitive nature of submissions and the potential privacy considerations, a decision is yet to be made on the best way of communicating any sexual violence strategy work product with the public.
- (5) The first meeting of the reference group and a sector consultation forum are scheduled for October 2021. Statewide community consultation for the strategy is due to begin in early 2022. An interim report will be produced in 2022. Victims and survivors are able to use the following email address to tell the project team of their experiences: sexualviolencestrategy@justice.wa.gov.au.

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH SERVICE

721. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 531 asked on 18 August 2021 regarding the business case submitted to the Department of Health by the Child and Adolescent Health Service seeking a continuation of funding to employ additional paediatricians and allied health staff as part of the 2021–22 state budget process. Given that the 2021–22 state budget has now been released, can the minister advise the total amount of additional funding that was sought by CAHS as part of this business case?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

As was the case in previous governments, budget submissions are cabinet-in-confidence and therefore are subject to cabinet confidentiality. But good try!

PRISONS — TAFE COLLEGES

722. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer the minister to Western Australia's 16 public prisons.

- (1) Do any prisons have a partnership with any TAFE colleges?
- (2) If yes to (1), which prisons and with which TAFE colleges?
- (3) If yes to (1), which courses are provided for prisoners?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

On behalf of the Minister for Regional Development, I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Corrective Services, I provide the following answer.

- (1) Yes. TAFE colleges have well-established working relationships with prisons in Western Australia to coordinate the delivery of training to prisoners when the training is provided directly by the TAFE colleges.
- (2) See the response at attachment 1, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

List of public prisons with WA TAFE delivery reported in 2021 (as at end July)

Public prison name	2021 delivery reported by				
	North Metropolitan TAFE	South Metropolitan TAFE	North Regional TAFE	Central Regional TAFE	South Regional TAFE
Bandyup Women's Prison	x	x		x	
Boronia Pre-release Centre for Women	x	x		x	
Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison		x			
Casuarina Prison	x	x		x	
Karnet prison farm		x		x	
Wooroloo prison farm				x	
Bunbury Prison Farm		x			x
Pardelup Prison Farm					x
Albany Regional prison					x
Roebourne Regional prison			x		
West Kimberley Regional prison			x		
Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison				x	
Broome Regional Prison/Wyndham Work Camp			x		
Greenough Regional Prison				x	

- (3) See the response at attachment 2, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

List of courses delivered in public prisons by WA TAFE colleges in 2021 (as at end July)

52773WA Certificate I in Leadership
52807WA Certificate I in Industrial Skills (Entry Level Training)
52824WA Certificate II in Building and Construction (Pathway — Trades) [Bricklaying and Blocklaying Pre-Apprenticeship]
52832WA Course in Underpinning Skills for Industry Qualifications
AHC20316 Certificate II in Production Horticulture
AHC20416 Certificate II in Horticulture
AHC21016 Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management
AHC21216 Certificate II in Rural Operations
AHC30116 Certificate III in Agriculture
AHC30616 Certificate III in Production Horticulture
AHC30716 Certificate III in Horticulture
AHC31416 Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management
AUR20516 Certificate II in Automotive Servicing Technology
BSB10115 Certificate I in Business
BSB30115 Certificate III in Business
BSB30415 Certificate III in Business Administration
BSB42618 Certificate IV in New Small Business

CHC32015 Certificate III in Community Services
CHC33015 Certificate III in Individual Support
CHC42015 Certificate IV in Community Services
CHC43015 Certificate IV in Ageing Support
CPC10111 Certificate I in Construction
CPC20211 Certificate II in Construction Pathways
CUA20715 Certificate II in Visual Arts
FNS30317 Certificate III in Accounts Administration
FNS40217 Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping
FWP20116 Certificate II in Forest Growing and Management
FWP30216 Certificate III in Harvesting and Haulage
ICP20115 Certificate II in Printing and Graphic Arts (General)
ICT10115 Certificate I in Information, Digital Media and Technology
ICT20115 Certificate II in Information, Digital Media and Technology
MEM20105 Certificate II in Engineering
MEM20413 Certificate II in Engineering Pathways
MSF20313 Certificate II in Furniture Making
RII20215 Certificate II in Surface Extraction Operations
RII20715 Certificate II in Civil Construction
RII30415 Certificate III in Resource Processing
RII30815 Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations
SHB20216 Certificate II in Salon Assistant
SHB40115 Certificate IV in Beauty Therapy
SIR20216 Certificate II in Retail Services
SIS30315 Certificate III in Fitness
SIT20316 Certificate II in Hospitality
SIT20416 Certificate II in Kitchen Operations
SIT30616 Certificate III in Hospitality
SIT30816 Certificate III in Commercial Cookery
TLI20119 Certificate II in Logistics
TLI20419 Certificate II in Warehousing Operations
TLI21616 Certificate II in Warehousing Operations
TLI32416 Certificate III in Logistics
TLI42016 Certificate IV in Logistics

PUBLIC HOUSING — WAITING LIST

723. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the public housing waitlist.

- (1) How many applications were on the public housing waitlist at the end of August 2021?
- (2) How many individuals do the applications in (1) represent?
- (3) How many applications were on the public housing priority waitlist at the end of August?
- (4) How many individuals do the applications in (3) represent?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) As at 31 August 2021, there were 17 480 applications on the public housing waitlist, representing 30 394 individuals.
- (3)–(4) As at 31 August 2021, of the 17 480 applications on the public housing waitlist, 3 548 were priority listed, representing 7 065 individuals.

WUNDOWIE BUSH FIRE SERVICE STATION

724. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to reports relating to the urgent need to construct a new bush fire service station at Wundowie.

- (1) Did the Shire of Northam make application under the local government grants scheme to construct a suitable and safe fire station for volunteers and the community?
- (2) Was the application for a grant under the scheme rejected by the state government; and, if so, on what grounds was the rejection made?
- (3) Will the minister visit the facilities currently occupied by the Wundowie bush fire service to understand its urgent need?
- (4) What was the number and total value of applications under the local government grants scheme for 2021–22 by —
 - (a) grants accepted; and
 - (b) grants rejected?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2)–(3) The application was received by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and progressed to the local government grants scheme bush fire service capital grants committee for consideration. This is a process independent of the minister. The BFSCGC considered the request and determined that there were higher competing priorities than an additional standalone facility in Wundowie. It was recognised that Wundowie and surrounds were, and still remain, well serviced by the Wundowie Volunteer Bush Fire and Rescue Service based just 200 metres away from the BFB's interim facility, as well as over half a dozen bush fire brigades, with the closest being eight minutes away in Bakers Hill.
- (4)
 - (a) Twenty-one local government bush fire service applications totalling \$5.7 million and 14 State Emergency Service applications totalling \$1.3 million were approved.
 - (b) Ninety local government bush fire service applications totalling \$29.4 million and 16 State Emergency Service applications totalling \$1.2 million were not approved.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION AND WA HEALTH — SERVICE AGREEMENTS

725. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the 2021–22 WA state budget, and specifically the service agreements between the Mental Health Commission and WA Health. What is the cost of each service listed below as provided under the total Mental Health Commission budget —

- (a) East Metropolitan Health Service;
- (b) North Metropolitan Health Service;
- (c) South Metropolitan Health Service;
- (d) Child and Adolescent Health Service; and
- (e) WA Country Health Service?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (a)–(e) In 2021–22, the Mental Health Commission has been provided with a total of \$848.477 million towards the funding of inpatient and non-admitted outpatient service delivery agreements. The MHC is currently finalising the funding allocations with the health service providers listed.

