

METRONET — COSTINGS

Motion

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [1.02 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that at a staggering capital cost of \$13 billion, the enormous 400 per cent blowout in Metronet has impeded, and continues to thwart, the planning and delivery of other important infrastructure projects across the entirety of Western Australia;
- (b) notes that Metronet’s expected recurrent costs, including future Public Transport Authority operating subsidies, will constrain expenditure on the delivery of other key government services across and beyond the future estimates period, and weaken Western Australia’s future capacity to respond to deepening problems and changing circumstances; and
- (c) acknowledges that the Minister for Transport’s seven years of grossly mismanaging the Metronet project are indicative of the Cook Labor government’s incompetence and fixation on wrong priorities.

The PRESIDENT: Members, Hon Tjorn Sibma has moved that motion and the question is that the motion be agreed.

Hon Stephen Dawson: No.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: An unsurprising interjection, President. It is unsurprising because the government has demonstrated over the course of at least the last three years an inability or lack of will to confront the truth, to see the facts as they are —

Hon Stephen Dawson: The truth? You can’t handle the truth!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Wow! This is great. They often say that politics is a poor person’s or an ugly person’s show business. I think everybody is reasonably attractive, but I do not want this debate to degenerate too swiftly and for the interjections to come in a way that will impede me from providing this chamber with some very important facts. I will start with the facts and go back to two core documents. These core documents originate from none other than the Minister for Transport, now also the Treasurer, Rita Saffioti, and her partner not in crime but in business at that occasion, Hon Ben Wyatt. This was during a period when they were on the cusp of the government. They were young, hungry, energetic and ready to leave a political legacy that, I will argue, we will pay for rather than themselves. What is this legacy and to which documents am I referring? I am referring to two documents published on 6 February 2017. They are two press statements and a press statement with an appendix. The first one is headed “Liberals’ Metronet ‘analysis’ shows why they cannot be trusted” with a range of disparagements cast by Rita Saffioti largely at the then government as it interpreted what the Labor opposition, now Labor government, was proposing to do with its pet project, Metronet.

It is very important that we go back to these core documents, because at this stage they indicate what Metronet was supposed to be in scope, scale, cost and the like. In fact, they were so pleased with themselves at that time that they were given a tick of approval by an allegedly independent review. Perhaps that tick of approval was appropriate when presented with what Metronet was then intended to be. It is very important to put on the record now that Metronet was intended to be a staged program—a phased program. There was not much detail about what further stages might be, but stage 1 was very clear. What was stage 1? It included the Forrestfield–Airport Link, the Thornlie–Cockburn Link, the Yanchep extension of the Joondalup line, the Morley–Ellenbrook line, the Byford extension of the Armadale line, a program of new and existing train station upgrades, improved signalling, the remediation of four level crossings and 78 rail cars. The cost of this was intended to be \$2.945 billion, slightly under \$3 billion. This program was intended to be delivered over the course of about six years from 2017.

On the face of that, that looks like a reasonable although ambitious investment in the extension of the public transport network, which I have said repeatedly. But what happened? Everything blew out in time, scale, scope and the intended delivery timeline. Let me cite some examples. The Thornlie–Cockburn dimension was promised to be delivered at a cost of \$474 million. The latest budget papers reveal an estimated total cost of \$1.35 billion. The Yanchep extension, originally promised at a cost of \$386 million, is now forecast to cost \$1.27 billion. The Morley–Ellenbrook line, originally promised at a cost of \$863 million, is now likely to cost \$1.65 billion. The Byford extension of the Armadale line, originally costed at \$291 million, is now forecast to cost \$1.34 billion.

The level crossing program then materialised and it has grown out of all proportion. It was originally proposed that it would cost something in the order of \$257 million to deal with four level crossings. That has since been expanded into two programs: the elevated Armadale line rail project through Victoria Park, and some ancillary works. The Armadale line work was not promised originally but was added on later, and it comes at a cost of

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\$1.67 billion. The railcar program has also grown out of all proportion. It was originally a \$410 million commitment to build 78 railcars. We now have two railcar programs operating separately. One is an acquisition program and the other is a replacement program. They come at a combined cost of \$1.4 billion. The total cost now is slightly more than \$13 billion.

I have been given responsibility by the opposition to effectively ride shotgun on Metronet. I have had this job for only two years. The first thing I had to do was to try to capture where all the money is going, and why. I have estimated the cost of Metronet in each successive budget response speech I have given. My first, very modest, estimation was \$10 billion. Every time I have put a figure to the public I have deliberately led with my chin so that, in a figurative way, I might be disabused of my calculations, but that has never happened. In fact, I think I have perhaps underestimated the cost somewhat, because the Treasurer; Minister for Transport has not rebuked me for my calculations, nor contradicted or disputed them.

Therefore, it cannot be argued that limb (a) of my motion stands in defiance of any of the facts. But one might ask: how have the costs grown, and why? The stock standard responses to that from the Treasurer; Minister for Transport have largely followed this narrative: “Well, there was COVID”; “Well, there were disruptions to the global supply chain”; “Well, there was the Russian invasion of Ukraine”. But there has never been an explanation as to why there was a deliberate attempt to grow the scale and scope of the program in light of, and in full appreciation of, those externalities. If those external pressures had happened to the program as previously devised and constrained, it would have provided the Treasurer; Minister for Transport some justification, but with each successive budget—through COVID, through disruptions to the global supply chain, through shortages in the labour market, through cost escalations of materials, and through geopolitical uncertainty—the minister has taken deliberate steps to grow the program. This was done in full comprehension of what was going on elsewhere. Responsibility for the blowout has to be accepted, but it has instead been discarded and walked past. This is another one of those moments when the opposition will attempt to drag the government back to accept responsibility for what it is doing.

I should also say that the “investment”—in scare quotes, because an investment in the conventional sense is something that gives us a return—or the decision to grow Metronet was made in full recognition of the very modest to negative benefit–cost ratios that applied to each project sub-element.

In the last budget estimates phase of 2023–24, I requested, in questions I asked prior to the estimates hearings, that the Minister for Transport provide the benefit–cost ratios for those Metronet subprojects. The majority returned a benefit–cost ratio of approximately 1.3 to 1.4, and that would be about the median or the most frequently cited benefit–cost ratio. A couple exceed that: the Yanchep rail extension and the railcar acquisition project.

I draw attention to the benefit–cost ratios for the Byford rail extension and the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal. These projects cost \$3 billion between them. It costs \$1.34 billion for the Byford rail extension and \$1.67 billion for the rail elevation through Victoria Park. The benefit–cost ratio is 0.45, or 45¢ in the dollar, for the Byford rail extension, and the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal project provides a benefit–cost ratio of 0.36, which is a return of 36¢ in the dollar. The Minister for Transport knows this because she provided me with that information in an answer to a question.

Deliberate decisions were made, effectively, to fund projects that will not give an economic return, and this all comes at a severe opportunity cost. I have crafted this motion so that the full implications of that opportunity cost can be remarked on across the health, housing, police and education portfolios or wherever we would like to look. The problems reside not just in the massive capital expenditure blowout but also in the implications of this excessive investment in a constrained period and the implications if it is considered against the likely patronage, the ordinary and now elevated annual running costs of the infrastructure, and the annual fare subsidy that will be required.

Here we have a clue about what this costs presently. Towards the back of budget paper No 3, on page 322, is a useful table called “Expenses from the general government sector to public corporations”. The headline is the subsidisation accruing to the Public Transport Authority. If we look at the bottom of the table, we can determine that the operating subsidies accumulating to the PTA are in the order of \$1.394 billion for budget year 2024–25. Not all of that amount relates to the metropolitan rail network, but it substantially does; almost 90 per cent, if not more, of it does. The subsidisation will only grow as the other elements of the line come on track. As it stands, the running costs of the rail and bus networks in Perth are in the order of \$1.5 billion to \$1.6 billion annually, and that excludes the subsidisation figure I just read. Presently, it is reasonable to assess that the full running costs of Metronet, once all the stations are built and the lines are commissioned, are likely to be in the order of \$2.5 billion annually, if not more, by the end of this decade.

