STATE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 8 November 2023.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [5.15 pm]: I rise to make a very brief contribution on the State Superannuation Amendment Bill 2023. I will say at the outset that the opposition will support the legislation. I think this was introduced in November last year, so it has been sitting around for quite some time. We know that the bill intends to amend the State Superannuation Act 2000 to enable the Western Australian public sector and the Government Employee Superannuation Board to participate in the commonwealth's Your Future superannuation reforms through the GESB One Fund initiative.

As we read in the second reading speech from the minister, the principle change is that members of GESB will be able to have their payments stapled to them, figuratively speaking, so that when they onboard as members of the government workforce, they can begin their contribution. I understand that unless they nominate somewhere else, it will go to GESB. That will then follow them throughout their work life. If they leave their employment or take other employment on a part-time basis, they can then put those contributions from non-government employers into the GESB fund, which will mean that there will be savings for them in terms of the fees et cetera that will be paid.

We also understand that the need to have multiple superannuation funds can lead to people sometimes not keeping up with exactly what is going on with their superannuation. I think it is much simpler for an employee to have the one fund to contribute to. For that reason, we support this. GESB is one of those non–Australian Prudential Regulation Agency regulated public superannuation funds. I think there are many across the country, most of which have already made this change. Western Australia is one that has not, as of yet.

There are a couple of things in here. I do not know who is the representative —

Ms M.J. Hammat: I am.

Mr R.S. LOVE: You are. Sorry, parliamentary secretary.

I have a few questions that sprang from the minister's speech. Forgive me, it has been a fair while since we had the briefing. I have got briefing notes. I just want to take up the issue of the timing of some of the matters. The minister's speech states —

> After the bill is passed, the parts of the amending legislation that require WA public sector employers, when onboarding new employees, to contribute to a new employee's stapled fund—if no other fund is chosen—will be proclaimed separately and at a later date from the legislation's other provisions.

It goes on to state —

> This is to allow time for state government employers' systems and processes to be updated and to ensure efficient interaction with the Australian Taxation Office's online portal.

I do not necessarily intend to take this to consideration in detail, unless other members have searching questions on this matter. I wonder whether there could be some guidance on the complexities and timing of it, and also information on the fees, performance and insurance coverage that will be provided as part of that process, as mentioned in the second reading speech. It would be good to get some detail and assurances around those matters. It is very important for younger people, who do not have large super fund balances that have accumulated over many years, to be assured about their insurance provisions and to have a good understanding of where they are at.

I really do not think there is much point in me talking for much longer on this matter. As I say, the opposition is very happy to support the State Superannuation Amendment Bill 2023. I note that it affects only one Government Employees Superannuation Board fund; it does not affect West State Super or Gold State Super, which are the existing constitutionally protected schemes that are now closed. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could explain, if somebody is in one of those schemes, what the consequences might be for them. I understand that if they were to try to contribute from another fund, it might affect their status in a constitutionally protected fund. Perhaps if we could have a brief example of what they might be able to do in those circumstances, which I presume would be to open another GESB account to, at least, keep it all under one roof, so to speak, rather than spreading it around.

I understand that a number of other changes will be made to the composition of the board and that there are a few other technical matters to undo some of the changes in the 2011 amending legislation and go back to the process that was in place before. Perhaps a brief explanation of that would be helpful. Assuming that those explanations are satisfactory, I do not think we will need to spend any more time interrogating the provisions in any greater depth. With that, I will conclude my contribution. I understand there are other members who would like to comment on this legislation.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.22 pm]: I rise to contribute to the second reading debate on the State Superannuation Amendment Bill 2023. It is great to have the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer taking the lead on this bill. It is also fitting, given that she is a former secretary of UnionsWA, and the mighty union movement and the Labor Party have always been leaders in improving people's access to superannuation right across Australia. I acknowledge that.

On that note, I would like to start with the observation that compulsory superannuation is one of the crowning achievements of the union movement, the Labor Party and Labor governments in this country. Compulsory superannuation schemes were delivered despite heated and ongoing opposition from the Liberal and National Parties over many, many years. The Labor Party and the union movement had to fight for it tooth and nail, and they have always had to fight tooth and nail, not only to establish superannuation schemes in the first place, but also to protect them from attacks by Liberal–National governments over many decades.

I think that is a great shame, but I want to wind back to the origins of superannuation. Superannuation, as we understand it now, is in most cases enshrined in federal legislation, the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act and its related charge legislation. That was introduced by the Keating Labor government in the early 1990s, but of course before we had that national legislative scheme for compulsory superannuation, superannuation existed only in workplaces where it had been bargained for by working people and their unions.

