

MAIN ROADS AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.46 pm]: I rise to also make a contribution to debate on the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023. As always, I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak about another bill that has come before this house. As a number of speakers before me have already outlined today, this legislation has been around for nearly 100 years, a long time, and I will come back to that.

I want to start by reflecting on, as others have done before me, the importance of the road network in Western Australia. It is something that we take for granted, but is essential for not only being able to travel from point A to point B, but also making sure that we have a prosperous economy. The state of our road network contributes substantially to the overall productivity of the state and the economy. In a state the size of Western Australia with so many of our natural resources in regional areas, having a road network is essential to being able to unlock the resource richness of Western Australia. Being able to travel to work is an important precondition for people to get to their jobs and to keep their employment. Having a road network that facilitates and allows access to public transport and people to move about the city to where they live or where the jobs are is an important precondition for ensuring that people can access jobs. That sounds self-evidently true, but it is incredibly important to remember. This government is committed to getting people to work, to having people keep their jobs and to making sure that those jobs are good quality jobs, and the road network is an important part of that as well. The road network also plays an important part in building good neighbourhoods and making sure that people can move about their communities in a way that is beneficial to how they interact.

The bill before us today is very important in that it points to the central place that our road network has in our lives, our employment and the economy, and in building a strong and cohesive society. As I said earlier, this bill is from a minister who we know is incredibly productive. She has done a lot of important work in her role as the Minister for Transport. I have spoken before in this place about the substantial body of work that is connected with Metronet to improve our public transport. This minister has done an incredible amount of work to ensure that we have a road network that is fit for the future, to build roads right around the state and to focus on getting funding from the federal government to support that. The member for Mount Lawley spoke eloquently about the substantial body of work around not just the metropolitan area, but also the regional areas to ensure that we have a road network that will meet the needs of the state not just today, but also into the future.

The Main Roads Act 1930 is nearly 100 years old, and it is important to reflect on the context in which the original act was adopted by this Parliament. Only five years before 1930, we had undertaken the first major car manufacturing in Australia. In 1925, the Ford Motor Company established itself in Australia, and five years down the track the Main Roads Bill was passed by this Parliament, so motorcars were brand new and not widely owned by people in Australia. I will say a few words about the history of car manufacturing because it is important to contrast this government's approach to manufacturing and building the economy compared with the federal Liberal–National government's approach, which shamefully allowed the Australian car manufacturing industry to wither and die. Knowing the history will also provide a really important contrast between this government's commitment to build manufacturing, the economy and skilled work for the future, which are the things at the heart of this government.

Car manufacturing established itself in Australia in 1925, and then in 1926, General Motors Australia was officially formed. It imported American chassis but used Holden designs and parts to build the vehicles. By 1936, Holden had opened a new assembly plant in Port Melbourne and three years later it opened another plant in Sydney. At the end of the 1930s, Australia entered the Second World War, which disrupted the manufacturing industry because the manufacture of military goods was given precedence over car production. Manufacturing was interrupted during the war period; however, those factories were allowed to continue to work and people developed their manufacturing skills and built a skilled workforce during that time. After the postwar period, governments first became interested in providing support to what was still a fledgling car industry. There was a lot of support from parliamentarians of all persuasions at the time, because they saw that supporting the automotive industry was important to allow that industry to grow. Cars were seen as a symbol of modernity, progression and the future. It is interesting to note that there was enthusiasm for investing in the industry, but by the 1950s still only one in 10 households in Australia had a car. This context is important because it illustrates that the 1930 act was written for a very different set of circumstances and at a different time, when cars were not commonplace and our road network was nothing like it is today.

The car industry grew and thrived through the 1950s and 60s, but, sadly, went into decline for a range of reasons. However, it is important to pause and reflect that the decline of the car industry, which was important in places like South Australia and Geelong, was hastened by the federal Liberal–National government that took deliberate decisions not to continue the support that had been part of that industry since it was first established in Australia. Having a car manufacturing industry and providing support to it was significant not just because we wanted to

make cars, which were a symbol of modernity, but also because that substantial manufacturing process provided a centrepiece that allowed many other component manufacturers to grow up around it.

It allowed us to have a large industry to train skilled apprentices, who would then leave that industry to go off into other parts of the Australian economy and help build those parts of the economy as well. That large manufacturing base was like having an incubator, which allowed us to build up other component manufacturers around it and spread those skills and that expertise into other industries, thus building the Australian economy. Alas, it was not to be; it was not to stay.

From about 2015, or thereabouts, key car manufacturers in Australia started to wind down and then close. This was a matter of great concern for many people. As the substantial manufacturing bases closed down, we saw people who had worked there for their whole lives—sometimes entire families—were put out of work. Usually it was the dad who had worked there and then his children had taken jobs there as well. Generations of workers lost their jobs, many of whom found it difficult to find work again depending on their age and circumstances. Some workers who lost their jobs were in their 50s, which is an age at which we know is difficult to be re-employed in other industries. It had a devastating impact on many of the communities that had grown up around those manufacturing hubs. I am thinking of Elizabeth in Adelaide in South Australia and parts of Geelong as well.