It is then worth comparing what that \$2.5 billion, or thereabouts, would get us. I recommend that interested members read the individual portfolio funding appropriations in the budget papers because they will see figures the likes of \$1.16 billion or \$1.7 billion to run the entirety of the justice system in Western Australia, and that includes courts, prisons and the like. It costs \$1.8 billion annually to run the Western Australia Police Force. These

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are the comparisons that we might reflect upon. This is no great artifice of mine. This is no fabrication. The facts are plain, and nobody here, as much as they might wish to, can argue against some fundamental economic laws more than they can argue against fundamental physical laws. One of the principal economic arguments here is that there is always a balance in the ledger. As much as the government might like to pat itself on the back or congratulate itself on record asset investment, or more properly put, asset expenditure, it has to appreciate that there is a liability column that matches the asset column—always; that is a fundamental principle of accounting. Investments made in certain dimensions come at the expense of investments to be made elsewhere, and I think that it is appropriate that the next facet of business, the consideration of committee reports, has listed at the top of the agenda “the funding of homelessness services in Western Australia”. The amount devoted to funding the elevation of rail through Victoria Park, Canning, has come at the cost of enormous investment in social housing, for example, if one wished to draw that example.

What then is a future government to do? I have made the argument, which outside of this chamber seemed to get the grudging acknowledgement and concurrence from the former Labor Treasurer Hon Eric Ripper at a social function, that this kind of expenditure creates a legacy—yes, a political legacy, but also a financial legacy. My argument is that it is not wrong to invest in public transport, it is something that a government needs to do, but this expenditure is not an investment. It creates a massive liability because the length of track, the scale of the network, has been doubled in length when we have not seen a commensurate increase in patronage. Unfortunately, Metronet is the project that will devour future budgets and restrain future governments from dealing with crises as they emerge because the recurrent budget will be gobbled up by Metronet commitments. It is one of the most reckless spends I have ever seen a government engage in, and it has engaged in it willingly, blithely and irresponsibly. We will have no other option but to sweat the assets and make Metronet work, but the minister has no idea how to do it.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [1.23 pm]: I emphatically support this motion, and I thank Hon Tjorn Sibma for bringing it to the house, and particularly for his very comprehensive analysis of the blowout of Metronet. Regardless of everything else, that standalone project in its entirety has blown out of all proportion, and that inevitably has a direct impact on service delivery to Western Australians. That is what I want to pick up on in the part (b) of the motion. It reminds me very much of when I first started in this place in opposition; the service delivery at that time was similar to what it is now. State governments are judged on the delivery of services. Fundamentally, the public of a jurisdiction judges its state government on the delivery of the fundamental services of transport, health, education and law and order—they always have, and they always will—because that is the domain of state governments. The big picture stuff, such as taxes, defence et cetera, is left to the federal government and bins, rubbish et cetera are left to local governments. The role of state government is service delivery. Members may remember that back in 2005 and 2006 just prior to that infamous 2008 state election, we ran out of gas and electricity; we had massive teacher shortages, the lowest paid teachers in the nation and the lowest resourced schools in the nation; patients were on trolleys in hospitals and the great escape happened at the law courts on St Georges Terrace. Basically, service delivery was appalling. If we move on another 20 years, not much has changed under this Labor government. The health system is in crisis and law and order is out of control. The latest Productivity Commission report, which was handed down yesterday, shows that education funding has declined appreciably compared with that in other jurisdictions. That is a shame because when the Barnett government was in power, we had the highest paid teachers in the nation by any comparison and the highest funded schools in the nation by any comparison. What goes around comes around. We are back there again with a second-term Labor government and service delivery is found wanting. I have no issues with the Labor government’s almost obsession with Metronet, but the other aspects of service delivery are low-hanging fruit and, unfortunately, the Western Australian public is suffering as a direct result.

The one area that I want to talk about today, which I talk about constantly because it is part of my shadow responsibilities, is law and order. The latest figures speak for themselves. That is not the Leader of the Opposition saying that; they are the government’s figures. Every single area of law and order in Western Australia has reached record proportions. Members should look at the Western Australia Police Force website to see what I am talking about.

One of the things that has led to that is the problem of not just attracting police recruits, but also retaining police officers. Members will be pleased to know that I will not go through yesterday’s prolonged contribution about problems with the police force. Suffice to say, about seven or eight months ago, I noticed a shift in the rhetoric of the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police when it was becoming blatantly obvious to everyone—apart from the minister—that the government was not going to reach its target of 950 recruits by 30 June this year. Everyone except the minister was saying that the government would not meet that target. I went through all that yesterday. The rhetoric changed a little bit. We started to get juvenile comments at the end of answers to questions, such as “Since 2017, this government has added an additional 500 officers since the Barnett government.” The government is talking about that again. We always get that from the minister; he needs to grow up! The minister wants us to forget about the 950 additional officers and compare the numbers with those under the Barnett government.

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Let us also have a look at the population under the Barnett government. I received responses from both the minister, and the commissioner during an estimates hearing three or four months ago, that we have 500 more police officers than we had in 2017. In March 2017, there were 6 427 police officers. In March 2024, we had an additional 724 police officers. The number is around 500, give or take 50, because the figure goes up, comes down and basically continues to come down. The population of Western Australia in March 2017 was 2.57 million. The population in March this year was 2.9 million, which is an additional 330 000 people. In March 2017, there was one police officer for every 400 people in Western Australia. In March this year, there was one police officer for every 413 people. In anyone's language, that means that there are fewer police on the streets than there were under the Barnett government. No matter which way this minister goes, he just could not make this stuff up. Keep on talking about the additional 500 police officers—that means nothing to the people out there who are suffering at the hands of record crime throughout Western Australia, particularly in the regions.

I will show that I am not being selective. I have been all over the state with these statistics. I will read in a couple. Against the five-year average, the latest statistics, which came out a month ago, show that selected crimes against a person are up by 19.7 per cent. Family-related offences, that is, domestic violence incidents, are up by 41 per cent in Western Australia. Selected offences against property are down by 1.7 per cent. Of course, a lot of that comes from the fact that after the COVID pandemic et cetera, a lot of people were staying at home. That is the same with the situation with drugs. Selected offences against a person or property are up by 9.9 per cent. In effect, crimes increased from 266 032 to 273 774 over that period.

In the regions it is parlous; it is shocking. Members just need to have a look at these statistics. People living in Broome, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton or even in Busselton do not need these statistics; they can just leave their car out overnight or go for a walk along the street at night to see whether crime has gone up. In regional Western Australia, there were 56 056 crimes in 2020. In 2023, three years later at the end of last year, there were 75 532. That figure has increased from 56 000 to 75 000. There were 8 636 cases of stealing in 2020 and 13 090 at the end of 2023. Breaches of violence restraining orders went from 4 245 in 2020 to 5 783 in 2023. There is a major problem there. Where is the largest shortage of blue uniformed officers? In the country. There are shortages in literally every regional policing district at the moment.

Let us have a look at Joondalup. In 2020, it went from 1 624 crimes to 1 978 crimes. Family and domestic violence incidents went from 130 to 149 and stealing from 727 to 970. I will have a look at Victoria Park in the south east. In 2020, there were 1 215 crimes in 2020 and 1 687 at the end of 2023 last year. Family and domestic violence incidents went from 58 in 2020 to 74 in 2023 and stealing from 438 in 2020 to 725 by the end of 2023. That captures this first quarter as well. In Kwinana, crimes went from 298 in 2020 to 579 in 2023. In Midland out in the east, crimes went from 3 180 in 2020 to 3 219 at the end of 2023. In Perth, crimes went from 9 238 in 2020 to 11 779 in 2023.

Just listen to this: in Broome, there were 2 827 crimes in 2020, and last year, there were 4 428. That is almost double the number of crimes. In addition to that, there were 348 instances of stealing in 2020 with 608 last year. There were 251 breaches of violence restraining orders in 2020 and 408 in 2023.

Wherever you go, the story is the same. In Busselton, there were 704 crimes in 2020 and 968 in 2023. In Geraldton, there were 1 458 crimes in 2020 and 2 026 in 2023. Those figures are from all over the state—north, south, east and west. It is in the metropolitan area and in the regions—not to leave anyone out. The unsavoury yet real situation is that crime is out of control. Contrary to the rhetoric that we have constantly heard from the Minister for Police over the last three and a half years, there are fewer police officers per head of population now than there were under the Barnett government. Members can look at those figures. I do not make them up. They are from the government's own figures. The population has increased by 330 000 people, which means there are fewer police officers now than in 2017. I do not like revealing those figures. They are the government's own figures. When we hear the nonsense that comes out of the mouth of the minister on this, I cannot help but reinforce that point because, quite frankly, the minister has a tin ear. If you go out there, as I said, and ask people whether or not they feel safe on the streets or safe in their homes now, of course they are going to say no, particularly in the regions of Western Australia.