FORESTRY — HARDWOOD — IMPORTATION

726. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

- (1) Has the state government modelled how much hardwood timber will have to be imported because of fundamental structural changes to the timber industry; and, if not, why not?
- (2) If yes to (1), how much hardwood is expected to be imported per annum?
- (3) What countries are timber imports originating from?

- (4) What safeguards has the state government established to ensure that hardwood timber imports are not originating from countries that engage in unsustainable forestry practices, including the destruction of pristine natural habitats for critically endangered species?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1)–(3) Records around importation are held by the federal government. There has been a steady reduction over the past 20 years of jarrah timber in not only the use of native forest timber, but also the availability. It is not used as a construction timber in any great way anymore in Western Australia and it has been facing competition in its traditional markets of flooring and decking by imports and substitute engineered products. The introduction of the bushfire attack level rating for construction in bushfire-prone areas has also limited its use in recent years in WA.
- (4) There are Australian-grown alternatives already available in WA. Rules around the importation of timber products are within the jurisdiction of the federal government and questions on these matters should be directed accordingly.

HOUSING — SPOT PURCHASING — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

727. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the government's budgetary announcement of the allocation of \$40 million for a program of spot purchasing for social housing in both regional and metropolitan areas of Western Australia.

- (1) What proportion of the \$40 million program has been allocated to —
- (a) regional WA;
 - (b) the south west; and
 - (c) the great southern?
- (2) What are the purchasing criteria applicable to this program?
- (3) Who will have oversight and final determination of the acquisitions of the spot purchasing program?
- (4) Given the billions of dollars above budget that the government has received in revenue for two and a half years, why has the government waited until now to act on the existing housing crisis?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(4) The McGowan government is investing \$2.1 billion into social housing over the next four years, which includes the recently announced record investment of \$875 million as part of the 2021–22 state budget. This is the single largest one-off investment in social housing in the state's history and will provide an immediate boost to social housing. The \$40 million funding commitment announced as part of the 2021–22 state budget is only part of the spot purchase program.

The current spot purchase program allocation is as follows —

- (a) regional WA, \$11.6 million;
- (b) the south west, \$1.3 million; and
- (c) the great southern, \$1.7 million.

The spot purchase program has been designed to ensure that properties identified for consideration are aligned to the priority waitlist and regional demand and reflect a long-term value-for-money investment for government.

Property acquisitions are approved in line with the Department of Communities' financial delegation framework and managed through a program control group within the department.

QUBE HOLDINGS — MARITIME UNION OF AUSTRALIA

728. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Ports:

I refer to the current industrial dispute between the Maritime Union of Australia and Qube Holdings, which is delaying the unloading and delivery of millions of dollars of farm equipment, which is vital for this year's grain harvest, as well as critical mining equipment and parts.

- (1) Given the length of this dispute and the impact this and the worker shortage is having on the agricultural sector, why has the government not taken any practical action to facilitate the release of this equipment other than simply monitoring the situation?

- (2) In the event that this issue is not resolved prior to the commencement of harvest, what actions beyond monitoring the situation will the government commit to?
- (3) Does the government stand by the statements made by Hon Kyle McGinn in his member's statement in this house on 8 September 2021?
- (4) When considering the context of the statements referred to in (3), does the government acknowledge that this may compromise any future practical action that it may take to facilitate the release of vital farm and mining equipment?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(4) This dispute is between Qube, its employees and the MUA. The state government is not a party to it. This dispute is covered by the commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009. Under this commonwealth legislation, the state has limited opportunity to formally intervene in these disputes.

The state government is aware of some delays in the agricultural sector and is monitoring them.

BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS — RECOVERY PLAN

729. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the “Proportion of critically endangered and endangered taxa and ecological communities that have a recovery plan” as referred to under the table dealing with outcomes and key effectiveness indicators on page 708 of budget paper No 2.

How many such plans are there, which taxa and communities are covered and how is performance against these plans measured?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

There are 292 recovery plans covering 303 taxa and 30 ecological communities. Progress against actions in the recovery plans is considered at recovery team meetings. I table this document.

[See paper [610](#).]

FOSTER CARE REFRESH PROJECT

730. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the *Foster care refresh project* and the actionable items listed in its report, one of which is to pilot and evaluate the use of a specific duty officer to respond to carers in a timely manner in two districts, one metropolitan and one regional.

- (1) Noting that the report says on page 12 “Carers were concerned about the timeliness of responses from Communities, particularly in terms of decision making and impact on the child due to the delays”, how will the pilot address this issue?
- (2) When is this pilot scheduled to commence?
- (3) What will be the model or process for this pilot?
- (4) How will the success of the pilot be measured?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

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

- (1) The pilot will make a worker available to carers to contact during business hours. This worker will liaise with case managers and others to address carers' needs promptly.
- (2)–(3) Pilot models are currently being developed in each of the two trial districts and they will be finalised within the next four weeks.
- (4) Measures of success are currently being identified and considered for inclusion within an evaluation framework for the proposed pilot models.

SCHOOL HEALTH NURSES

731. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing Minister for Health:

I refer to school health nurses employed by the Department of Health. What is the total amount of funding allocated for the provision of school health nurses in the 2021–22 financial year and for each financial year across the forward estimates?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

It is not possible to provide the requested information in the time required and I therefore ask the honourable member to place this question on notice. However, I am happy to undertake to see whether an answer can be provided much quicker —

Hon Donna Faragher interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I give the call to Hon Martin Aldridge.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY ACT

732. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the passage of the Work Health and Safety Act 2020 and the expected proclamation of its operative provisions shortly.

- (1) Is the minister aware of growing concern among emergency service volunteers and local governments about the application of the act?
- (2) What work has the minister or the Department of Fire and Emergency Services commissioned to assist volunteers as well as those who engage with or direct volunteers in understanding the new statutory regime?
- (3) What assessment has DFES undertaken to ensure adequate workplace safety within facilities under DFES and local government control?
- (4) Will the minister please table any information that he or DFES has prepared to guide and support the implementation of the new act once proclaimed?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I am sorry that this is a long answer, but the scope of each part of the question canvasses quite broad matters. The member has an answer, but I am sorry that it is a bit long.

- (1)–(2) The Department of Fire and Emergency Services commissioned expert advice to review the new requirements associated with its responsibilities under the Work Health and Safety Act. This work focused on volunteers, who are included in the definition of “worker” under the WHS act. DFES is undertaking further analysis in relation to the inclusion of volunteers in the definition of “worker” under the WHS act, with a focus on worker safety and responsibility. This has included a variety of scenarios under the emergency management framework, including when direction of emergency response workers is provided by local government; DFES; the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions; and Western Australia Police Force staff. DFES provides bushfire response training to volunteers, local government staff and DBCA. Local governments are provided with a training budget in their local government grant scheme operating grant from the emergency services levy. This is to cover logistical costs associated with local level training. The majority of bushfire training developed by staff at the DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence is designed to be delivered locally by DFES and/or volunteer trainers.