People will recall that Joe Hockey, the then federal Treasurer, dared the car industry people to leave. He basically threw down a challenge and egged them on to leave the country, which is exactly what they did. It was hardly surprising. That was the level of support that we got from the federal Liberal–National government. It dared one of our key manufacturing industries to pack up and leave, which is exactly what it did, rather than taking proactive steps to support an industry, recognising its importance in the fabric of the Australian economy and the fabric of the community and not investing in that. I think that is such a stark contrast to the approach that this government has taken, and, again, I want to recognise the minister's leadership in this area.

I have spoken before at length about the establishment of the manufacturing facility for rail cars at Bellevue because it is a fantastic investment in the future of this state. It is a fantastic investment in our economy and the delivery of skilled jobs. We are doing some really exciting things. The Metronet project is building a world-class railway line, which in itself will be a terrific outcome. It will have a huge impact on communities and transportation. It is also an opportunity to say that we can do much more than that. We can start to provide a basis for the return of the manufacturing industry to this state, and encourage manufacturing. The Bellevue facility will do exactly that. It is a terrific example of how the government's strategic view to diversify and grow our economy will have an impact that will also deliver real benefits for everyday working people in the state. The WA government has ordered over 200 Metronet railcars and six *Australind* railcars to be built in that facility.

It did not just stop there, of course. It is exactly the same point about the car industry: once governments have the investments and build a critical mass, others will come and other opportunities grow up around that. Although the order of those railcars is in itself very exciting because it creates those 200 local skilled, quality, well-paid jobs, it led to Rio Tinto's announcement that it would also use that facility to manufacture iron ore railcars, which are currently being manufactured in China. It is a real example of how government can by strategic, clever and well-thought-out plans invest in facilities that allow us to grow the economy and deliver work and skilled jobs here.

The other thing that is really interesting and exciting about the Bellevue manufacturing facility is its work with the local TAFE. It recognises the connection between training, skills, finding jobs and then growing opportunities for the future. There is a stark contrast between the approach this government takes to the economy and jobs and the approach of the Liberals and Nationals, who never really understood the opportunities to grow the economy here in Western Australia from governments working strategically on big projects with private companies to deliver real benefits for everyday working people.

I echo the member for Mount Lawley's comments about the commitment to bring contracts back in-house at Main Roads. A great example of this government's approach has been to look at contracts across a range of areas and ask the question: do these deliver good outcomes for the community, for workers and for the budget? When the test is applied, we often see that the answer to that question is no. In fact, previous governments contracted out work not because it was better for the communities or the budget but because of an ideological obsession with small government, regardless of the outcome. When we undertake a careful analysis to work out whether the community will get better results from decisions to contract out services, in a number of cases the answer has been no. We can then bring those jobs back in-house.

There have been significant changes at Main Roads. This is a really important example because those are jobs in regional areas. We hear over and over again about the challenge of ensuring that we have good, quality and permanent jobs in regional areas because those employment opportunities allow us to grow regional towns and strong communities. I take this opportunity to congratulate the minister for that work, which I think goes straight to the heart of the difference between the approach of our government and the approach of the Liberals and Nationals on these issues.

I want to talk today about roads, the subject of this bill. I was reflecting on the context and the fact that it has been almost 100 years since the initial Main Roads Act was enacted by this Parliament. It is true that our roads and our road network have changed substantially in that intervening period. In my inaugural speech, I talked about my parents, who both grew up in station country in New South Wales, got married, and packed up their car and moved here to Western Australia, driving across the Eyre Highway and the Nullarbor Plain. I was always interested to hear their stories of that journey across Australia in the early 1960s. It was a gravel road. People often had to cross cattle pits. It was a long trip in a car that certainly was not able to go as fast and was not as comfortable to ride in as the cars of today. Anyone who has undertaken that trip recently will know that we now have an amazing highway across Australia. It is, in fact, a beautiful trip. We can see the contrast and how things have changed—namely, how our ability to move not just around the state, but also around the country has changed substantially.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. HAMMAT: In my comments today and in reflecting about how roads have changed, I now talk about the work that Main Roads has done in producing the book *Aboriginal Journey Ways: How Ancient Trails Shaped our Roads*. People might be familiar with this book because a number of copies have been distributed to public libraries. It has been distributed to members of Parliament to pass on to high schools so that all our high schools and all our public libraries have a copy. It is a beautiful book written by Dr Noel Nannup and Dr Francesca Robertson. The project commenced in 2016, took three years to complete and mapped traditional Aboriginal trails and pathways, which were often the precursors to the roads that we are now familiar with and drive along all the time. It illustrates that our road network, which we might think has been around in its modern sense for 100 years, has been around for much longer than that and has taken very different forms over that period. The book is beautifully presented and was produced as the result of a partnership between Main Roads and Edith Cowan University. A substantial body of work was undertaken to work with elders around the state to hear their stories of the history of our roads and pathways. I have already presented a number of copies to schools in my electorate in Mirrabooka, and it has been incredibly well received. On every occasion I have presented it, people have said that it is a great book and asked where they can get a copy. There is a lot of interest in it. I congratulate the Minister for Transport, Main Roads and Edith Cowan University for the work that went into producing an important historical record that tells us much more about the history of the state.