One area of particular concern to everyone in this chamber, particularly at the moment, is domestic violence. There is a national plague of domestic violence. That is replicated here in Western Australia. We have seen that relentlessly and constantly with hideous stories of domestic violence incidents, some resulting in death. We have to make sure that we as a society do better, but the government also needs to do better, without a shadow of a doubt. I am surprised about this. I asked a question back in 2021 —

Point of Order

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Today we are dealing with a motion in relation to Metronet and its impacts. The member is welcome to make contributions on whatever issue he wants at various times. This is about Metronet, and he is steering off course.

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Hon PETER COLLIER: No; I am not. Look at part (b) of the motion.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is drawing to the house's attention matters that relate, in particular, I understand to part (b) of the motion; therefore, I consider that there is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER COLLIER: I made it quite clear at the beginning of my contribution.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Perhaps I misheard.

Hon PETER COLLIER: At the beginning, I said I acknowledge the amount of money spent on Metronet, but it has been done to the detriment of service industries. That is why I went through that. It is a specific part of the motion.

In 2021, I asked how many officers were designated to domestic violence. The answer was —

All frontline officers can respond to family violence matters. In addition, 90 officers are currently allocated to family violence response teams and work with Department of Communities' staff.

I asked again in 2023, and the number had been reduced to 87.65. The number of dedicated police officers for family and domestic violence has actually gone down. I then asked in May of this year, just a couple of weeks ago, and the number was 83.35. The number has gone up by one, but it is lower now than it was three years ago. I want to make that clear to everyone in this room. When we talk about domestic violence, I want members to understand that there are now fewer police officers dedicated to the family and domestic violence unit than there were three years ago. Unless the minister has misled the house, that is a fact. That is concerning.

I have also asked, on a number of occasions, for the number of arrests for family and domestic violence, as is my responsibility as shadow minister. I am sure that people want to know. The figures are confronting. Members will know, from the crime statistics I provided earlier, that family and domestic violence is prevalent right throughout the state. In August 2021, I asked how many family and domestic violence incidents police had attended and how many arrests had been made. I got the answer straightaway. The question was without notice, but I got the answer straightaway, so it was available at the push of a button. That was in August 2021. That is probably when the minister had some decent advisers in his office. What happened is that the advisers got the response from WAPOL and they just gave it to me; they did not try to put some political spin on it. The figures were confronting. I will not go through the whole lot because it will consume too much time, but, for example, there were 58 571 incidents in 2020–21 and the number of outcomes, in terms of arrests, was 16 098. The police attended 58 000 incidents and had 16 000 outcomes, or arrests. That is extraordinary. That is not a slight on the government. All I am saying is that the minister was able to provide those statistics. It is compelling that there were so many incidents and so few arrests, but, of course, domestic violence is a complex area that is interwoven with complex relationships. That has not changed, unfortunately. If we look at the last round of statistics, we will see that in 23 per cent of incidents the perpetrators received sanctions. That means that fewer than one in four perpetrators of domestic violence are arrested. I asked exactly the same questions in May 2023 —

- (1) How many family and domestic violence incidents were attended in 2021 and 2022?
- (2) How many arrests were made in each year as a result of attending incidents referred to in (1)?

I was given the answer to the first part. The figures were confronting yet again—almost 60 000 incidents were attended in both years. However, the answer to the second part was —

As this question requires extraction to be undertaken that will remove staff from operational priorities, the WA Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frame. It is requested the honourable member place the question on notice.

I did that. Members will remember that I got the answer to that question 12 months earlier, so obviously the advisers in the minister's office had changed. I put the question on notice and got the number of domestic violence incidents and outcomes. They pretty much mirrored the year before—around 60 000 incidents and around 16 000 outcomes. Those figures are disturbing in anyone's language; so many incidents of domestic violence go unsanctioned. Again, that is not a reflection on the government. I understand that a lot of that has to do with the relationships themselves. My issue was that the minister could not provide that information. I asked exactly the same question a month ago. I asked how many family and domestic violence incidents had been attended last year and the year before, and how many arrests were made. I was given the number of incidents—it is always around 60 000; I have got used to that—but then the answer to the second question was —

The Western Australia Police Force is unable to provide a response as the number of arrests resulting from the above incidents cannot be determined in a reliable and systematic manner. Manual interrogation of each incident is required to ensure the family violence incidents attended on the police computer aided dispatch system are directly linked to the arrests recorded in the police incident management system.

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How could it be provided in two previous years but not this year? I asked this follow-up question the next day —

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

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

The response was —

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

You cannot make this stuff up! Then I did get a response back and it states —

The Western Australia Police Force are unable to link arrests recorded in Incident Management System, (IMS) to the attended Family Violence, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) tasks as these are different systems/databases.

But why could they do it for the previous two years? How can we possibly confront the scourge of domestic violence if we cannot even get an accurate number of incidents and arrests? Is this government going backwards? How on earth can it provide me the response to those questions in 2021 and last year, but it cannot do it this year because it apparently has some new you-beaut computer system? It is gobsmacking, President. Having said that, crime is definitely out of control in Western Australia. It is one of the essential service industries in Western Australia. I do not mind if the government wants to hang its hat on Metronet, but do not do it to the detriment of the service industries in this state.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [1.46 pm]: I rise to also support this motion. Hon Tjorn Sibma mentioned earlier the young, hungry and energetic opposition in 2017. I think we are now dealing with an old, tired and lost government that has lost sight of its original vision. I keep reminding members opposite that we have a Minister for Transport, who is also the Treasurer, and she has, quite frankly, sucked the life out of the budget of other members opposite. They are no doubt concerned about services in the health, housing and law and order areas, just like we are concerned, as outlined in fine detail by Hon Peter Collier. We are the violent crime capital of Australia. We see ambulance ramping at record levels, and yet the services that matter to the people of Western Australia are having the life sucked out of them by a Treasurer; Minister for Transport who is intent on cutting those ribbons by 8 March 2025, by being in a hardhat to get the headlines and the outcomes. Members on this side of the house support public transport. We support sensible public transport and infrastructure spending. However, we are not seeing it done in a sensible, measured way, and that is the key argument today.

We saw a fresh-faced Hon Ben Wyatt on 11 February 2017 come out with the debt reduction strategy, and I will talk a bit about the general impact on the budget of this \$13 billion spend on Metronet. Hon Ben Wyatt’s proposal was to spend 50 per cent of iron ore royalties while the iron ore price was above \$85 a tonne and the GST recovery rate was 65¢ in the dollar. For many years, the government was able to get around that. It was not until the coalition, under Prime Minister Scott Morrison, did the deal with Western Australia to get the GST floor price up. There was no obligation to follow through on that debt reduction strategy, but what we have seen since is effectively money going to a debt reduction account and then basically back-ended through to other projects, particularly Metronet. As I said in my budget reply speech, if we look at the asset investment program of the WA Labor government, we can see the government’s priorities. Metronet is number one, with its expenditure on roads and freeways particularly around the metropolitan area. Then coming in right down the bottom is the Department of Communities, health and those important services, particularly in the justice area.

Those asset investments have been severely curtailed because of the expenditure that has been forced on this project, which has been poorly managed. Contract management is a problem. I go back to the claims of the fresh-faced future Treasurer, Hon Ben Wyatt, who said that he would introduce a debt-reduction strategy. We saw a claim in an article of February 2017 that the then opposition would reduce expenditure on advertising by \$20 million. What did we find out from the Auditor General’s report of 15 May? We found out that between July 2019 and December 2023, state government entities spent at least \$205 million on buying advertising on television, radio, print, social media and other online digital platforms for the government’s campaigns. Over the same time, government trading enterprises spent \$4.5 million on purchasing media places. I have asked questions in this place about how much the government has spent on media. What is the answer I get from the Minister for Finance? The minister tells me to look at the annual reports. There is no transparency whatsoever from this government. It spent \$205 million on advertising when it claimed it would reduce advertising spending by \$20 million to drive savings.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

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Hon NEIL THOMSON: It is the same pattern. Metronet is a \$3 billion project that has blown out to \$13 billion. What does that cost us? I outlined in my reply to the budget that the government received \$58 billion in windfall gains, when comparing the fourth year of the forward estimates with the actual out turn over the life of this government. An additional \$58 billion in revenue has poured into this government's coffers. Despite that, we are seeing quite an insipid impact on debt that is now projected to be \$40.9 billion, which is a record level. According to the budget and the Western Australian Treasury Corporation, Metronet is projected to be a \$13 billion spend at the current projected rate. An interest rate of 3.45 per cent equates to \$448 million a year. We also know that the public transport operating subsidy in 2016–17, which I also outlined in my reply to the budget speech, was \$799 million. It is now nearer to \$1.4 billion. That is the closest number I can get at the moment. It is projected to be about \$2 billion in the future.