DFES is providing local governments with advice and support in relation to the new legislation. DFES has assisted the local government insurance scheme and the Western Australian Local Government Association to deliver a briefing to local government staff and emergency services personnel. The briefing was accessible statewide and covered responsibilities under the new legislation for farmers, local government, DFES and DBCA across different bushfire scenarios. DFES has also assisted in the development of a WALGA and LGIS publication that provides information regarding the WHS act and responsibilities.

- (3) DFES and local governments have always had a duty of care for their workers, including volunteers, and ensuring workplace safety remains a priority for DFES. DFES continually undertakes workplace safety inspections of all DFES career and volunteer facilities under its management. There is a safety reporting mechanism for staff and volunteers to report any hazards, and safety incidents are investigated to identify causes and risk mitigation. DFES has an existing occupational health and safety governance and management framework, which is being revised in the context of the new legislation.

Local governments safety matters will need to be referred to the Minister for Local Government for a response.

- (4) Given the detail required, the information is unable to be provided in the time frame available. I ask the member to place this part of the question on notice.

PLANNING, LANDS AND HERITAGE — STAFF

733. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

- (1) What number of FTEs in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage are currently allocated to managing applications under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972?
- (2) What number of FTEs in the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage are currently allocated to managing compliance related to past decisions?
- (3) Of those FTEs outlined in (1) and (2), how many are filled with persons of Aboriginal descent?
- (4) What were the combined FTE numbers working in the area of Aboriginal heritage in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs when the department was wound up in 2017?
- (5) What proportion of the employees referred to in (4) were of Aboriginal descent?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

There is insufficient time to properly analyse historical data from the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs, so I ask the honourable member to place this question on notice.

NATIVE FOREST — MANAGEMENT

734. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the predicted increased cost of forest management activities as a result of the government's decision to ban native hardwood harvesting. Has the government calculated the projected cost of forest management activities, such as ecological thinning, mechanical load reduction, access roads and fire mitigation after 2024?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I do not appear to have that question in the folder. If anyone is listening, it might come in before the end of question time and I will answer it then.

NUMBATS — RECOVERY PLAN

735. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the outcomes and key effectiveness indicators of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. My question relates to performance against the outcome: "Plants and animals, and the landscapes they occupy, are conserved through evidence-based conservation actions".

- (1) Has the recovery plan for numbats been revised since the prescribed burn at Perup destroyed members of that community?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Can the minister table a copy of the current recovery plan?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1) No.
- (2) This event does not require a change to the recovery plan.
- (3) Yes. I table the current plan.

[See paper [611](#).]

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — ELECTION COMMITMENTS — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET

736. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to election commitments funded in the 2021–22 state budget.

- (1) On what date can the additional firefighters be expected in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Geraldton and Albany?
- (2) Can the minister please provide a breakdown of the funding per year and identify the source of the funds if other than from the consolidated account?
- (3) Can the minister please identify which firefighters and which fire services will benefit from the \$4.9 million investment in personal protective clothing?
- (4) How many sets of PPC will be made available to —
 - (a) career firefighters; and
 - (b) volunteer firefighters?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The process to recruit, train and initially deploy career firefighters from start to finish takes time. It will take two to three years to complete, based on our capacity to train new recruits. However, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services will be starting to post additional career firefighters to regional Western Australia from 2021. The recruitment process for the next trainee firefighter school commences in November 2021, with testing to begin in early 2022. The school takes just over five months, and DFES intends to post some of those graduates to regional stations prior to the 2022–23 southern bushfire season.
- (2) This information is available in the state budget.
- (3) The \$4.9 million investment in personal protective clothing will replace the level 2 structural PPC statewide for career fire and rescue service personnel, volunteer fire and rescue service and volunteer fire and emergency services firefighters who currently have level 2 PPC.
- (4) A total of 4 100 sets are required for a full level 2 structural PPC replacement statewide. The full replacement quota for career and volunteer services is —
 - (a) 2 246 sets for career fire and rescue service firefighters; and
 - (b) 1 854 sets for volunteer fire and rescue service and volunteer fire and emergency services firefighters.

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT — 2021–22 STATE BUDGET**737. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the state budget speech that stated that \$30.7 billion would be allocated to infrastructure over the next four years. Of that \$30.7 billion, how much is —

- (1) funding through the commonwealth by way of grant;
- (2) allocated to the Mining and Pastoral Region of Western Australia, and how much of that amount is funded through the commonwealth government by way of grant;
- (3) funding towards transport projects, including the \$5.7 billion allocated to Metronet;
- (4) funding towards road projects in the Mining and Pastoral Region; and
- (5) funding towards other transport projects in the Mining and Pastoral Region?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(5) The state government has been successful in working constructively with the commonwealth to secure significant funding for key infrastructure projects. The state budget speech refers to infrastructure projects across all portfolios. The Minister for Transport is able to respond only in relation to the transport portfolio. In relation to commonwealth grants to transport portfolio agencies, this information is available on pages 613, 630 and 635 of volume 2 of budget paper No 2. If the member has a question regarding the state–commonwealth funding split of a specific project, the member is asked to place that question on notice.

NATIVE FOREST — MANAGEMENT*Question without Notice 734 — Answer Advice*

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Mental Health) [5.03 pm]: Earlier today, Hon Steve Martin asked a question of the Minister for Forestry. It has been redirected to the Minister for Environment, so I provide the following answer on behalf of the Minister for Environment.

A wide range of forest management activities are conducted within existing agency resources. The development of the next *Forest management plan 2024–2033* will give further consideration to the resources required for forest management during this 10-year period.

PAPER TABLED

A paper was tabled by the President.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE*Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [5.05 pm]: Before orders of the day were interrupted for the taking of questions, I was going through some of the issues identified in many of the reports on mental health services in Western Australia over the years and some of the common themes that had emerged from many of those reports. It is quite important that we understand that a number of issues are common and it is important that we address those. I was talking about the focus on mental health spending in many cases

being about beds rather than services. That is a really important component of the whole mental health picture. The provision of the services is what matters. Sometimes it is not always about having more beds; in fact, ultimately, the aim of any health system is for people to not need beds because we should be keeping them out of hospital. We need to give them the services they need to stay healthy so they do not need to land in a hospital or, in this case, the mental health system. This is the third common theme that emerged from these reports.

I was referring to the Auditor General's *Access to state-managed adult mental health services: Report 4: 2019–20*. This report refers to the *Better choices. Better lives: Western Australian mental health, alcohol and other drug services plan 2015–2025*, which identifies the urgent need to expand community mental health services and rely less on costly hospital beds. That plan aims to reduce the proportion of funding for hospital beds from 42 per cent to 29 per cent by 2025. By the end of 2017–18, it had instead risen to 47 per cent of state mental health funding. That is a really important observation. Providing the services people need and access to those mental health services and making those mental health services easily accessible is very important in the whole scheme of the provision of mental health services. I attest to the fact that it is not that way at the moment and has not been for some time. I am sure that comes as no surprise to many people.