It was an idea of the union movement to be able to preserve savings for the retirement of working people so that they would be able to live a decent life and enjoy a good standard of living in retirement, and would not have to be reliant upon the age pension to support themselves. It was bargained for on a piecemeal basis, and the best outcomes came about in workplaces where there was strong union coverage. Those workplaces first introduced superannuation schemes in enterprise agreements or awards, and later on they were able to improve those schemes. As a result of that, access to superannuation in Australia was patchy. It did not apply to every worker; it depended upon whether or not they had an award or an enterprise agreement that provided for superannuation in their workplace. The Keating government came along in the early 1990s and said, "We need to introduce superannuation for all Australians. Everybody should have access to it. All people should have the guarantee of decency, dignity and a good standard of living in retirement."

The success of that scheme, since its introduction over 30 years ago, has been overwhelming. Australia's superannuation assets, as of the final quarter of 2023, came to $3.7 trillion, which is a mind-boggling amount of money. It is the fourth-largest pension scheme in the whole world. In fact, if counted on its own, it is the largest managed pension scheme in the world. I did a little googling to try to work out who was ahead of us; I could not quite find a definitive list but from piecing things together, I think the United States, Canada and Japan are ahead of us. But given that our population is significantly smaller than all three of those nations, we are well and truly punching above our weight, and that is because we have a system that is geared towards putting aside significant sums of money early and regularly, and protecting those sums of money in a fund that people can access later in their lives.

That consistent approach to superannuation over the last few decades has led to this accumulation of extraordinary wealth. It is extraordinary wealth that is not held by private interests; it is held by superannuation funds for the benefit of their members, who are working Australians. That is an exceptional achievement, but as I said at the outset, it has only been achieved in the face of ongoing attacks from the Liberal Party and the National Party over many years.

In the previous debate the Minister for Education made the observation that the Liberal and National Parties have always had an ideological opposition to higher education. I would extend that to say that the Liberal and National Parties have always had an ideological opposition to superannuation. They have fought against it because they do not want to see money that would otherwise be used by private capital to line their pockets being used to secure the retirement of working people. More than that, they do not believe that ordinary working and middle-class people ought to be able to own capital in the way they do through superannuation schemes, because superannuation schemes are, effectively, a form of workers' capital. We hear about other forms of workers' capital being talked about around the world; we hear people talking about workers' cooperatives that might own companies and the business that those companies do. We do not really have anything on that scale, although I guess we could argue that that traditional domain of the Nationals WA, Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, is probably the biggest workers' cooperative in Western Australia, if not Australia. That is a credit to the agrarian socialists in the Nationals WA! The reality is that when it comes to workers' capital in Australia, the main way that workers' capital has been given expression is through our superannuation scheme. It is an enormous amount of workers' capital and it is a great success.

I want to go through the history of opposition to superannuation. Obviously, when unions were bargaining for superannuation over many years, claims for superannuation were opposed by employers, employer associations and by the Liberal and National Parties as the political wing of private capital in Australia. Then, when the Keating government said it was going to introduce it, it was of course opposed tooth and nail by the Liberal and National

Parties in the federal Parliament as well. It was then put into place. Realising that it could not just rip it away from people, in the lead-up to the 1996 election, John Howard promised that he would maintain the current—at that time—approach to superannuation. Members will know that when superannuation was first introduced it was introduced at a rate of, I think, nine per cent, but there was a schedule to increase that amount because actuarial analysis tells us that we need a rate of more like 15 per cent.

Ms M.J. Hammat: It started at three per cent, member.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: It started at three per cent? I am not surprised to hear that. I was not entirely sure on the starting figure.

The Labor government had implemented a schedule of increases to gradually increase the amount, because we know that a rate of 15 per cent is needed to provide an adequate amount for people to support themselves in their retirement. John Howard went to the 1996 election saying that he would stick to the then current plan and schedule, but, of course, as soon as he was elected, he froze the superannuation guarantee rate at its then rate, which would probably have been the nine per cent figure that I became familiar with when I entered the workforce. What is incredible about that is that I would have been about five or six years old when Paul Keating introduced compulsory superannuation, and by the time he left office, the rate was around nine per cent. The rate was still nine per cent when I entered the workforce as a 17-year-old, because the superannuation guarantee rate did not change during those 11 years of the Howard government. A whole generation of people missed out on fair increases to the superannuation guarantee rate.