The problem with this government is that its priorities are not in the right place. That amount is equivalent to building a whole Fiona Stanley Hospital every year at a time when we have record ambulance ramping and it takes two years for a child to see a paediatrician. I met with a dentist the other day who said that there is a three-year waiting list for kids to attend a dental clinic at primary school. Dental health is a real problem across Western Australia because not enough dental technicians are available. These are the things that really matter to Western Australians. Having a healthy life and being able to see the specialists that people need to see and get the world-class treatment they should be getting in a state as rich as Western Australia matters to Western Australians. People having a roof over their head without having to pay a fortune and making sure that Western Australia has enough housing matters to Western Australians. We know that the government's investment in social housing over the last couple of years has been at record low levels. It is only in the last couple of years, before the next election, that suddenly the government has decided that it needs to throw some money at the problem, but it cannot even get the builders to do the job to put a roof over people's heads. We also have a rental accommodation crisis in Western Australia, particularly in the regional centres. People being safe in their own home really matters to Western Australians. They are the things that really matter to Western Australians. Although we all want to have a good and modern public transport system, the problem is that it has been done too hard and too fast, all for the ego of a certain Treasurer; Minister for Transport.

I say to members opposite to speak up in their party room and in their cabinet room so that their voices can be heard and so that the issues that concern them will be highlighted and become a priority for the government. I am sure that many members opposite deep down in their heart of hearts share the same concerns as the people of Western Australia about services. Their concerns are the same concerns that members opposite have. The problem is that we have a Minister for Transport; Treasurer who is happy to agree with the statement that she is the best Treasurer—even though she has done only one budget—in Australia and the best Treasurer ever. The hubris of it all! We would be much better off if we had managed that project in a more structured way and kept an eye on contract management, particularly. This has not been the case because we have a massive \$10 billion budget blowout. We have seen a blowout in the opportunity cost, as outlined by Hon Tjorn Sibma, on interest that has to be paid and on employing all those grano and steel sector workers. Those operators and trades might otherwise have been available in the construction sector during one of the tightest times in our market, with record low construction.

It will be up to a Liberal-led government to sort it out and make sure this asset, which is pretty much committed, will work properly. That is where we see this government's failure in the planning piece. It is a complete failure. It has been unable to get on top of the issue of getting density into the right places to drive that accommodation piece that needs to be done. That is where the work should have been done. In fact, it would have been smart to spend a little less on Metronet and get that system working and then deliver all the headworks that needed to be delivered in and around those key transit-orientated development train stations. The only solution we have to make this asset work so that it does not drain the future budgets of our future generations is to get patronage up. There is no planning, and we have to do more work.

I am a big proponent of better planning and better investment to make sure that we get our assets working. The term used by Hon Tjorn Sibma was “sweating the asset”. That asset needs to sweat. It is not going to sweat at the moment with a benefit–cost ratio of some of the things that we are talking about. A benefit–cost ratio of 0.4 is not sweating the asset. That gold-plated asset is not actually delivering for the people of Western Australia. We have to make sure that Metronet works. That is why it will come down to a Liberal-led government to make sure it works. We will do the job to properly populate the precincts in and around Metronet stations so that people could actually live a life, if they so choose, whereby they can walk to a train, get on and go and enjoy services that they normally would have to travel to in a car. That is the only solution.

We have a problem because no real serious planning has been done. The metropolitan regional development authority put out a paper in 2021, which I was reading earlier, about trying to do some work on the east line precincts. We have talked to people in the development sector. I talk to them and they say they cannot make it stack up economically. We must get to the point at which the private sector can actually deliver. The Property Council of Australia says that

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it is almost impossible to develop an apartment that is suitable for a family in Western Australia for around \$700 000. That is not affordable accommodation. We have to do more to make sure there is an affordable product so that people can choose, if they wish, to live in an apartment and to live their life in that high-density area around the precinct and go down the lift, jump on a train and go to the shops or find a childcare centre or a school. I am giving the Minister for Transport some advice here, if she chooses to listen to it. The problem is that there are hardly any public schools within walking distance of Metronet stations. There are a few private schools nearby that families from the higher socio-economic group will be able to afford, so their kids could get to those private schools on the train. The government can give away all the free tickets it likes for children to catch the train to school, but most of that will go to the people who can afford to pay transport costs because few public schools are located within 100 metres of a Metronet station. There is not much by way of services around those stations. I have done an analysis on that, so I know.

Hon Kate Doust interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Members opposite can go on about it, but I have done the analysis. I have looked at it in detail in terms of sport and leisure services. It is hard to get access to all those things. I looked at health services and, most importantly, employment. The challenge for Western Australia is that not many of its employment centres are accessible by public transport. A young tradie might want to get out to Wangara or wherever, but it is a challenge because Perth is such a spread-out city. Those sorts of challenges can be addressed only through proper planning and by making sure that those Metronet stations work with density. We have seen an appalling lack of planning by this government. It is all about putting on a hard hat and a fluoro jacket and getting out there and announcing things. No serious planning has happened at all. An obvious example of that is the cost blowout of this program—absolutely appalling. Of course, we know that we cannot rely on the government to tell us anything about what is going on because of its secrecy around Metronet. We saw this happen in government advertising with the fresh-faced Hon Ben Wyatt making all those promises. Sadly, we have ended up with a tired, worn-out government that is not able to deliver the services that matter for the people of Western Australia. That is the problem we have today.

The other day, I was at the Australian Energy Producers conference. I must say, it did not fill me with inspiration or hope when it comes to this government. I really hope, for the sake of Western Australians, that on 8 March 2015, we have a Mettam Liberal government.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You said 2015! Back to the future.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Sorry, 2025. Thank you, honourable member, for reminding me. I was just having a moment reliving the good times. Back then we could actually deliver for the future prosperity of Western Australians, and it was a year in which there was peak capex private sector investment in the mining sector. We are not seeing that now because we have \$318 billion worth of projects in the approvals pipeline, and all we get is platitudes from Minister Whitby about that. Those projects will fund the huge operating losses of the Metronet program. Those projects will fund the interest payments on the capital investment. Those projects will fund the future expenditure that will be sorely needed in the health sector because it has been put on hold and not a single tertiary health facility has been put in place under this government. We have seen the consequences of that and all the other disinvestment going on in Western Australia, including in the education system, as was so clearly outlined by Hon Peter Collier.

I will get back to this point about Minister Whitby who made a comment at that conference.

Hon Stephen Dawson: It is Minister Whitby's sixtieth birthday today.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: , I hope that he does not say that that will be the standard operating system for Western Australians when we do not have reliable power in Western Australia. I hope Minister Whitby contemplates that matter, as we see the power cuts in Kalgoorlie today and the ongoing situation there. This was the comment by Minister Whitby. He said decarbonisation will be the biggest project, ever, in the history of Western Australian governments. Already in the budget, \$5.6 billion is set aside for decarbonisation. Again, decarbonisation is a very noble cause indeed, but there is no transparency about the effectiveness of that spend. There is no transparency whatsoever. It is just like the Metronet project where there is no transparency whatsoever. That is a real problem. I do not trust this government. I certainly do not trust the Treasurer, given her track record in the Metronet cost blowouts. I do not trust this Treasurer. I do not think she is the best Treasurer ever. I think this Treasurer might have been a keen, fresh-faced Minister for Transport but after seven years in the job she has lost sight of the original objective. She has been too long in the job—time is up. If the project is going to be more than \$5.6 billion—we expect it could be—who knows what the decarbonisation project will cost. That is a problem because, again, we could face headwinds. We talk about that in relation to the budget. Those headwinds or royalty under-estimates will keep coming in. That will be a problem.

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [2.06 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on behalf of the government this afternoon and indicate, at the outset, that we will not be

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supporting this ludicrous motion before the house. I also acknowledge that it is Minister Whitby's sixtieth birthday. I congratulate him on reaching this age and thank him for the great job he does in the energy and environment portfolios. The previous speaker might want to check the *Hansard* because he referred to the Minister for Finance as not giving him stuff and sending him to the budget papers. I think he means the Treasurer. He might want to check the *Hansard* and correct that, if it is not the case.