Only a few weeks ago, I had the unfortunate circumstance in which my stepdaughter needed to be assessed. What was the result? We visited a GP who was fantastic and referred us to providers. We contacted a bunch of providers, both private and public. The message was not that we could not get an appointment but we could not even get on the waiting list. The waiting list was not open again until next year. We are at the stage at which not only are appointments not available, but the waiting lists are closed. That just highlights the pressure on the system and therefore the need to better fund those services outside hospital and outside the inpatient-type services. Again, this was evidenced to me from not only my own experience, but also that of friends and others that it is really challenging to get access to those services, particularly for that cohort of young people who are in that no-person's land of being between the ages of 16 and 18 years, where they are too old to be considered a child for the purposes of a child in adolescent mental health services but too young to be an adult. In my experience, I am in a lucky position because, as a family, we have the financial wherewithal to source private help, but it is still a challenge. It is still very, very difficult to get into those services, but if you have that option, you can take it. If you do not have that option, what do you do? Where do you get access to those services? Again, one of the emerging themes was that focus on beds, rather than services. The 2012 Stokes review also refers to many of these issues.

I want to talk about some of the other matters raised in these reports over the years. One of the principal recommendations of the Stokes review from July 2012 was —

That as a matter of urgency the Department of Health and the Mental Health Commission jointly develop a Clinical Service Plan which embraces the key elements of clinical care, rehabilitation, living accommodation, geographical location and infrastructure build and support.

There are limited resources available for the mental health system and it is under stress, particularly in relation to staffing. That is one of the key things in our health system and obviously in mental health it is the same thing. We can build wards and provide more beds, or whatever, but if we do not have the people, the system ultimately will not work and we will not be able to deliver those essential services. I think that was evidenced to me late last year when my eldest daughter first started going through some of the challenges she faced. We were referred to the public system initially. Despite the seriousness of the issue and the challenges she was facing and the fact that at various times she needed a wheelchair, the service was simply so stretched that the words its staff used were, "I'm sorry, but your condition is not serious enough for us to help you. We think this is what the issue is you're dealing with, but you're going to have to go and get help elsewhere." That is pretty frustrating for any parent. I am 100 per cent sure I am not the only one who has had that experience with the child and adolescent mental health service. I do not blame the guys and girls in CAMHS. It just does not have the resources to deal with all the people who are coming through the system. The sad fact is that as much as it is about having places to treat people, it is about having the practitioners to do the treating. It is about the psychologists and psychiatrists. It was July last year when we found that out. It took about another month to see a private psychologist, and it took until late January to see a psychiatrist in Western Australia. It was six months before we could actually get the real help that we needed.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Col, was that in Esperance or was it up here?

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: It was in Perth and was for my eldest daughter who attends school in Perth. My youngest daughter in Esperance was also having some challenges. She was able to get help relatively quickly through telehealth, which is a great service. It is not ideal for mental health, but at the same time it is better than nothing. That is the experience we had in that circumstance, and recently as well. I do not say this just to talk about myself or my family here. I am making the point that these experiences are real. They can affect anyone and anyone can experience that same challenge of trying to find help and banging your head against a brick wall trying to get there. In the interim, with my eldest daughter we were able to see Youth Focus, and I have to say it is a tremendous resource. Headspace and Youth Focus are just fantastic. We have to resource those other external providers as well, because they do a wonderful job. That really bridged the gap to some extent for us, and for many other people too. Again, they were under the pump at that time. I know the psychologist that we were seeing there left that organisation and moved

to a job in New South Wales. Rather than being able to continue with the treatment, my daughter was back on the waiting list for another few months. That is when we eventually found a private provider. Clearly, the resources are stretched right across the system.

I want to talk a bit about some of the other reports. I do not want to hold up Hon Samantha Rowe, who is very keen, champing at the bit to continue with her bill. I refer to the Stokes review, which noted —

... within the hospital and clinic situations there appears to be an absence of a single point of authority ...

Again, that reinforces the notion that there is a kind of siloed, separate and fragmented system, if you like, that makes it very challenging to coordinate overall. Another issue that was raised in this 2012 review was —

Information management across mental health is a key area for improvement. Ensuring that there is an accessible and effective system-wide information management system is an important challenge ...

That is a critical challenge in not only mental health, but also health in general. We need to make sure that those systems are accessible across the board so that immediately when people present, their clinical history is available and we can ensure better outcomes because whatever treatment is appropriate can be done.

In the Auditor General's report, to which I have referred a number of times already, she observed —

The Better Choices. Better Lives: Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan identified an urgent need to expand community mental health services and rely less on costly hospital beds.

I have said that before. I want to reinforce that point. It is not about only beds. The Auditor General also said —

It is a soundly devised plan, developed with extensive consultation and strong support from consumers and care providers.

At the time of writing this report, she said —

... there has been limited progress in implementing the Plan to rebalance the service mix.

I think that has been the challenge. There have been many reports and a number of different plans over the years, and it has been a very big challenge to see those implemented and appropriately funded. I hope that the funding provided in the state government's 2021–22 budget will go some way to addressing some of the issues raised in many of those plans. The Auditor General identified —

... this means that the system continues to deliver services inefficiently and ineffectively. The Plan aimed to reduce the proportion of funding for hospital beds ...

As I said before, instead the proportion has risen. Western Australia's state-funded mental healthcare system provides inefficient and ineffective services with funding misdirected to provide more hospital beds, rather than prevention programs. The report continues —

The MHC has not developed a system-wide implementation plan to support the Plan, and the lack of an agreed funding strategy means implementation has relied on ad-hoc investment. There has also been a lack of clarity around who is responsible for managing mental health care, which has worked against effective coordination between the entities. These factors have slowed progress in changing the mix of mental health services to better match needs. For some people this means there are gaps in services, so they continue to rely on acute, higher cost and often less suitable care settings. People accessing community treatment services in 2017 were receiving less care on average than in 2013.

It is critical that people who need specific mental health care do not turn up in a hospital system or emergency department that is under pressure, because it is not the place they need to be in the first instance. That has obvious flow-on effects in that system. It is really important that those treatment services in the community are more available and well-funded to ensure that those people can get the treatment they need.

In 2020, the Chief Psychiatrist produced a report titled *Targeted review: Homicides allegedly committed by people who have had contact with, or were being treated by, WA mental health services during 2018*. It states —

The Review found that the mental health system is under significant pressure, across Emergency Departments, specialist clinical community mental health services and inpatient facilities. The factors identified in this Review were similar to those that have been identified as leading to a range of poor outcomes in many previous reviews ...

That, again, highlights the fact that there have been a number of reviews of mental health provision in this state over the years and they have identified many similar themes. Unfortunately, we have not really seen significant improvements in the delivery or the availability of those services. The other particular issues identified in that report were the lack of a long-term perspective in delivering care and the lack of coordination of care—again, it is that fragmentation and siloing. The review identified —

... the limitation of the current practice of risk assessment and management. The two policies released by the Department of Health, the Clinical Care of People Who May Be Suicidal Policy (October, 2017) and the Clinical Care of People with Mental Health Problems Who May be at Risk of Becoming Violent

or Aggressive Policy (January, 2019) have had limited uptake into clinical practice. Services are still using risk assessment tools that purport to provide a gradation of risk, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. As the Review Team identified in a number of the cases, an assessment of low risk almost invariably militates against the development of a risk management plan.