I want to talk a little bit about it because people know that I grew up in the Broomehill–Kojonup area, and I am happy to report to the house that both of those places get a mention in the book. Much of my high school years were spent in Kojonup; I was there for some time. I think most striking, upon reading the book and understanding the local story now, is how little of the Aboriginal history of the area we were taught in school at that time. Perhaps it has changed over the years as we have grown in awareness and are now much more conscious of ensuring that the path of reconciliation acknowledges the Aboriginal history of areas. I was really interested to read the history.

The history of Kojonup is based on an oral account given by Jack Cox, who has lived in the Kojonup area all his life. I knew the Cox family and went to school with some of the Coxes in Kojonup. Jack Cox talked about how the place name Kojonup comes from the word kodj, which in those parts is an Aboriginal axe made from stones. He talked about the spring in Kojonup that we all knew about as kids; the spring was one of the local features. He talked about how the spring's existence meant that Kojonup throughout history had been a really important place for the Noongar people. It was a good spring, and it always had fresh, clean water running in it. Three tribes used to come to that area to make and sharpen axes and to camp there. The existence of the spring also made it attractive to the whitefellas, and, of course, it was on the road between Albany and Perth. We now know the road as Albany Highway, but it was a path that Aboriginal people have walked for many, many years; it was an important pathway for them. It became a place for a fairly early settlement. Settlers were attracted to it because of the spring and its location on the pathway between Albany and Perth. It was also good land for sheep; it still is. I thought that was quite interesting to read about. The book highlights the importance of documenting those Aboriginal stories so people can understand not just the European settlement of places we know in Western Australia, but also a history of Aboriginal people that extends more than 60 000 years.

The other reflection that I want to make in the time available to me is that the book also talks about Broomehill and the road that runs through Katanning, Broomehill and Tambellup. I spent some of my early years in Broomehill, and I used to travel along that road quite often with my mum and dad—usually my mum—mainly when we travelled to Katanning. Like all kids in a car, I used to stare out the window blankly and watch things flash past me. What I recall from those years of travelling along that road is a hall that had on it the name Carrolup. At that time, it was just a building on the side of the road. There were lots of buildings on the side of the road throughout the great southern. There were churches that were no longer used as churches. There was a tennis club in the middle of the Flat Rocks region that used to be a school, for people who are familiar with that region. I never knew what Carrolup was. I never thought to ask my parents about it. I certainly never learnt anything at school about the history of that place. I think we now have a better appreciation of these things. When I started university and was studying Australian history, I learnt that when Aboriginal children were removed from their families and became part of the

stolen generation under this state's policy in the early part of the last century, Carrolup was one of the places to which they were sent to live. I had no sense of that when I used to be driven past it. It had never been taught to us or explained to us. When I look back now through the eyes of an adult, I think that was such a wasted opportunity for us to have learnt about and deepened our understanding of reconciliation. In Broomehill I was at school with Aboriginal kids from the local families—the Rodneys and the Hansons. I often think now that I bet they knew the history of that place. I bet their families had told him about that place and that that was part of their oral tradition and awareness. Of course at that time it was not something that was talked about, taught or known. I do not think there was any particular sense that people did not talk about it because they wanted to cover it up. It just was not part of the history that was recognised and understood by people at that time.

People may know that in more recent years, there has been a collection of the art by the young people who lived at Carrolup. One of the teachers who had come to Carrolup encouraged the Aboriginal children to paint and draw. They produced a number of paintings. Those paintings have an interesting story. I believe that in the 1940s, those paintings were exhibited around the world. The collection finally ended up in the ownership of a person in New York. The paintings have recently been repatriated to this state and there is now a collection of pictures that depict what life in Carrolup was like in the 1940s and 1950s. This is an interesting story. I am conscious of the time, but I want to say a bit more about it. That teacher who went to Carrolup was keen to teach the children how to paint and draw, and that is the context in which that art was produced. She exhibited that collection internationally, in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. I believe that she later became bankrupt and lost possession and ownership of the collection and it was transferred to a person in New York.