What does the motion before us today show? Once again, it shows the Liberal Party is out of touch—plain and simply out of touch. What does it have against the people of Butler, Byford, Mandurah or Ellenbrook? Why do Liberal members not want them to have a train line? Shame. Why should not the good burghers of Butler or Byford have the same train line as the people of Cottesloe? Absolutely, they should.

The people of Western Australia have twice endorsed Metronet at an election. Unlike members of the Liberal Party, we keep our promises when it comes to public transport—members opposite do not, but we do. Our Metronet program continues to go from strength to strength and it continues to be supported by the people of Western Australia. We have now completed eight Metronet projects, including the Forrestfield–Airport Link and the Denny Avenue level crossing removal project. Bayswater station has been completed. All the platforms and the track work are ready for later in the year to have the full lot of services through that station. They will be connected to the Morley–Ellenbrook line—another line that is absolutely supported by the people of Western Australia. The first WA-made C-series trains were introduced into service earlier this year, delivering on our commitment to return railcar manufacturing to Western Australia. Guess what the people of Western Australia think about that? They love it because, many years after members opposite closed the Midland Railway workshops, putting thousands out of a job, trains are finally being made in WA again, employing Western Australian people. The Yanchep —

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I would remind members that that word, whoever did say it, is actually considered unparliamentary.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: I was going to say that next the Yanchep rail extension will be ready to open. That is due to be completed in the second half of the year—not too far away. What will the people of the northern suburbs think? They will love the train because it will connect them to the city and make it easier to get to their jobs. What has the opposition got against the people of Ellenbrook? It is outrageous. Another 10 projects are also underway at various stages of development from procurement and initial planning to delivery. They, too, will be supported by Western Australians. A total of 10 Metronet projects are expected to be completed by the end of 2024, including the Yanchep rail extension and the Morley–Ellenbrook line. In fact, by the end of next year, all the new lines that we committed to at the 2017 election will be completed. It will make the lives of Western Australians so much easier.

Metronet is widely supported across the community, as it is in Canberra, by not just the current federal government, but also the last federal Liberal–National government, because of course we have been delighted to partner with federal governments of both persuasions to deliver Metronet. We note the significant support of the former Liberal–National government. It likes trains, but the opposition does not. I will quote the former federal Liberal minister for urban infrastructure, Paul Fletcher, who on 16 March 2022 said —

Working in close partnership with the WA Government, we are getting on with the job of delivering critical infrastructure projects that improve public transport connections and congestion for communities across Perth, and provide a boost to local jobs and the economy.

Since 2017 we have been able to secure \$5.5 billion from the federal government, the commonwealth, to Metronet.

Opposition members like to mislead people about costs. What they fail to acknowledge is that the scope of Metronet projects has changed and grown significantly since the 2017 election, with a significant number of new projects added to it. Since 2017, we have significantly increased the number of level crossings to be removed from four to 15. We have increased the number of train stations from 18 to 23. We have increased the number of railcars being made in Western Australia from 78 to 246, creating local jobs, keeping people employed and of course in doing so, delivering significant and better outcomes for communities across our suburbs.

Of course, for all projects, whether public or private, global cost pressures have impacted things such as concrete, labour and steel, and have significantly added to costs. That is happening across the world. We have seen global and local level disruption to supply chains that has driven unforeseen cost increases across the construction sector. Western Australia is not an orphan in that regard. It is happening here, over east and in many places around the world. These events were largely unforeseeable and have impacted all aspects of construction work from 2019. Whether someone is building a patio at home or a rail line, the price has gone up. That is the reality.

The cost of key materials for civil construction has increased significantly since 2019. That includes a 35 per cent increase in the cost of concrete pipes and culverts, a 62 per cent increase in the price of reinforcing steel, and an 84 per cent increase in the price of diesel fuel. We have worked with agencies like the Water Corporation or

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Western Power when we have needed asset relocations for Metronet projects, which were not always known at the time of the tender process. In many cases we discovered ageing infrastructure, and so we made a decision as part of the project to upgrade that infrastructure, to make sure it is around for another hundred years. We are now delivering not only train lines, but also water and power infrastructure for future generations. Importantly, projects have delivered significant improvements to network utility assets in the region. We have managed these cost pressures by working with industry to smooth the pipeline of works, with our price per kilometre of rail still the best value of any in the country. We are delivering 72 kilometres of new track and 23 new stations and removing 15 level crossings for less than the cost of a single smaller project over east. When people jump on these new rail lines, they will pay some of the lowest fares in the country. That is because our government has taken significant steps to make sure that public transport is more affordable and accessible for Western Australians. In fact, in January 2022, public transport fees were capped at the cost of a two-zone fare, saving people who live in Perth's outer suburbs and who commute into the city hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars a year. For a commuter travelling from Dawesville to the CBD for work every day, that means more than \$3 000 a year in savings. That is massive.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Why should we not subsidise trains? Why should we not make it easier for people living in Dawesville to access trains, participate in the economy and take on jobs?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Stephen Dawson.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In fact, since February this year, travel on Perth's public transport network has been made free for SmartRider users every Sunday. Not only have we capped prices, we are making it easier, and free on Sundays. For example, for a retail worker who has to work on Sundays, this means savings of about \$350 over the course of a year. Since 5 February this year, travel to and from school, Monday to Friday, has been free for school students using their SmartRider cards. That will save a family with two school-age children up to about \$560 a year—again, further savings. We are using the public transport infrastructure that we are investing in to make it easier for families to participate in society and to send their kids to school. This is in addition to our existing concessions and free off-peak travel for seniors.

In this motion Hon Tjorn Sibma and the Liberal Party have criticised the subsidisation of public transport.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: No, I haven't criticised it.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Read between the lines. Public transport is subsidised right around the world. Fares are subsidised to incentivise people to catch trains. We want them using our infrastructure because if they do not use private vehicles, it will reduce congestion, reduce parking requirements and reduce emissions—which is something that we, on this side of the house, believe is something that the world needs to do. Subsidised public transport also means that people who cannot drive a private vehicle are able to get around affordably and can take part in our society, whether they are young people, seniors or people with disability—people who cannot afford the running costs of a vehicle.

Of course, roads are also subsidised to a huge extent, but this does not rate a mention from the Liberals. If the cost recovery targets for public transport were to be increased, fares would need to increase. That would have several detrimental effects, including increased congestion and reduced mobility for people unable to use a private vehicle. It would also lead to a fare spiral; as people turned to private vehicles and reduced their patronage of public transport, it would necessitate further fare increases to meet cost-recovery targets. To meet a 50 per cent cost-recovery target, the cost of a two-zone fare would need to increase by 267 per cent to \$13.90. Is that what Hon Neil Thomson is suggesting? Is he suggesting that we should increase fares? Shame on him; we should not be.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: This would mean that commuters would pay more than an extra \$3 000 a year.

Point of Order

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I refer to imputations and personal reflections of improper motives. I was not saying that. The minister was incorrect with respect to my motivations in relation to this matter.

The PRESIDENT: Honourable member, while I have received your point of order and have had the opportunity to consider it, I do not think there was anything specific that you were accused of, as the standing order requires. There is no point of order. Minister for Emergency Services.

Debate Resumed

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: Thank you, President. I was saying that if people are suggesting we should have cost recovery and should not be subsidising our train lines in Western Australia, prices are going to go up significantly,

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and we do not believe in that. Western Australians do not deserve that. As I said, Western Australians voted twice for a Labor government; people in this state support Metronet.

The Liberals and Nationals have no credibility when it comes to Metronet—or, indeed, public transport or rail at all. Why is that? Let me remind people.

Hon Louise Kingston interjected.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: The member has not been here that long, but I have been here for a while. Let me remind people why the Liberals and Nationals have no credibility on this issue: it is because they closed the Fremantle line; they decimated regional rail services; they closed the Midland railway workshops; they sold the Westrail freight business; and they privatised our rail freight network. They failed to deliver the Ellenbrook rail line despite their promises in 2008 and 2013. Obviously, they have guilty consciences. They failed to deliver the Metro Area Express rail line; they promised it when they were last in government and then backtracked just before 2016. The former Premier Hon Colin Barnett said, “No, we are not going to do that anymore.” They closed the tier-3 rail network and tried to kill *AvonLink*. It was not just people in the metropolitan area who did not benefit from their policies. People in the bush were also affected by them and faced the wrath of their government. They have always had an issue with public transport. They have always had an issue with train lines. Whether it was the Court, Court or Barnett governments, they have always tried to close train lines and services. They have sold them off.