The policies and associated guidance on suicide and violence and aggression need to be promulgated by the Department and the Health Service Providers for implementation into practice. Both these policies stress the importance of engaging consumers and carers in the risk assessment and management processes.

It is really important that those policies are coordinated and that risk assessment and management is done better under those various policies.

In 2018, the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine released a media statement that called for a new approach in managing presentations of people with mental health problems in our emergency departments. It states —

Researchers took a snapshot of emergency departments in December 2017, with 65 Australian emergency departments reporting on the number of patients present at that time. While only 4% were mental health presentations, they comprised 19% of patients waiting for beds and 28% of those experiencing access block.

The problem of access block was worse in some jurisdictions compared with others, and particularly notable in Western Australia (66.7%) and Queensland (38.7%).

As we know, the pressures that we are now seeing on our EDs, and, in general, our emergency departments, are generally not due to the emergency department itself. It is not the ED that creates that pressure, but the difficulty experienced by those people seeking alternative treatment and the availability of that treatment. In particular, the difficulty across the mental health system is in accessing psychiatric beds and the lack of community-based mental health services, particularly after hours. That is a challenge. Mental health afflictions, like other illnesses and challenges that we face, do not happen just during work hours; they happen all over the place. It is important that we understand that there has to be some mechanism to provide out-of-hours services for mental health patients. Part of the problem is the current overall bed numbers combined with a model of care that focuses on symptomatic treatment and a short length of stay. We cannot afford to have these people stuck in beds and blocking up the system, so they are moved on, which is obviously not going to work well for people with mental health issues. Now there are various mechanisms and methods to manage those sorts of patients. I know that some of those types of systems are being funded as well, which is good.

The December 2020 the *Chief Psychiatrist's review into the treatment of Ms Kate Savage by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services* identified —

... a huge surge in demand for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in recent years. CAMHS development has not kept pace, and this has placed significant pressure on clinical staff and the WA community.

It is essential that CAMHS is adequately resourced. My experience with CAMHS was that it was not resourced adequately and it was really struggling to cope with the demand that it had at the time we used its service, which, coincidentally, was very much the same time that Kate Savage saw CAMHS and it was the same CAMHS office as well. The Chief Psychiatrist's review continues —

What is clear from this Review is that there has been a significant escalation of serious mental health issues for children, particularly in the number of young people who are self-harming.

It is a tragic thing that is occurring in our community if more of our kids are harming themselves. Aside from looking at the services and so on for mental health, we also need to find out what is really affecting the mental health of our children at the moment in this world. There are all sorts of different hypotheses. I am not going to say that I think I know what it is, because I genuinely do not know. I have seen it happen with my own kids for no appreciable reason. We really need to put a lot of work into this because we cannot have our kids going through what other kids have gone through. The Leader of the House is not here, but she would obviously be aware of the tragic incident in Esperance earlier this week. We absolutely want to avoid our young people doing that sort of thing.

The investment in CAMHS has not kept pace with that significant escalation in mental health issues and the need in the community. As evidenced by my own experience, and found by this review, CAMHS has largely morphed into a service for high-risk, often older, adolescents. That is a tragedy because there are so many younger kids, unfortunately, with mental health afflictions. If we can get them the treatment and the help that they need at that young age, the outcomes for them will be much better later on in life. It is a tragedy that the system is so broken and needs so much done to it.

I do not intend to continue for too much longer. These reports raise many different points and go on to refer to where the problems lie in our mental health system. I know that the government and the minister are doing some work in this space. They have certainly put some dollars on the table. I will be very keen to see where that money is invested. As I understand it, a task force will be looking at CAMHS in particular. I think that that is fantastic. It is a great resource that we very much need to work well.

Hon Stephen Dawson: If you want a briefing on any of this stuff, I am happy to organise it.

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: Thanks, minister. I am very happy to sit down and have a chat about that because I am particularly passionate about this area. It is incumbent on all of us to do whatever we can to make sure that we are part of the process of improving the mental health service in our state for not only our young people, but also our adults.

I conclude by talking about a couple of other important services that sometimes go unmentioned. I refer to services in regional Western Australia that largely start off the back of passionate people in the community. There are plenty of examples, but one of those services is, of course, the fantastic 6Bs service. I am sure members have heard of the six Bs—namely, blokes, barbecues, bonfires, bonding, beers and BS.

Hon Martin Aldridge: And other things!

Hon COLIN de GRUSSA: And other things that I shall not say in this place. This initiative is supported by Beyond Blue, MensLine Australia, virtual psychologists and the Regional Men’s Health Initiative. It is a fantastic thing. It gives blokes an opportunity to get together in a comfortable setting and have a chat about some of the things that are bugging them. It is often a tradition, particularly for farmers and blokes in the bush, to be a bit stoic and to not talk about things as much as we should. I think this is an absolutely fantastic initiative. I wanted to get on the record my congratulations and support for these initiatives. To Brad Millstead, who got this going, I say, “Fantastic. Well done!” The next instalment of the 6Bs program is happening this Friday, 17 September, at Mic Fels’ farm in Esperance. If anyone is down there and has the opportunity to go along, this is a great program. I was fortunate to participate in a similar program in Condingup last year. It was a meeting at the sports club, but there was not much sport—and not much of a meeting either! However, it was a fantastic opportunity to catch up with a bunch of people and have a chat and discuss those things that blokes do not always get around to. The other service is the Regional Men’s Health Initiative, which is a very good organisation that is out there at every agriculture show doing health checks and chatting to blokes and others about mental health afflictions and so on. That is a fantastic organisation and has been supported over the years by both sides of politics and I hope the funding for that organisation continues.

In wrapping up, it is a good sign that significant additional expenditure on mental health is announced in this budget. I know the Minister for Mental Health takes this matter very seriously and is looking at all the options and, it is hoped, will roll out what is the start of a gold-standard mental health service. We have the opportunity now to create that in Western Australia and be leaders in this space. It is an incredibly important and significant issue that is occurring across society right across our nation. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated it, and I hope the opportunity is taken to set up this system for the long term, no matter who is in government, so that our mental health system can deal with the people who need that help over the years.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Pierre Yang**.

CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Committee

Resumed from 14 September. The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Steve Martin) in the chair; Hon Samantha Rowe (Parliamentary Secretary) in charge of the bill.

Clause 4: Section 3 amended —

Progress was reported after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: When we finished last night, there were a number of things Hon Nick Goiran asked to be followed up, so I might start with that first and then get to the definition around community, which is where we left off last night. One of the things the member asked for was an updated list of the consultations that occurred. I have that to be tabled. It is titled “Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2020–21: List of external briefings”.

[See paper [613](#).]