This is an important opportunity to capture some images from a time and from a place in which I grew up and knew well, but knew none of that history. This is an important part of our Western Australian story, and part of understanding what went on in our local communities and in places just down the street from us. Understanding those stories is one of the important ways in which we can ensure that we undertake reconciliation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I have spoken in this place previously about the importance of the Voice referendum that will come up this year. People who are familiar with the Uluru Statement from the Heart will recognise that it has three elements: voice, treaty and truth. We will have the opportunity to have our say on the Voice. I urge people to vote yes for the Voice. Being truthful and reflecting on our history is an important part of ensuring that we embrace the opportunities presented by reconciliation. For that reason, the piece of work *Aboriginal Journey Ways* that has been produced by Main Roads WA and Edith Cowan University is important to shine a light on the history of this state and to help us understand that the road network that we drive along today and that delivers important economic and social benefits is also part of a longer story. Having an appreciation of the Aboriginal history of our road network is part of how we can do justice to the important work that we have to do to achieve reconciliation.

I have run out of time. I was keen to talk about a lot of other things, including some road upgrades in my electorate of Mirrabooka. I will finish by acknowledging the incredible work that is being done by this government and the Minister for Transport, not only in big road projects, but also in delivering important local road projects through the black spot funding. One project in Girrawheen that is incredibly important to the local community is the upgrade of the Marangaroo Drive–Girrawheen Avenue intersection. Support from the black spot funding is enabling the City of Wanneroo to progress with that project. About three years ago, a fatality occurred at that intersection. I have met with the woman who lost her son in that accident. She is greatly pleased that this government is progressing that project.

Roads are important for a whole range of reasons, from deeply personal reasons, such as for Linda Fermia, who lost her son in that accident, through to the broader objectives that we face as a community to achieve reconciliation, economic prosperity, and strong and cohesive communities. With that, I will end my contribution and commend the bill to the house.

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [3.16 pm]: I also want to speak on the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023. In speaking, I have to acknowledge the very eclectic and urbane contribution from the member for Mirrabooka. I also want to thank the member for Kingsley for letting me speak before her because of a commitment that I have tomorrow morning. I have to say also that I will be going off-piste, which perhaps is not an appropriate metaphor given that we are talking about roads, so I will apologise in advance for giving what will be one of my more stream-of-consciousness contributions. We on this side of the house are all very passionate about transport issues, so I will apologise in advance for making a similar eclectic contribution today.

In its most restrictive terms, this bill will enable Main Roads WA to complete projects in a more efficient, timely and cost-effective manner. Like my colleagues, I have to say also that we are very fortunate to have a Minister for Transport who is extremely passionate about these issues. We could say that she has drive, but again that would be a very bad pun. The minister knows that our transport must be integrated and that each mode must be complementary with other modes in order to facilitate the logistics of the movement of freight and people throughout this vast state. The minister further knows that transport must maximise road safety, and that this can be achieved only by intelligent road design and engineering.

As I have said, the minister is striving for the integration of transport modes. I expect to be working very closely with the minister once the Malaga Metronet station becomes operational. We will need to provide excellent transport links on the eastern side of my electorate to service the suburbs of Landsdale and Alexander Heights by linked bus routes and bike paths.

In terms of truck transport, on behalf of my colleagues in the union movement and the Transport Workers' Union of Australia in particular, I want to acknowledge their advocacy in getting rest stops for drivers in remote WA; it is very important. Part of the road safety picture is not to have drivers driving tired. I want to commend their advocacy, and, more to the point, the minister for listening and providing funds for that to occur.

I now want to talk a bit about local traffic. Might I take the liberty of asking members in the room, by show of hands, how many have constituents who come into their electorate office or contact them about local roads? Yes; a full show of hands. This issue is made even more problematic in resolving them, because responsibility for roads can be local or state government. We have already heard the member for Cockburn talk about that regarding one of his major roads. On top of that, as well as the responsibility being shared between local and state government, we also rattle the tin occasionally for the larger projects to get federal government contributions. That makes it very difficult. Not least on the western side of Gnangara Road, the long-term plan for the Gnangara Road–Wanneroo Road intersection in my electorate is to join Gnangara Road on to Whitfords Avenue and create a flyover. That is a major engineering exercise. Added to the complexity of this is that a lot of work has been done on the eastern side of Gnangara Road, so, in a sense, traffic is encouraged down that route, but once it gets to my electorate, there is heavy traffic, much of it trucks. They speed through medium-density housing and residents within that area find it hard to even get out onto Gnangara Road. There is also a landlocked industrial estate, which I know the federal member for Moore has for some time been lobbying about, but again, rat runs are created. As I said, the solution is a flyover, but this causes major logistical issues, not least of which is the compulsory acquisition of land. It is a major undertaking that would require federal funding.

That leads me to a segue about acknowledging funding. It is a *bête noire* of mine that although the state government might provide substantial funding for a particular road project, that is quite often not acknowledged. I have had some robust discussion with the CEO of Wanneroo and the former mayor about the fact that Hartman Drive in my electorate was principally funded by the state government to the tune of over \$2 million. The City of Wanneroo contributed about \$300 000, yet the signage that remained there for almost two years said, “Another project for the City of Wanneroo”. Even after I brought it to their attention, the sign stayed. I mentioned it to the minister and said that I believe that funding to local government should be conditional upon the fact that it acknowledges the contribution of the state government as well.