What makes them frustrated is that we continue to deliver. We continue to build new train lines in this state, provide new services and make it easier for Western Australians to access, use and sit on our trains. We think Western Australians deserve good public transport, and we use public transport to help people not only live in the outer metropolitan area but also live closer to town if they choose to because we are building houses and services around the new train lines and stations.

I do not know what the team on the far side of the chamber has against the people of Ellenbrook, Dawesville, Byford and Butler, but I tell members that it is following a long line of Liberal politicians who hate public transport, particularly trains. We will not live with this. When Hon Tjorn Sibma spoke today, he spoke about core documents; I have given core facts. The Liberal Party and National Party do not like providing trains or public transport to people who live in the suburbs, and that is outrageous. Honourable members, for these reasons, we will not support the motion today.

Amendment to Motion

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON: In fact, I am so incensed by the motion before us that I will move an amendment. I move without notice —

To delete paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) and insert —

- (a) notes that public transport is key to the continued growth and prosperity of Western Australia;
- (b) commends the Cook Labor government’s investment in Metronet, which is creating employment and educational opportunities for people living in Perth’s suburbs;
- (c) condemns the Liberals’ and Nationals’ records of attacks on rail, which includes —
 - (i) closing the Fremantle line;
 - (ii) decimating regional rail services;
 - (iii) closing the Midland railway workshops;
 - (iv) selling the Westrail freight business;
 - (v) privatising our freight rail network;
 - (vi) failing to deliver the twice-promised Ellenbrook rail line;
 - (vii) failing to deliver the Metro Area Express light rail;
 - (viii) closing the tier-3 rail network; and
 - (ix) trying to kill off the *AvonLink*;
- (d) notes that any moves to significantly reduce public transport subsidisation will —
 - (i) increase the cost of living for families;
 - (ii) lead to more congestion; and
 - (iii) isolate some of the most vulnerable members of our community;

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- (e) calls on the Liberal Party to outline its plan to increase public transport fares and privatise services before the next state election.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [2.23 pm]: I will direct my energies to precisely what the house is now being asked to do. I note that this is the second occasion in a row.

Hon Colin de Grussa: Third!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: It is the third! I have been corrected. It is the third occasion in a row when the government has taken the opportunity not to amend a motion on the notice paper but, effectively, to rewrite one. It does not amend a motion but substitutes a motion.

The contents of this amendment, individually and collectively, are a sham and a disgrace to the orderly processes, procedures and traditions that used to be observed by the government in this house, until 2021. The government has been clever and patient enough until the last few sitting weeks to largely conceal the full gamut and range of its parliamentary treachery. But, now, there are preselection battles within gunshot of those opposite that might leave a number of them feeling slightly aggrieved or disappointed, and so they use this as an opportunity to demonstrate tribal purity and ideological hard lines, because that is all they have left. That is evidence this government has given up on treating the processes, procedures and traditions of this chamber with any respect at all. It is a demonstration that the government's policy cupboard is absolutely bare when it comes to explaining precisely how it intends to make its massive expenditure on Metronet work in the short, medium and long term in such a way as not to compromise the delivery of essential services and much-needed infrastructure that all responsible governments are required to deliver, which was precisely the argument put in my motion with its three limbs. I will identify this: not once did the minister attempt to deal with the issue of opportunity cost, but when confronted with the enormous scope of Metronet, he attempted to have it both ways by congratulating the government on the massive expenditure but at the same time complaining about the increases in cost. The government cannot have it both ways.

There is absolutely no way that any person of integrity can accept the amendment moved by the government—not even when they are put under enormous pressure with any livelihood to give up, any pressure, any inducement. It is shameful, desperate and reveals the government's contempt for process and its disdain for responsibility, and, frankly speaking, I am utterly disappointed in the Deputy Leader of the House for having the shameful temerity to move a motion like this. I doubt very much that he would have offered this amendment if it were truly up to him, but he has obviously been induced to do so, and I am very disappointed that he has given in to those overtures. Many of those smug, smiling, nodding faces opposite will not be here next year, but this is the kind of legacy they leave. They can have it, but they will not get it with my willing compliance.

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [2.28 pm]: I stand to make a few remarks and put some facts on the record about amendments, who does what with amendments and a little bit of history of who has done what with amendments. I listened to debate on the amendment just moved in which members opposite talked about contempt of process. I also heard what the Leader of the Opposition said in his budget reply speech yesterday and previously about amendments moved by members of the government; he said that we are destroying the values of this place. That has led me to do a little bit of research, something that those on the other side might like to do themselves. Far from being a contempt of process, far from destroying the house, we are using a component of the standing orders that refers to amendments. There have never been standing orders denying parties the right to move amendments, but somehow using standing orders to do so is a contempt of the process. In previous debates the Leader of the Opposition said —

... motions on notice give a unique opportunity for individual parties to move a motion ... that is the way it is done. It has always been done that way ...

Those comments suggest—indeed, his comments yesterday also suggested this—that such a contempt of process, to use the term used by Hon Tjorn Sibma, did not happen when he was sitting in the seat that I now hold. I beg to differ! History shows otherwise. Indeed, as Hon Stephen Dawson pointed out previously, that is not correct. He referenced Hon Helen Morton, a former member of this place, and the Leader of the Opposition's response by interjection—"That's absolute garbage." That is surprising because having had a quick look at *Hansard*—I do not have the time that I used to have when I sat on the opposition side to do the kind of research that we used to do—this is what we found. In August 2014, who was the Leader of the Government? It was Hon Peter Collier. Hon Sally Talbot moved a motion calling on the Liberal–National government to take action because women had been sexually assaulted in psychiatric hospitals. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment noting the positive actions taken by the government and then Hon Nick Goiran got up and moved an amendment to the amendment. In March 2015, Hon Dr Sally Talbot moved a motion condemning the Barnett government for failing to protect rivers, estuaries and inlets. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment that talked up the actions of the Barnett government. In April 2015, Hon Stephen Dawson moved a motion condemning the Barnett government for the state's Indigenous suicide rate. Hon Helen Morton moved an amendment acknowledging the good work of the Barnett government.

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In February 2016, Hon Darren West moved a motion. An amendment was moved by Hon Martin Aldridge to change the words of that motion. In March 2016, Hon Darren West moved a motion that noted the failure of the Barnett government and Hon Paul Brown moved an amendment to change it.

Who was the Leader of the Government in every one of those instances in which an amendment was moved to congratulate the government of the day? It was Hon Peter Collier. The proposition that what we are doing is somehow destroying the values of the Legislative Council is rubbish; it is not true. I am disappointed that members of the crossbench are out of the house on urgent parliamentary business because I am pretty sure that the narrative is directed at them to try to convince those who do not have the long corporate history that some of us have. There is nothing new about this. There is nothing appalling about this. There is nothing in this that will destroy the values of the Legislative Council. We are using the exact same tactics that were used by Hon Peter Collier when he was the Leader of the Government, and it is nonsense and not true—other words could be used but they would be unparliamentary—to suggest that this is in anyway something new and something that devalues, diminishes or destroys the values of the Legislative Council. I support the amendment.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition) [2.32 pm]: I have obviously struck a nerve with the Leader of the House. I stand by every single comment I made yesterday. If there is —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you mind?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: If there is one person who has destroyed the fabric of this house, it is the Leader of the House—one person. The Leader of the House has on multiple occasions cancelled pairs and moved —

Hon Sue Ellery: Did you or did you not move those amendments?

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am going to get to that. I sat in silence, which is one of the phrases the Leader of the House constantly uses.

I remind members that after the last —

Hon Sue Ellery interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The Leader of the House is very sensitive today after hearing yesterday a few truths that she did not want to hear. This place is a seriously diminished chamber because of the Leader of the House—make no bones about that.

Hon Sue Ellery: Tell the truth!

Hon PETER COLLIER: President, with respect; I cannot hear myself speak.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I remind members that in the three weeks after we won government, multiple members opposite moved multiple motions condemning our government. This was a month after we won government. It completely destroyed the whole purpose of motions on notice. In those days, it was not government then opposition, government then opposition, it was whoever got the motions in first. For the first three years that we were in government, we had to deal with condemnation motions from the opposition. That is how we operated. Of course we are filthy about that. Yet again, it completely destroyed the whole intent of motions. In those days, we had multiple parties. They got no opportunity to do a motion. Fortunately, that changed. We changed the format so that we would give out a roster and there would only be one motion each week. In those days, it was one motion for two weeks. We had motions condemning the Minister for Education, condemning the minister for this and condemning the minister for that. This all happened within a month of us winning government. That is exactly what happened.