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: The honourable member also raised issues around the definition of remote communication and telephone typewriters. The bill places a definition of “remote communication” in section 3 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 because the term is used in both current section 120 in relation to applying for warrants in protection proceedings and proposed section 241A in new part 10A in clause 72 of the bill. The definition of “remote communication” inserted by the bill is consistent with definitions of that term found across the WA statute book, including in section 43J of the Childcare Services Act 2007. Recent examples also include section 211 of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, section 7 of the Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act 2014, section 4 of the Public Health Act 2016 and section 177 of the Transport (Road Passenger Services) Act 2018. As it is an inclusive definition, it would undoubtedly cover other forms of communication such as the telephone typewriter and video link.

The member also raised questions about the definition of “parent”. The definition of “parent” in clause 4 consolidates definitions of the terms that appear in seven sections of the act. They capture two categories of parent—first, those who hold responsibility in relation to the child at law; and, second, those who held parental responsibility for the

child before the child became the subject of a protection order, apart from a protection orders supervision. The act recognises paragraph (b) parents in a number of ways, including the following: the principles that are set out in part 2 of the act under sections 89 and 91 in connection with their child's care plan, including a right to the review of a care plan decision; and under section 157 regarding the transfer of the child protection orders.

The other issue we discussed last night was the definition of "community", and there was a bit of back and forth, so I hope this answer clarifies some of the honourable member's questions. Review recommendation 7, to amend the Aboriginal child placement principle in section 12, included that. Consideration should be given to defining a child's community in the context of the child placement principle based on section 176(5) of the Victorian Children, Youth and Families Act 2005. The Victorian definition is provided in relation to cultural support planning for a child. In that context, a child's Aboriginal community is —

- (a) the Aboriginal community to which the child has a sense of belonging, if this can be ascertained by the Secretary; or
- (b) if paragraph (a) does not apply, the Aboriginal community in which the child has primarily lived; or
- (c) if paragraphs (a) and (b) do not apply, the Aboriginal community of the child's parent or grandparent.

Before drafting the bill, consideration was given to defining "the child's community" under section 12 of the act. Consultation on the proposed amendments was undertaken through a family matters workshop held in June 2018 and attended by regional and metropolitan Aboriginal stakeholders. This included express consultation on the Victorian definition. There was not support for providing a prescriptive definition in the legislation in the nature of the Victorian provision. The preference was to develop operational policy to determine the child's community, in consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders, on a case-by-case basis.

Further, with regard to the definition under clause 4, when amending section 12 in accordance with the Standing Committee on Legislation's recommendation, a discrepancy in terminology within the clause, as drafted, became apparent. The order of priority under the hierarchy referred to is, firstly, placement with a person who is an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander in the child's community in accordance with local customary practice; and, secondly, placement with a person who is an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander who lives in close proximity to the child's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community. This inconsistency could be rectified by providing a definition under proposed section 3 to clarify that whenever a child's community is referred to in respect of an Aboriginal child, it refers to the child's Aboriginal community. This accords with the intended meaning of the term whenever it is used in the legislation. It was considered that the amendment required no consultation as, firstly, the insertion of the definition was to address a rather technical drafting matter; and, secondly, it is a very broad definition rather than a prescriptive definition, consistent with the consultation that was undertaken.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I thank the parliamentary secretary for following up on those matters and for the comprehensive information that was provided. Over the course of the forty-first Parliament, we have had certain bills progress through the Legislative Council with the "Dawson–Swinbourn standard", and I think we can now add the "Rowe standard" of providing information to the Parliament. I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking that appropriate approach. I refer to the issue of the term "telephone typewriter", which is being deleted from the existing act. I appreciate the explanation that has been provided, consistent with the advice of last night, that it is an inclusive definition. The parliamentary secretary indicated that "telephone typewriter" would undoubtedly be included, along with "videoconferencing". We might recall that last night my concern was that we are going out of our way to delete this from the act. I would not want there to be any confusion with regard to the interpretation of the provision. Even though the advice is that it would undoubtedly be included, is it the government's intention for the definition of "remote communication" to continue to include "telephone typewriter"?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am informed by the advisers, yes. It also includes any other form of electronic communication that might be used.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I thank the parliamentary secretary. With regard to the issue of consultation, I thank the parliamentary secretary for the summary of the external briefings that have been provided. The dates included here begin on 17 May 2021 and flow through to 19 July 2021. A briefing occurred on 17 May with the Department of Health, and there was a series of other briefings, culminating with one on 19 July 2021 with the Perth Children's Court. According to my information, the bill was introduced to the Legislative Assembly on 2 June 2021. Prior to the introduction of the bill, the Department of Health appears to have been the only agency consulted, along with the rapid response interagency working group, on the day before the bill was tabled. I think any assistance that that group could have provided would be nil with regard to the drafting of the bill that was then presented the following day. It is most unlikely that a meeting on 1 June would have resulted in drafting changes for 2 June. Prior to the 2 June introduction of the bill to the Legislative Assembly, there was a meeting with the Department of Health on 17 May 2021. Is this list intended to be a list of all the consultations that have occurred on this bill since the 2019 bill lapsed in the previous Parliament?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: It is probably not a comprehensive consultation list.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Does a comprehensive list exist? Would it be onerous to prepare such a list?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that that could be prepared.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: If we could, that would be helpful. Looking at the summary that has been provided, I refer, for example, to 16 June. I do not know whether the parliamentary secretary has a copy readily available, but about four-fifths of the way down the first page there is a reference, at 16 June 2021, to the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The parliamentary secretary will recall that yesterday there were some questions about the level of consultation that had occurred with the commissioner. The parliamentary secretary indicated that there had been some consultation with his office, although not necessarily with him, and that is consistent with the summary, which refers to a briefing having been provided to two representatives from the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office on the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021. In terms of the helpfulness of that summary, what was actually helpful was the summary of the feedback that people have provided. The parliamentary secretary will recall that in a further example, a number of Aboriginal organisations that were stakeholders had concerns in the last Parliament about the 2019 bill. I can see here that there has been some consultation with them. For example, on 10 June 2021, there was consultation with Yorganop and others. I think the member indicated last night that some of those groups are more satisfied with this version of the bill than they were with the last version but they are not completely satisfied—there is some improvement with respect to that. Again, that is not apparent from this summary. It is not clear what remaining issues they are concerned about. When we ultimately dive a bit deeper into the bill, what clauses will they remain concerned about? Again, by way of contrast we know that the Commissioner for Children and Young People was broadly supportive of the 2019 bill and did not seem to have raised any particular concerns that we are aware of. However, as a result of this briefing with his office on 16 June 2021, we are not sure whether they have since raised any issues. I appreciate the parliamentary secretary is not in a position to answer that now, but what would be helpful for us to know is: who has been consulted and what are the remaining issues that any of these organisations have about the bill? I am happy to park that there and move on to another issue.