The next project that will come to my electorate is the Hepburn Avenue–Wanneroo Road intersection. That is always in the top 10 of black spots. I have been advised —

The current at-grade signalised intersection of Wanneroo Road and Hepburn Avenue is highly congested and poses a safety concern to Main Roads; it is regularly ranked in the top 20 worst intersections in the metropolitan area for these reasons and it is vital that it is upgraded in the near future. Main Roads has allocated funding for next financial year —

This was written in 2020, but it has not been done yet —

to progress project development of the grade-separated concept.

There are many considerations in determining the layout and configuration of complex intersections like Wanneroo Road and Hepburn Avenue and the planned concept is similar, albeit with a different orientation, to what is currently being constructed at Wanneroo Road and Ocean Reef Road.

That has been a highly successful project.

I have to say that I am one of the people who features in those statistics, because someone ran into the back of me at that intersection. I could see this large four-wheel drive with a roo bar in the rear-vision mirror coming for me, and I could do nothing about it. The road has been reserved for many years. It is near the Kingsway City Shopping Centre. Some of the tenancies close to Wanneroo Road have to wind up their businesses, but that land reservation has been there for many, many years.

The second issue I want to raise briefly is local traffic law enforcement. Again, my colleagues who put their hands up about complaints from constituents will be well aware that many of those complaints are about lack of traffic enforcement on local roads. I was involved some years ago in a parliamentary committee inquiry that looked at traffic enforcement by police. It was apparent from that that there is rarely much traffic enforcement by police on local roads. Not only that, but what is on the main roads tends to be by Multanova radar and camera. The days of seeing a police officer on their bike around the traps deterring individuals is long gone. That is a problem. There are also more subtle issues. For example, Main Roads—I can understand why in terms of the expense and to avoid

unnecessary graffiti—has a policy that if there is no indication, the default speed limit for a road is 50 kilometres an hour. Frankly, that default position is not often effective. For example, there are areas in my electorate that go from a main road at 70 kilometres an hour down to the default position of 50 kilometres an hour, and it is not readily apparent. I want to commend one of my constituents Shane Pope, who has been lobbying assiduously for the street that he lives in, where the failure to have a 50-kilometre-an-hour sign has been a real issue. I think Main Roads needs to be a bit more flexible, look at traffic movement and put up signs in those places.

Similarly, in terms of flexibility, I want to talk a bit about school crossings. The Department of Education has a tendency of placing a catchment area for schools without taking into account the existence of main roads. The latest school opened in my electorate, Landsdale Gardens Primary School, has Mirrabooka Avenue, a 70-kilometre-an-hour road that slopes—the visibility is somewhat restricted—smack bang in the middle of that catchment area. We have the usual problems, and the number of students at this stage means that we cannot have the school crossing people involved because not enough students attend the school. The member for Bicton gave a grievance about this and she has been able to get red-and-white flashing traffic lights on Canning Highway. My general practitioner is on Cambridge Street, and the other day I was stuck at one of these sets of lights on Cambridge Street in West Leederville. I was thinking, “Why was Main Roads prepared to put one there, but not at where I consider to be very dangerous position?” I have to say that it is probably deterring kids from one side of the road enrolling in that school, even though—thank you very much Minister for Education and Department of Education—it is a fantastic school.

Another inquiry I did with the same committee that I was talking about earlier related to policy changes that are needed to accommodate for seniors in an ageing society. We cited some traffic lights in Singapore. People with disabilities or older people were given a swipe card. They could go up to the traffic light, swipe their card, and that would automatically program a longer period for them to cross. I raised this with the former Minister for Transport, Hon Dean Nalder, whose electorate included Garden City and, of course, Riseley Street. I could contemplate that there would be a lot of seniors wanting to cross Riseley Street to go to the shops. I raised that issue with him, to which he said, “It’s Main Roads policy to keep traffic flowing.” Even that gap of allowing a person to cross the road was seen as unacceptable. But the plus side of that gap is that it would give breaks for traffic so that people coming from side streets could then get onto these main roads, which is the very problem that we are having in my electorate in Pearsall and Hocking with residents turning onto Wanneroo Road since the creation of the Ocean Reef Road overpass. The Minister for Community Services and I went out to Wanneroo Road to check on the capacity for students to be able to cross Wanneroo Road at school time, given the traffic flow down to the Ocean Reef flyover. It was very fast and there was a large volume of traffic. If there were the odd crossing here or there, it would actually open the road up for people in the side streets to be able to enter more easily.

The next topic I want to deal with is electric vehicles. There was an article in *The West Australian* of 6 March of this year titled “6009 the EV winner”. This article deals with the penetration of electric vehicles by suburb. The usual suspects are there, which are Nedlands, Applecross, Churchlands, Crawley and Dalkeith, but the lead paragraph was interesting. It states —

Wanneroo, Wangara and Tapping are among the more surprising suburbs making up the postcodes with the most registered electric vehicles in WA.