Hon Sue Ellery: You were a pretty bad government.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Let us not embellish the situation, Leader of the House. She was 100 per cent complicit in this.

Hon Sue Ellery: Check *Hansard*!

The PRESIDENT: Order.

Hon PETER COLLIER: We had a situation in which we collectively decided to change the standing orders to give every party an opportunity. That has now been eradicated because of the Leader of the House. We now have a situation in which Hon Dr Brad Pettitt had one motion this year and it was taken from him. You guys took it from him.

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Hon Sue Ellery: No we didn't!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, the government did. It moved an amendment.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Sue Ellery: It was amended! Figure out how to debate. Have the capacity to pivot!

Hon PETER COLLIER: Excuse me.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I had actually called order, Leader of the Opposition. I did not need you to do it as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I will remind members that that is exactly what happened. There is one easy solution if the government does not like a motion: vote against it. That is all the government has to do. That is the purpose of motions. Otherwise, get rid of them. It has got rid of everything else. It controls the orders of the day. It controls everything. We do not have a vote on non-government business. The only time that people on this side get a chance to vote on something they believe in is during motions on notice. The government has removed that. For the last three motions it has taken one from the Nationals, one from us and one from the Greens. That is exactly what the government is doing.

Hon Sue Ellery: So vote against the amendments! Switch your arguments to the other way! Have a little bit of flexibility!

Hon PETER COLLIER: See, the Leader of the House is very vulnerable. She knows she is going to finish shortly and she has destroyed this chamber. Every single convention of this chamber has been destroyed because of her actions. She really has destroyed them. Go back and have a look at her track record on some of the motions that she moved and see whether or not they are appropriate. I am saying that this motion has nothing to do with and does not look anything like the motion that we moved. Where is part (b) about the impact on service industries across the state? It is nowhere. If the government wants to have a motion like this —

Hon Sue Ellery: Where is the standing order that says you can't move amendments? Where is it?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon PETER COLLIER: I suggest that if the government wants to have a motion like this, it still has six or seven opportunities the rest of the year to do so. Do it during private members' business. I want to make one thing perfectly clear: the only reason we changed those motions was because the Labor opposition came in and did 15 motions condemning us and that virtually consumed the entirety of our term of government. This government started with the demise of this place back in the last term of government. That is what it did.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [2.38 pm]: This is an amendment that I absolutely and wholeheartedly support. No-one here will be surprised to hear that. I am absolutely staggered by the response from the Leader of the Opposition to what the Leader of the House had to say post-her excellent research. I listened intently and I heard the Leader of the Opposition say, "Do you know what we had to put up with when we won government?" and he talked about everything that we did as the then opposition. All I heard in that was that we were far more organised one month into opposition than the other side is now, seven years into opposition. That is what I heard. I heard that we did it well, knew what we had to do and that we took the role of opposition extremely seriously. We knew what we had to do and how we needed to work and we worked hard. That is why when the opposition was in government, it had to put up with a number of no-confidence motions in a row. We were all playing by the same rules. We are all subject to the standing orders in the same way. We did that in our opening few weeks, and we did it better than the opposition is managing to do now, after seven years. Maybe that is because we were a united party in opposition and did not have two separate party rooms meeting all over the place, or three, if you want to include the Nationals WA. Maybe that is what it was.

Hon Peter Collier in his contribution just asked about the second limb of the original motion and how we have addressed that. Part of that is about weakening Western Australia's future capacity. I will talk about those words because they are quite interesting. When I look at the third limb of the amended motion, it talks a lot about weakening future capacity because it talks to the time a former Liberal-National government closed the Fremantle rail line. I was a child when the old orange Westrail engines used to take the train up and down the Fremantle line. A former Liberal-National government closed it. I do not have them in front of me right now, but I have quoted newspaper articles from the time and comments that were made by members of the Liberal-National government at the time the line was closed.

This limb of the motion absolutely addresses Western Australia's future capacity. The former Liberal-National government decimated regional rail services. That is something else we have put in to the amendment, and that absolutely addresses that as well. I have spoken on numerous occasions in this place about the effect that closing the

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Midland rail workshops had on—sorry to use your words, Hon Tjorn Sibma—Western Australia’s future capacity. I have spoken at length on that. I have also spoken at length on what we as a government have done to bring back that manufacturing capacity and the jobs that it creates, and everything else along that line.

An opposition member: I don’t know about that.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will run out of time, member, so this cannot be a conversation.

What else have we put in the amendment? It refers to the Liberal–National government failing to deliver on the Ellenbrook line. That would have weakened the state’s capacity, but, luckily, we as a government actually took that seriously. We brought Metronet to the Western Australian community. It has gone through two elections and has been wholeheartedly supported. The former Liberal–National government had MAX light rail. It was a thought bubble. It was not even costed. The former government had no idea what it would do and how it would work. Yesterday, Hon Tjorn Sibma spoke about the need for a parliamentary budget office. Can members imagine what would have happened if that office had been in existence when that former Liberal–National government brought up MAX light rail or when it held that train wreck of a press conference before the last election?

Several members interjected.

Hon DAN CADDY: I will be finished shortly, member. Imagine if any of that stuff had been absolutely costed by a PBO.

The former government was unsuccessful, but it tried to kill off *AvonLink*. That would have greatly diminished Western Australia’s future capacity. Closing the tier 3 rail network, in a word, absolutely diminished a whole lot of capacity in the state. I think we have more than addressed that part of the second limb of the original motion from Hon Tjorn Sibma. I will just say that this is an outstanding amendment. It is far more reflective of the facts and what is actually happening.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.43 pm]: I would also like to support the Deputy Leader of the House on this fine amendment to the motion made in accordance with the standing orders of the house. It does not break any conventions and perhaps sets the record straight for all of those people out there in regional Western Australia who are tuned in to Parliament at the moment and who may be thinking that perhaps the opposition is onto something here—it is not. It is with some incredulity—in fact, complete incredulity—that the opposition has come here to talk about rail. Of all the things that the opposition could have talked about today, it came in here with a motion about its biggest Achilles heel. It came here to lead with its chin 100 per cent. What happens when you do that, members?

If amended, the motion will make complete sense to not just the government but also the people of Western Australia, who have overwhelmingly supported this government at two elections now when its signature policy has been Metronet. I will leave it to members opposite to go out to the outer suburbs and say that people out there should not have a rail line and subsidised rail fares. I will leave it to members opposite to go out and say that the closure of the tier 3 lines in the wheatbelt was a good idea when we have not been able to get grain to port in a timely manner ever since. I will leave it to members opposite to go out and sell their policies, if, indeed, there are any.

I will pick up on a point that I have noticed. The federal Liberal Party seems to have abandoned its leafy harbourside and riverside electorates for electorates in the outer suburbs. That seems to be where the federal Leader of the Opposition is now going for support. That is absolutely contradicted by his state colleagues, who go, “There is no way that the people who live in those electorates should have railway lines and subsidised fares.” It is a bit of a conundrum for the Liberals. At one level, they are getting around the outer suburbs, but on another level, they are abandoning the outer suburbs. I just picked that up.

The Nationals WA are involved in this as well. Nationals members went out and said that closing the tier 3 lines was a good idea. Their vote in the wheatbelt has collapsed ever since. They might one day pick up that that was perhaps not such a good idea. I note that the car park at Parliament House is the only place that I ever see the sticker that has been mocked up by the Nationals that says “Metrodebt” and talks about how bad Metronet is for their constituency. I wonder how the Nationals candidates for Kalamunda, Bateman or whichever other places they can find candidates in the metro area to try to survive in the now democratic environment are going to feel about this aversion to public transport. I have made up my own sticker that will perhaps adorn the bumper of my car. I will show members what it looks like.

Point of Order

Hon TJORN SIBMA: My point of order is one of relevance.

Several members interjected.

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Hon TJORN SIBMA: I am attempting to deal with the government seriously and hear a contribution that would justify the amendment. I am hearing a lot about bumper stickers and all other kinds of phenomena. As much as this might assist the member with his preselection, I do not think it is enabling debate.

The PRESIDENT: Honourable members, I have been listening intently to the member's contribution. I think he is attempting to put an argument forward for why the amendment should be supported, but I encourage him to ensure that his focus remains on the question regarding why the amendment should be supported.