Yesterday, we discussed the document that was tabled that contained the non-legislative recommendations. The parliamentary secretary was looking to get an indication from government about what was happening with the three recommendations that were described as being on hold. Is there any update on that matter?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that we do not have that with us but it is something we could provide outside the process of this bill.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: To tie off the last loose end from yesterday, we dealt with the consultation list, the recommendations that are on hold, the famous telephone typewriter and the definition of “remote communication”. The parliamentary secretary also updated us on why the Victorian definition of a “child’s community” was not pursued. As I understand it, the consultation that was then embarked upon determined that that was not going to be the approach. The one thing I missed in the explanation the parliamentary secretary provided was the examples of the definition of “parent”. The parliamentary secretary responded to it but it was not clear what exactly it means. I turn to clause 4, which we are on at the moment, particularly clause 4(2), which will insert a number of definitions, one of which is “parent”. The definition of “parent, of a child” has two limbs to it. The first is fairly self-explanatory and states —

- (a) means a person, other than the CEO, who at law has responsibility for —
 - (i) the long-term care, welfare and development of the child; or
 - (ii) the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child;

It is the second limb that was unclear. The parliamentary secretary said last night that it was an existing provision, but can she indicate any examples of what is intended to be covered by paragraph (b) in the definition?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that section 90, “Review of care plan”, is an example. It states —

- (1) The CEO must carry out a review of the operation and effectiveness of every care plan at regular intervals not exceeding 12 months.
- (2) In the course of the review the CEO must have regard to any views expressed by —
 - (a) the child; and
 - (b) a parent of the child; and
 - (c) any carer of the child; and
 - (d) any other person considered by the CEO to have a direct and significant interest in the wellbeing of the child.

While I am on my feet, when I gave the member an update at the beginning of the session I said “under sections 89 and 91”; it should have been under sections 89 and 90, just for the record.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: At section 90 of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 I can see a reference to “a parent of the child” and that the parliamentary secretary is drawing a link to the definition in the bill. I am trying to understand what class of people is intended to be captured by this peculiar definition at paragraph (b). Maybe I can give the parliamentary secretary an example and she can tell me whether it applies, because the language is confusing. As I say, I appreciate that it is the existing language in the act that has just been moved. Sometimes I do not know why it needs to be as tortuous as it is. We are talking about a person who would have been a parent of the child if the order had not been made. The order referred to is a protection order. Is a biological parent who does not have the day-to-day care of a child and who does not have the long-term care of a child for whatever reason—they might be completely estranged; they might have been estranged for the entire life of the child—an example of someone who is intended to be captured by this definition?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Yes.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: My question that flows from that is: why do we not just say that? Instead of saying “includes a person who would have been a parent of the child if the order had not been made”, that person is a parent; the fact they might be estranged from the child and have had no rapport whatsoever, they are still the biological parent of the child. I assume that we are then trying to capture an additional group of people other than the example I have given. I am trying to understand what other types of people would meet this definition.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that it is persons who no longer have parental responsibility because of the order.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5: Part 2 Division 1A inserted —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Clause 5 deals with the application of the objects and principles of the legislation. I seek clarification from the government about the intention here. The language used here appears to have the intention that a person, and that might be a court or a tribunal, is performing a function under this act and there is a discretion to the extent that they take into account the objects of the act, but there appears to be a managerial requirement to observe the principles of the act, and I want to clarify whether that is the case. Is adherence to the objects of the act and the principles of the part intended to be mandatory or discretionary?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that they must be guided by them.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I think that is how it should read as well, but that is not what it says. Lines 6 to 8 on page 5 state —

A person, court or tribunal is, in performing a function under this Act, to be guided by the objects of this Act and to observe the principles set out in this Part.

What I think we are saying, but we do not say it at this point, is that a person, court or tribunal must, in performing a function under this act, be guided by the objects of this act and observe the principles set out in this part. I just seek clarification about what the intention is; and, if the intention is that they must do it, why are we not saying that here?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that that is just the way it was drafted.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It is the way that it has been drafted, but is the government inclined to amend this clause so it reads “must” rather than what it says at the moment? While that is being reflected on, it seems that that is the intention, but it is not exactly what it says. I draw the parliamentary secretary’s attention to the fact that the history of this matter finds its way in recommendation 16 of the *Statutory review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004*, which says —

Section 14 should be amended to provide that in performing a function under the Act, a person, court or tribunal must observe the principle ...

This is the language straight out of the statutory review draft by the experts —

that an Aboriginal child’s family, community or representative organisation is entitled to and should be given opportunities and, where appropriate, assistance to participate in decision-making processes under the Act that are likely to have a significant impact on the life of a child. In observing this principle the views of the child and the child’s parent or parents must be considered.

The parliamentary secretary will see there in recommendation 16 that the authors of the statutory review have twice gone out of their way to highlight that this must be done, yet we do not see that at clause 5. I seek advice on whether there is an appetite to amend accordingly.

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that “is to be” is the same as “must”, so it essentially means the same thing. It is the way the legislation has been drafted by parliamentary counsel, and there will not be any changes made to it.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6: Section 6 amended —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: This clause has its history in recommendation 43 of the statutory review, which says —

The object under section 6(da) should be amended to align more closely with the underpinning principles of the Act and the aims of the Department’s Parent Support service.

The new language being proposed here in clause 6 is the phrase “appropriately and safely manage”, at the same time it seeks to delete the phrase “in exercising appropriate control over”. Are we satisfied that the words proposed here at clause 6 are consistent with the language recommended at recommendation 43?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that yes, we are satisfied.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Recommendation 43 says that this should be amended to align more closely with the aims of the department’s parent support service. Are those aims documented somewhere; and, if they are, do they use this same language of “appropriately and safely manage”?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: I am advised that the change in terminology from “exercising appropriate control over the behaviour of their children” to “appropriately and safely managing the behaviour of their children” recognises that control is not the aim of the service, and instead developing and using parenting strategies that guide young people to make better, safer choices is the purpose of the service.

Clause put and passed.**Clause 7 put and passed.****Clause 8: Section 8 amended —**

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In clause 8 the instruction is to amend section 8 of the act, and specifically to do seven things in section 8(1). I want to spend a moment considering the sixth of those things, set out at paragraph (f). This will see the deletion of the words in existing paragraph (h) and them being replaced with —

the need for the child to develop and maintain contact with the child’s parents, siblings and other members of the child’s family and with other people who are significant in the child’s life;

This is particularly important because as the parliamentary secretary might recall, almost a couple of years ago now there was a shocking case in which department workers took a baby to visit their father in prison. That is all I will say about that particular story. That is not necessarily the shocking part; the shocking part is that the father was in prison for murdering the baby’s mother. A violence restraining order was in place but despite the fact that there was a violence restraining in place forbidding contact, for reasons still not apparent to me, child protection workers took the baby to visit the mother’s murderer, albeit the baby’s father. As the parliamentary secretary can imagine, there was some community outrage at the time. I think the explanation provided by the department was that it was unaware of the violence restraining order at the time. Be that as it may, whether or not a violence restraining was in place, for my part it beggars belief that this occurred. I raise that particular case at this time because I want to make sure that what we are doing here will not further enshrine that type of approach by departmental workers: “There is this need for the child to develop and maintain contact with the child’s parents.” In this instance, yes, the man was the father of the child, but he was the father who murdered the mother. By using this particular language, I want to be sure that we will not exacerbate the sort of situation that happened two years ago. I am particularly mindful of this because I cannot find where in the statutory review it recommended this course of action. Perhaps the starting point for our discussion at this stage is: what was the genesis of the amendment that has led to the instruction in clause 8(f) to delete paragraph (h) and insert a new paragraph (h)?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Honourable member, I am advised that the genesis of the amendment relates to recommendation 39, which refers to relationships to be promoted. It reads —

Section 9(g) of the Act should be amended to provide that, if a child is removed from the child’s family then, so far as is consistent with the child’s best interests, the child’s relationships with his or her parents, siblings and other relatives, and with any other people who are significant in the child’s life should be promoted and the child should be given encouragement and support in maintaining contact with the relevant people.