The article mentions the postcodes of Madeley and Darch, as well. It continues —

The Australian Automobile Association’s new Electric Vehicle Index shows 3078 battery EVs were sold in WA last year. Tesla was the top choice.

The article continues. We now have a situation whereby one in 20 cars purchased in Western Australia is an electric vehicle. In my view, there is clearly range anxiety, and we need to lift our game with more public charging stations. The Electronic Vehicle Council’s calculations state that there are fewer than 3 700 public charging stations across Australia at 2 100 locations. This compares with Canada, where there are 16 000 public charging stations at 7 000 locations. In September 2022, the WA government launched its electronic vehicle policy. Under that policy, it commits to complete the network of fast charging stations by January 2024.

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms M.M. QUIRK: There is also a government subsidy of \$3 500 for the purchase of an electric vehicle.

The final matter I will briefly talk about—I warned people that I would be somewhat eclectic in my coverage today—is getting workers for Main Roads in remote WA. Decades ago, I had the privilege to visit work camps in the Kimberley, the goldfields, Pilbara and the south west, and I know that the member for Thornlie mentioned Walpole. A lot of the local government work undertaken by prisoners at those work camps relates to road building or maintenance. I noticed that the member for Thornlie gave Walpole a big rap and said what a great community it is, how tidy and environmentally sensitive it is, and so on. The issue I have with work camps is that there is no formal training for those prisoners. It seems to me that if there were TAFE lecturers or some formal training at the work camps for those prisoners, who are low security, there could be a much better pool of workers to work on

regional roads. There is the added benefit that they would acquire skills. We all know that recidivism rates are significantly reduced if prisoners can go from custody into a job. There are many jobs available in road maintenance, and the trauma that the people in Fitzroy Crossing and the Kimberley have had to go through for road maintenance I think indicates that there is a crying need for more skilled personnel. Many of these prisoners are First Nations individuals. Again, First Nations individuals are over-represented in unemployment, so it makes sense. At the moment—I have to add the qualification that I have not been there for many years—work camps are not really taken as seriously as they should be with their potential to provide excellent training with a qualification at the end of it that would help local communities and not only limit the risk of recidivism, but also, I think, assist with prisoners' self-esteem and their feeling that they are contributing to their communities.

I commend this bill to the house and I apologise for the bad puns and rather discursive manner in which I have delivered these words today.

MS D.G. D'ANNA (Kimberley) [3.37 pm]: I rise today to make a contribution to the debate on the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023, but I really wanted the opportunity to get up and say how much the people of the Kimberley, as well as, I am sure, the rest of the state, are actually quite grateful for the work that the awesome Minister Saffioti and the Main Roads crew have put into the regions to keep communities and towns connected. We know that this year alone, and over time, there have been a lot of works, and Main Roads and its projects have delivered many opportunities for not only Indigenous people but also people from regional and rural communities to gain training, purpose and skills to work and earn their own livings and contribute to their communities with a sense of pride.

An example of this is the Broome–Cape Leveque Road, which was a long time in the making. Some of my family—not all of them—live in Cape Leveque, up on the Middle Lagoon road, and in Lombadina, Djarindjin and Beagle Bay. Before that road was sealed, there was a huge debate—Should we? Shouldn't we?—and I know that the department did a lot of work and consultation with not only the stakeholders that make the community run and the community people on their feelings, but also the traditional owners, so that they could have their say about the impacts a road like that can have.

For me personally, I was worrying about my nanna and my mum—my nanna is gone now—having to travel up and down to access services such as regular hospital checks and not having the money to continually service their car, because those rough roads took a toll; I think my dad alone went through three cars. As I drove along that road, I remember seeing a lot of community people I knew directing traffic, grading the sides of the road and operating rollers—men, women, young and old. There are limited economic opportunities up there, but community people had a real sense of inspiration—that they had something to get up for, they could work on the road and get it done. Many of those people went on to start their own businesses. I just wanted to mention that.

As many people know—and if they do not, I do not know where they have been for the last four months—there was a huge flood in the north last year and early this year, the Kimberley flood, which some have referred to as a once-in-a-century event. That is debatable, with climate change, but that flood was a result of ex-tropical cyclone Ellie. I remember hearing the news about that cyclone. It was the Christmas break and I thought, “Okay, I'll work through December and take my break in January, in the new year. I'm going to drive up to Kununurra and that's when I'll take my holidays.” I watched that system move down from the north and then back again and I thought, “I'll give it a day and transfer my travel. I'll wait until this rain passes and watch the river.” Well, that was a mistake on my part! I never got to take my leave and I never got to cross that road.

That flood impacted two major pieces of infrastructure. A lot of emphasis was placed on the Fitzroy River Bridge, which is a huge piece of infrastructure that is important for not only Fitzroy people but also people in the whole of the Kimberley in respect of transport, service access for community people, freight and deliveries. Another small section of Great Northern Highway was damaged, near Willare Bridge, which cut off Broome and Derby. I want to acknowledge the impact of those road washouts, but also the resilience of the people of the Kimberley. They are used to being cut off every year by floods, but the uncertainty brought about by the devastation of the floods and the extensive road washouts really made people stand up and pay attention.