Debate Resumed

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you, President; I will take your very sage advice on board, but as a regional member, I will always stand up for the people of the Agricultural Region and regional Western Australia. I am pointing out the hypocrisy and preaching from certain sections of the opposition that we should not have rail. The opposition has moved a motion that says we should not have rail and now opposes the amendment that we are putting forward. Very briefly, my sticker reads "MetroNats: Preaching to the regions from Perth". That is what we hear from the Nationals; they tell us how it should be in the regions. Of course, they are all metropolitan residing, public transport using members of Parliament.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: The former member for Victoria Park referred to the Nationals as the "CAT bus Nats". He was not far out with that!

This is a great amendment. It is actually a factual amendment. This amendment will give people who read the *Hansard* or listen to the debate an idea of what Parliament should be about. The list of shame in paragraph (c) of the amendment is good reading for anyone, but particularly young people, who believe in the future of public transport and will benefit in the future from public transport, as well as those from the regions and outer suburbs who rely on rail. That list of shame is not something that members opposite should be proud of. Again, I cannot believe that they would bring a motion to this house regarding rail after their failed record in government and now their failed record in opposition.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [2.49 pm]: I do not normally speak on these motions but today I am inclined to. Having been here a long time and listened to these debates about Metronet and other train lines during my 23 years in this place, it is always the Labor side, either in opposition or in government, that has fully supported not just the maintenance and sustenance of train lines, but the creation of new lines. All I have heard during my time from the conservative side, regardless of where they sit at that point in time, has been in opposition to both maintaining and keeping lines. Tier 3 is an excellent example. We had a parliamentary inquiry into that, which I was involved with. The opposition opposed the Perth–Mandurah train line. It wanted to send it in a different direction. That line has been a cracking success. It is oversubscribed and has opened up huge opportunities in the South Metropolitan Region.

I know that the changes and new lines that will occur in my electorate are also equally welcomed. I think the proposal put forward by Hon Tjorn Sibma today reflects the ongoing negativity and total policy deficit that exists in the Liberal Party. We hear these complaints about the financing—yes, it will cost money to provide this line and these opportunities for our constituents to have better access and proximity to the lines. I live about a street away from where all these changes are happening on the Armadale line. I know that the people I talk to who live nearby throughout those lines are welcoming that change. They look forward to the opportunities that will arise with the new train lines and the capacity to do other things in this space that it now creates.

We have not heard that from the opposition, but I have heard a whole lot of negativity from another member who I do not think has even been out that way or actually spoken to the people who live and work in that space. The amendment put forward today by the Deputy Leader of the House is indeed a much more realistic amendment to the original motion before us. It outlines the historical errors made by those in the Liberal government about how it has prevented public access to train lines. I remember when the Fremantle line was shut down. I was a student in Rockingham and I was going to university. It would take me hours to get from Rockingham to Perth when I had to go home from college on weekends, because there was no train line to take me straight from the city to Fremantle, where I would then catch a bus home. It was duly celebrated when the line came back on.

My colleague has talked about the impacts on the Midland rail workshops and tier 3 in the regional areas. When members come in here to raise these motions, they really need to think about the implications because they are the alternative to the current government. Although the opposition condemns this government for spending money, it has no viable solutions, options or alternatives for what it would do if it were ever fortunate enough to return to this side of the chamber. That is on them. Here we are, nine or 10 months away from an election, and we still do not know what members of the opposition are thinking. Nobody knows what they are thinking. They can whinge

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and moan, and complain about the way that motions are being done, but we heard from the Leader of the House about how these things have been managed in the past. The opposition has the challenge to get out of its misery, stop complaining, and come up with something positive. I do not think it can actually better the proposal for Western Australia with Metronet.

I am fortunate enough to travel a lot, and the one thing I love doing when I go to major cities all around the world is utilising their amazing public transport systems. Go to Singapore, Paris, London, Milan, Hong Kong, Sydney or Melbourne. All of these places have fantastic public transport systems. They have had to retrofit in a lot of cases, and expend significant amounts of money, but they are welcome. They provide significant change for their communities and businesses. They create generational change in those cities and enable people to access and participate in activities they may not have had the opportunity to otherwise engage in if the public transport had not been in place. I know that the people in my electorate will benefit magnificently from the decisions of this government to put in the new changes to the Metronet project.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [2.54 pm]: I was hoping to have 20 minutes to discuss this in great detail. Unfortunately, I am now down to less than five minutes, although I would have had that either way. Members will miss out on a fairly comprehensive contribution. I am intrigued by the sheer hypocrisy of some of the statements made on the motion before the house. I would have loved to address each of the comments made. I made copious note on the Minister for Emergency Services' contribution, some of which is worthy of debate. I like this comment he made on the amendment to the motion that we are debating. He referred to decimating regional rail services and closing the tier 3 rail network. Do members opposite remember closing a rail service? Do they think that the Labor Party has never closed a rail service? No? Stony silence.

Hon Stephen Dawson: We get in trouble when we heckle. Do you want us to heckle or not? Make your comments through the chair. It is unruly.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Let me give members a short history lesson.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Did the Labor Party close a rail service? Members opposite were outraged at the closure of rail services. Guess what? The Labor Party closed the Greenbushes–Bunbury rail service. Do members know who closed it? It was my erstwhile debater on the other side, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, when she was the transport supremo. The Labor Party closed that rail service. Do members know what the Labor Party is doing now?

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Labor Party is conducting a study to reopen that rail service. The Labor Party conducted a previous study for \$300 million; it is probably \$800 million by now. The government is conducting another study and fudging it. The government is pushing it off to somewhere into the distance. Before government members jump up on their high moral horse about closing rail lines, they should remember that the Labor Party closed rail lines. It is like the government's moral high ground on privatisation. The Labor Party sold wind farms. The high moral ground is astounding. The Labor Party closed rail lines.

The government also messed around for years trying to work out what to do with the tier 3 rail lines. How often have I had to ask where the business case is for that? Every few months I ask where the business case is. The last time was a little bit exciting because the answer from the Minister for Transport through the representative in this chamber was that the business case was done. I raced to the press and said is it not good that the business case is done but was then told by the government, "No, not really; we've just done a bit more of a study." We could not even trust the answer we got from the minister. Time and again I have asked whether the government is going to revamp the tier 3 railway lines. Is the business case completed? Is the government even writing a business case? The government is concerned about the rail network and rail safety. Is the government doing a business case for the tier 3 rail lines or is it not? Will the government reopen the Greenbushes rail line that it closed or will it not? Give us an answer before climbing up on the high moral horse and telling us what a wonderful job the government is doing on the rail system.

It is absolutely true that everybody loves trains. Do members know what? The Labor Party closed them down, too. I campaigned for years on the Greenbushes rail line when the Labor Party said it might not —

Hon Klara Andric interjected.

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Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Liberal Party proposed the Perth–Mandurah line and government members were arguing over what path it would take.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Labor Party closed railway lines.

The PRESIDENT: Order, member! Noting the time, I will seek the advice of the mover of the motion and whether he will seek to use his right of reply under standing order 66. If he is seeking that, I intend to put the amendment and then give the mover his right of reply.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I confirm that I will be seeking my right of reply.

The PRESIDENT: In which case, I will put the amendment.

Division

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken with the following result —

Ayes (18)

Hon Klara Andric	Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Shelley Payne	Hon Darren West
Hon Dan Caddy	Hon Lorna Harper	Hon Stephen Pratt	Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Sandra Carr	Hon Jackie Jarvis	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Peter Foster (<i>Teller</i>)
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Ayor Makur Chuot	Hon Samantha Rowe	
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Kyle McGinn	Hon Matthew Swinbourn	

Noes (9)

Hon Martin Aldridge	Hon Steve Martin	Hon Neil Thomson
Hon Peter Collier	Hon Tjorn Sibma	Hon Dr Brian Walker
Hon Louise Kingston	Hon Dr Steve Thomas	Hon Colin de Grussa (<i>Teller</i>)

Pairs

Hon Dr Sally Talbot	Hon Donna Faragher
Hon Rosie Sahanna	Hon Nick Goiran

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [3.02 pm] — in reply: We potentially may have ended up in some uncertain territory considering the way the clock was counting down in this debate and the very enthusiastic speakers whom we have listened to from both sides of the chamber. I will use this very brief opportunity to reflect upon the contribution made by the Minister for Emergency Services in his reply to my original motion before the amendment decision was made. Reference was made to the claim that the government has brought back railcar manufacturing to Western Australia. That is a mistruth. The Minister for Transport has been given every opportunity to demonstrate exactly how much local content has gone into this so-called claim. She has failed to provide evidence. I have seen photos of shrink-wrapped train carriages being imported directly from India. That does not meet anybody's definition of "manufacturing".

Question put and passed.