When the Rudd–Gillard government was in power from 2007 to 2013, the Labor Party unfroze the superannuation guarantee rate and it gradually increased, but only to 9.5 per cent until the Labor government was swept out of office. Tony Abbott again promised that he would stick to the unfrozen increases to the superannuation guarantee schedule. Of course, he did not keep that promise. As soon as he got in, just like John Howard, he froze it and again the superannuation guarantee rate was stuck at 9.5 per cent for a number of years. It took until the election of the Albanese Labor government for us to see a commitment to ongoing real increases in the superannuation guarantee rate, such that we are now on track to get up to 12 per cent and eventually in the future to 15 per cent as well. All along the way, there were attacks against the proper functioning of our superannuation scheme.

There is another way that the Liberal and National Parties attacked our superannuation scheme by stealth—by watering down the regulations and allowing for the early release of superannuation to people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was all dressed up and sold to the electorate as being a way of allowing people to support themselves under the economic stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was anything but. In reality, it allowed people to make short-term decisions in running down their superannuation balances that will have a magnitude of higher consequences for them when it comes to their retirement. The problem with the arguments that were put by the Liberal and National Parties is that when we look at the way that people actually spent money that was released early during that time, we see that they did not spend it on emergency relief; they overwhelmingly used it for discretionary spending. An analysis from AlphaBeta, which is a consulting firm run by Andrew Charlton, who is now the member for Parramatta in federal Parliament, found that this was how money was spent. People who took advantage of the Liberal and National Parties' early release scheme spent an additional $2 855 in the first fortnight after the release, and the number one thing they spent that money on was debt repayments of $393—that is, money spent on dealing with circumstances of financial distress. But the second item was gambling at an average of $327. In addition, an average of $207 was spent on restaurants and cafes, $157 on alcohol and tobacco, and $75 was spent on apps, games and music. I make no criticism of people's individual decisions, but the reality is that the Liberal and National Parties' approach to regulating our superannuation industry incentivised people to spend their superannuation, their retirement savings, on discretionary purchases like gambling, alcohol and games.

Dr Andrew Charlton put it this way: if someone used their super money at the time of the pandemic to buy a $20 pizza, due to the compounding effect of what they would have got for that $20 if it had stayed in their super account, that pizza might end up costing them $150 at the time of their retirement. He said —

> It will be the most expensive pizza they've ever bought.

People did not think of it that way at the time, and should not be blamed for that, because that is why governments put policy settings in place. We put policy settings in place in order to nudge behaviour in order to regulate our retirement system appropriately, but, by stealth, the Liberal and National Parties sucked money out of the superannuation system. It sucked money out of people's superannuation accounts and the consequences of that attack on superannuation during the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt not now, but in decades' time when people come to rely on their superannuation savings, and, on these figures, some people will be tens of thousands of dollars worse off as a result of the decision by the Scott Morrison Liberal–National government.

I just want to be clear that Labor has always been the party that protects superannuation. The Liberal and National Parties have always been the parties that oppose superannuation. It was heartening, however, to hear the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of Nationals WA, say that the Nationals WA—or is it the opposition as a whole? —

Mr R.S. Love: The opposition.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: — supports this bill. That is good. I think it is a good thing that members of the opposition are focused on the importance of a good retirement, because they are losing 50 per cent of their members to retirement at the next election—some forced, some unforced. The member for Central Wheatbelt has decided that her time is up and is moving on. I respect that. She has been a contributor of gravitas to this chamber and the other chamber for many years, regardless of the fact that I may disagree with her on policy issues. We then have the member for Cottesloe who, unfortunately for him, was deselected as the candidate for the Liberal Party for Cottesloe, and so has had an early retirement forced upon him. Then, of course, we have the battle royal between the Leader of the Opposition and the once Nationals member for North West Central, now Liberal member for North West Central, who will be duelling it out in the new seat of Mid-West, and we know that only one shall return from that contest.

I have to say that when the opposition has only six members in the chamber, it is a bit of a worry that the opposition has lost 50 per cent of them before the election has even started. That is more than careless; it seems reckless to me. I know there was talk in the last Parliament when some opposition members were going around pointing at government members and telling them that they would be gone at the next election. I am not doing that. I just make the observation that no matter how the campaign goes, 50 per cent of the opposition members will not be here in the next Parliament.