I mention that because it led to a realisation of how important those roads are for connectivity in the Kimberley. Main Roads and other departments rose to the occasion and almost immediately got up and reconnected those roads. That was humanly immediate, because it was like a series of unfortunate events up there. Not only was there flooding; when the water went down in Fitzroy, the thunderstorms arrived in Derby. When the thunderstorms went down in Broome, the river went up in Fitzroy. It was extremely challenging for the people who live there, and I really want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the quick action and support from this house, especially from Minister Saffioti. She really rose to addressing the challenge of keeping our communities and towns as connected as was humanly possible—keeping the Kimberley connected with the rest of the state, Broome with Derby, Derby with Fitzroy, and the eastern bank of Fitzroy with Kununurra. Even though the break was in the middle of the Kimberley, the impacts were felt throughout the region.

The isolation resulting from damage to the road system created huge anxiety for local residents. A lot of residents could not stay in their homes or home towns. They could not maintain contact with family and country, and even tourism was affected. There was destruction to medical facilities and to food and fuel supply chains that was felt throughout the Kimberley. I am repeating myself, but I again acknowledge the actions and quick responses of this government, Minister Saffioti and the teams of local people on the ground, grading, moving dirt, getting things ready and working on plans for bypass roads. They would build a road and it would wash out two days later, so they would get up again and build another road and see it wash out yet again. That shows the incredible resilience and patience of the people of the Kimberley. Main Roads workers and others did not just sit on their hands and say, “Let’s just wait until later; it’s more cost-effective.” It was, “We need to keep trying.”

I remember having a conversation at a fuel station on a Saturday when the Willare Bridge section of the highway was accessible for brief windows of time for people to come across to Broome; for example, to collect their cars and drive back. I met someone and said, “Hey, how are you? What are you doing here?” She said, “I’ve come to finally pick up my car.” I said, “How is it?” She said, “It’s amazing. I can’t believe how much they’ve worked to make that dirt track useable for us to cross.” She was a local person who had seen these roads washed out before and knew the extent of the damage, but she had enormous appreciation for the local crews and contractors, and their resilience in that situation in continuing to push ahead to keep communities connected.

I really wanted to highlight that, because a lot of people have complained that things were not done quickly enough and that it was not this and it was not that. I can tell members that those crews worked tirelessly and the local community truly appreciated the efforts that went into their work. I remember inspecting that section of the road with the Premier and Minister Saffioti. Members could not truly appreciate the level of work that went into that if they did not see the extent of the damage. Believe me, I have lived there my whole life and I have never seen that much devastation. There was an enormous amount of work put in by those crews, and investment from the government, to make sure that those communities remained connected, and that is something that should not be dismissed.

The commitment from Minister Saffioti and the work crews to fix the bridge and the lower river crossings was a saga in itself. Again, the lower river crossing opened and closed again within a period of 24 hours. It then opened and closed again. Somebody came up to me and said, “Can’t you get the road open and leave it open? We need it to be able to come across.” I said, “Why, thank you. I feel quite privileged that you think I’m God and I control the weather! Unfortunately, I can’t, but I’m glad you think I can stop the rain from coming!”

Despite that level of anxiety and uncertainty, the people of the Kimberley—from Broome, Bidyadanga, the Dampier Peninsula, Kalumburu, the Tanami communities, Balgo, Billiluna and right up to Kununurra—have had a wake-up call and a renewed appreciation for what our roads mean to us. On a side note, Main Roads has been delivering in our regions, especially in the Kimberley, for a long time. Again, I have mentioned Cape Leveque Road, but now there are also single-lane bridge upgrades, especially in the East Kimberley. We have a project to upgrade single-lane bridges in the East Kimberley at Tickalara Creek, Arthur Creek and Frog Hollow Creek. When I used to live up there, they were quite small, but quite risky, single-lane bridges, especially with the amount of traffic and trucks that came through. When Main Roads was doing one of the other East Kimberley bridges, there was a large amount of work and opportunities for not only Indigenous companies and individuals from those remote communities, but also other businesses. I feel proud when I drive through the Kimberley and I pass a Main Roads camp or roadworks and see local people not only doing traffic control work, but also conducting inspections and operating rollers and graders. I see them at knock-off time when they take pride in what they have achieved. It is a hello when I am passing.

With that, I just wanted to stand and say that I am truly grateful for what this government has done under Minister Saffioti with the Main Roads crew. Keeping our communities connected is essential and the other opportunities that stem from the road network are true and real. I commend the bill to the house.

MRS J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI (Kingsley — Parliamentary Secretary) [3.51 pm]: That will be a hard act to follow, because the member for Kimberley always delivers her speeches with such passion and generosity for not only the people in this house, but also those who work for our government. My speech will pale in comparison with the speech that the member for Kimberley just gave.