I add that in determining what is in the best interests of the child, what must be taken into account is the need to protect the child from harm as well as a range of other principles.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I agree, but recommendation 39 refers to maintaining contact. When a child is taken into care, recommendation 39 is saying that we, the government in this particular instance, need to make every effort to maintain contact with the family—“maintain contact” are the key words. But in clause 8, at page 6 from line 26, the government has introduced a new concept to develop and maintain contact with the child’s parents. This concept of developing is a new one. It is not in the act but it is being brought in now. The concern I have is that although I accept there should be an aspiration by the department to maintain contact between a child and their parents, in the circumstances I gave earlier in which the father was the murderer of the mother, I question whether that is in

the best interests of the child. The parliamentary secretary referred to recommendation 39, which states “so far as is consistent with the child’s best interests”. That was not in the best interests of the child in my view. The department holds a different view and says, “It is in the best interests for the baby to continue to visit the murderer, the father, in jail”, and remember that this is in circumstances in which the mother tried to escape from the father and had the baby in her care and custody. At absolute best, if we are going to say that that is in the best interests of the child, it might be to maintain contact—although I have serious reservations about that—but to develop contact? Yes, I agree that recommendation 39 states that we want to maintain contact, but where does the concept of developing contact come from?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE: Honourable member, I am advised that there are some circumstances in which a child does not have a relationship with a parent and that might be the cause to develop that relationship. However, the best interests of the child trumps all of that.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: The genesis of the phrase “develop” is to try to capture circumstances in which there is no relationship, so it is the starting point. A distinction has been drawn between that and maintaining contact. I can accept that, but I would like an assurance from the government that what we are doing now will not perpetuate the circumstances of the case from two years ago, and that the department will not consider it to be in the best interests of the child, regardless of whether we need to develop or maintain contact, for the child to visit the father, who is the murderer of the mother.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, on motion by Hon Samantha Rowe.

HELPING LITTLE HANDS

Statement

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [6.21 pm]: I rise tonight with the words of Hon Darren West’s member’s statement last night and the story of his son, Cooper West, fresh in my mind. Last month, I was fortunate enough to attend a fundraising ceilidh for a fantastic organisation called Helping Little Hands. Let me say from the outset that for such a small not-for-profit organisation, this was one amazing evening of music and dance. The sight and sound of the Rockingham City Pipe Band marching through the corridors of an inner-city hotel is not something I will soon forget.

The Helping Little Hands organisation was founded by two incredible women, Joanne Beedie and Kate Crassweller, to provide support to parents and families whose babies have been admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit at King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women. When a baby is admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU as it is known, life as it was for that family ends. Priorities change and what was once important is sidelined. Daily tasks are put on hold while life revolves around the NICU schedule. Helping Little Hands understands that the best medicine that can be given to a premature baby is time with mum and dad. It provides practical support for families of the NICU so that they spend their time with their baby and do not need to worry about getting some of their other life tasks done. For these two women, this is a very personal endeavour. Both Joanne and Kate have the lived experience of losing a baby, with their twin sibling requiring an extended stay in the NICU ward. They understand better than most the pain these families are feeling and the importance of every second of every minute parents in this situation can have with their child. The time of COVID makes the neonatal intensive care unit a difficult and even scarier place to be, with visits limited, uncertainty high and support services diminished.

At the ceilidh, Joanne shared how many nurses at King Edward Memorial Hospital have gone above and beyond their medical duties to assist the support services of Helping Little Hands to continue both safely and appropriately. As many in this chamber will know, nurses around the world have been some of the true champions of this COVID time. Tonight, I want to mention three nursing professionals in particular. These nurses experience firsthand what NICU families go through and, in an act of true community service, they organised and hosted the fundraising event “Tartan for Tots: A Ceilidh” in late August for Helping Little Hands. Saadiah Gray, Rebecca Davidson and Sophie Treffry of King Edward Memorial Hospital were responsible for the incredible evening of Scottish fun, fundraising and dancing that raised over \$23 000 for Helping Little Hands. They should be immensely proud of what they achieved. The money from this event has gone directly to improving the in-hospital facilities for the families of NICU babies, and supporting them, during their time at King Edward Memorial Hospital.

I want to mention some of the services offered by Helping Little Hands to NICU families. The Dinner’s Ready program ensures nutritious home-cooked meals are provided so parents have the time and energy to focus on their babies. Nutritious Nibbles are fruit and snack deliveries for mums and dads to help them re-energise and get back to their babies. In partnership with Life Ready Physio, Helping Little Hands also provides drop-in massage sessions for parents. There are wellbeing events, which can be any manner of things to support NICU parents. There is travel support, which is usually in the form of fuel and travel vouchers, and home support, which can be anything from cleaning to mowing the lawn or dealing with household chores, everyday jobs and even emergencies.

President, above all, what Helping Little Hands provides is practical support from people who know exactly what they are going through. This is a worthy, worthy cause and I am pleased to share its work with the house.

NATIVE FOREST — LOGGING — TRANSITION PACKAGE*Statement*

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [6.26 pm]: I would like to report back to the house about a visit I made on Monday to Manjimup with Hon Dr Steve Thomas and Hon James Hayward for a public rally and meeting regarding the announcement a couple of days prior to that about the native hardwood sector. I certainly did not try to make the mistake of telling those people anything about the forestry industry. They live and breathe it. Manjimup has been a timber town for over 100 years and the people attending that rally certainly knew a lot more about the sector than I did, and I guess more than the Minister for Forestry as well. We will discuss the rights and wrongs of that decision, but I want to relate to members a conversation I had. I made the mistake of referring to the number of “jobs”. Hon Dr Sally Talbot and I discussed the other day how many jobs would be affected. I was halfway through making that point when the deputy shire president of Manjimup, a woman called Jayde Darin, said, “Stop talking about jobs. We’re not jobs, we’re people. We’re St John’s volunteers, we sit on the P&C, we’re involved in our kids’ schools, we’re members of the church and we’re volunteers at aged-care facilities.” She is not directly involved in the timber industry but she knows lots of people who are. That really struck a chord with me.

Occasionally in this place, when we are removed from these sorts of circumstances, we talk about jobs and numbers. It is really about people. I will not argue the rights and wrongs of that decision tonight, but its impact on those people’s lives is real. I got to meet them on Monday during the very sobering couple of hours we spent in Manjimup. I hope the government is sincere in reaching out to these people. There were feelings of anger and disappointment that the announcement had been made in the Perth hills and not in Manjimup. They want to see representatives of government. I am sure that will happen. They would like to sit down across the table and discuss what their futures hold. They are nervous, as members would imagine. They deserve some respect and members of the government driving south to Manjimup, Nannup and Greenbushes to sit down and work out what the transition package might look like and what the future holds for those towns. It was a privilege to attend that meeting as a member of the Western Australian Parliament.

House adjourned at 6.28 pm