I rise today to speak about the Main Roads Amendment Bill 2023. When researching the legislation, it came to my attention, as other members have highlighted, that the Main Roads Act is nearly 100 years old. For the horse-loving people in my life, just by chance I came across a very funny meme that put into context the mindset around when this act was written and whom it was written for. It says —

100 hundred years ago everyone owned a horse and only the rich had cars.
Today everyone has cars and only the rich own horses.
The stables have turned.

That certainly sounds like something the member for Landsdale would say. It really puts into context when this act was written and whom it was written for and why we need to look at modernising the legislation. These amendments to the act will help to clarify the head of power for Main Roads, particularly for identifying commercial opportunities. Obviously, we all understand that our roads are a massive infrastructure asset. We need them to get around. We need them to get to our jobs and recreation, to see our family members and to visit our beautiful state or wander out yonder. They also increasingly have a commercial aspect to them. The bill will provide clarity around Main Roads' powers to use that commercial aspect to the advantage of the state. This is a really important piece of legislation because we increasingly need to create new revenue funds for the state, and this is one way we can do that.

As other members have said, this bill will allow Main Roads to identify and enter into commercial opportunities along our vast road network in Western Australia, such as unmanned heavy vehicle fuel outlets, commercial leases of land and premises for service stations, and ancillary activities, such as a cafe along Matagarup Bridge to support the bridge climb and zip activities. All these will add to not only our Main Roads network, but also the vibrancy of our state. I know that climbing Matagarup Bridge and zip-lining off it—I have not quite got up the courage to do it yet—is a tourist attraction for many people. Even just walking across the bridge, people get to see the beautiful vistas along Derbarl Yerrigan, the Swan River. I imagine that the views from the top of the bridge would be amazing. I have climbed the lighting towers at the WACA, so I have some sense of how far someone would be able to see if they were on top of Matagarup Bridge. Having a cafe there to support this unique activity in our state would be a great move. We also have the opportunity to lease land next to our transport hubs to support commuters. Having childcare facilities, gyms and bike repair shops there would provide the capacity for people to use our road network efficiently. If we can create these hubs around our transport nodes, it will help to reduce the amount of time we spend on the roads and increase the amount of time we spend at home with our families.

The McGowan government has undertaken massive investment in infrastructure, but we also need to acknowledge that this is a rather large asset. We are investing \$9 billion in major road projects and upgrades throughout Western Australia over the next four years, with \$3.4 billion allocated for metropolitan road projects as part of the 2022–23 budget. We made that announcement in May last year. Of that money, \$80 million is for the Nicholson Road and Garden Street grade separation, \$290 million is for a dual carriageway on Thomas Road from South Western Highway to Tonkin Highway, \$100 million is for the Tonkin Highway corridor upgrades at the north Ellenbrook interchange, and \$35 million is for the East Perth footbridge. I know that many ministers are interested in the activation and vibrancy of East Perth, so I am sure that that will be helpful in achieving that goal.

I have a list of a lot of projects that we are currently doing in Western Australia, and a number of them are very interesting to me. In 2020, my husband, my family and I were saving money as we intended to visit his family in Macedonia. We had saved a good amount of money for tickets for four of us to head to Macedonia. Then, unfortunately, as we all know, we were hit by a global pandemic. Luckily for us, we had not purchased the tickets, so that money was sitting there. I purchased a pop-up camper trailer, a Jayco Flamingo—and I may or may not have decked out the inside with lots of flamingos! The reason I am telling members this is not that I am proud of my camper trailer, although I am, but that it allowed us to travel as a family along the many roads in this beautiful state. We travelled to Kalgoorlie, Esperance and Exmouth with this camper trailer. Every place that we travelled, we could see the upgrades and works that were being done on our regional roads. Not only were the roads being sealed, but also, most importantly—I think this is one of the greatest safety features on our roads—audible lines were being installed on the side of the roads and between the two single lanes of traffic heading north and south or east and west. Having audible lines on roads in remote and regional areas is vitally important when travelling long distances. Having travelled with my children in a car for 12 hours in one day, sometimes I wanted to close my eyes! Thankfully, I was not driving; my husband was. That could happen quite easily, so audible lines are a lifesaver on the roads. I think the minister should be commended for instigating that program, because not only is it the right thing to do for the regions, but also it is absolutely the right thing to do for anybody who is exploring the regions on our roads.

I will also note very quickly the project to seal the Gibb River Road, given it is next on my husband's bucket list. I am sure he will be very pleased to take his four-wheel drive up to the Gibb River Road. The member for Kimberley told me it is an absolute must do, even with the crocodiles! She assured me that they are freshwater crocodiles and will not attack. The Gibb River Road is definitely on the bucket list, and I know that we will be grateful for the extra sealing of the roads when we travel there. Members who have travelled on corrugated roads, will know it can be a bone-jangling trip.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.