It is always important to keep an eye on having a good retirement plan, and the bill we are passing today will ensure that public sector workers have access to a good retirement plan.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I will round this out by speaking to the substance of the bill. The bill will implement the federal Your Future, Your Super changes that were introduced by the former federal government. Although I do not agree with the ideological tax on superannuation by the Liberal and National Parties when they are in government, many of the reforms in the Your Future, Your Super package are good reforms and it is good to see them mirrored here. I do not know whether the parliamentary secretary knows the answer to this, but I suspect that the reason that we have to deal with this is that it would be unconstitutional for the federal government to pass legislation controlling a superannuation fund that is for the benefit of public sector workers. The principle known as the Melbourne corporation principle is, essentially, that the commonwealth government cannot impair the state's right to exercise its own functions, and that extends to controlling its own agents and employees. I suspect that the reason for this bill is that if the federal Parliament made laws that affected the way that the state provides terms and conditions for the employment and retirement of state government employees, that would be an impairment of the Melbourne corporation principle. I am freelancing a little; I was trying to work out what the constitutional barrier was, and I think that may be it. As a result of that principle, we have to basically take the reforms made at the federal level and apply them to GESB as a state superannuation fund.

The Your Future, Your Super reforms tackle a few different issues. The first is the duplication of accounts. We know that as people moved jobs, they had superannuation accounts opened for them either because they did not provide their super details, so the employer used a default fund, or the employee forgot they had a fund opened for them previously, so they opened a new fund when they started with a new employer. As a result, people's superannuation was fragmented across a number of superannuation funds. That meant they were attracting fees and insurance premiums in each of those funds that were running down their fragmented superannuation balances. We know that accounts were duplicated. We also know that unnecessary fees were being charged by superannuation funds and that some funds were underperforming. I want to be really clear that the vast majority of funds—not all of them—that were engaging in charging unnecessary fees or unnecessarily high fees or that were underperforming were retail superannuation funds; they were not industry superannuation funds. Industry superannuation funds perform better, on the whole, than retail super funds and charge lower fees than retail super funds. The difference between the funds is that an industry fund has been set up between employees and employers. It is a trust, effectively, that is administered by employer groups like, for example, the Australian Industry Group or the National Retail Association, but it also has representation from employees in the form of unions. In the case of a fund like CBUS, a union like the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has worker appointees on the board. A retail fund, on the other hand, is purely owned by a financial private for-profit financial organisation, which is usually a bank. Those funds are there to make money off the retail superannuation fund. Andrew Bragg, a federal Liberal Party Senator from New South Wales, is always attacking superannuation funds and, in particular, industry superannuation funds, which is ridiculous because industry superannuation funds that do not have a profit motive are there to represent employers and have much better returns and fees. Obviously, we understand that we want to get fees down; we want to get rid of unnecessary fees. We do not want people to have duplicate accounts and we do not want funds to underperform if we can avoid it. Some of the reforms that were made through the Your Future, Your Super laws addressed those issues and we are now implementing those reforms at a state level when it comes to GESB. One of the ways we are doing that, as the Leader of the Opposition alluded to, is by allowing for the stapling of accounts. The Leader of the Opposition clarified that "stapling accounts to people" is meant figuratively. I thought that was an important clarification to make. We are not proposing to physically staple accounts to people! The point of a stapling an account is that it means that when a person starts as a public sector employee, the employer will be obliged to check the ATO portal to see whether the person has an existing superannuation fund and, rather than opening a fund for that person with GESB, the employer will be required to use the existing fund that is registered with the ATO. That will not create duplicate accounts.

The second reform that I think is important is that we will allow GESB to receive private contributions from employers in the private sector. This is important for someone who started with the public sector and opened an account with GESB and then left the public sector. Currently, that person has to open another superannuation fund to accept their contributions from the private sector. We then end up with people having duplicate accounts. By making these reforms, people will not need to have duplicate accounts.

I want to talk briefly about my own experience. I worked casually as a part-time electorate officer after I graduated from high school, starting in about 2006 or 2007. At that time, we obviously did not have these stapling requirements. We could not put funds from a private sector employer into a GESB account, and people could not take that GESB account with them, effectively. Once I finished up as an electorate officer and moved into the workforce, that account essentially had to sit there. I could not put any contributions into it from the private sector. More than that, at that time I could not even roll my GESB account over into a private superannuation account. That was changed by the state Parliament in the early 2010s. People could not move private contributions into GESB but they could take funds out of GESB and roll them into another superannuation fund like Australian Super. Originally, I could not even elect to take that superannuation with me and roll it into another fund. The result was that I had an account with GESB that was just sitting there basically being eaten up in fees. There was no option open to me. I could not take out the money and roll it somewhere else or put any additional contributions into it from my job in the private sector. We solved one of the problems in the early 2010s and now we will solve the other problem with this legislation so that when someone goes into the private sector like I did, rather than rolling their funds from GESB into Australian Super, once these changes take effect, they can elect to keep their GESB account and put their private sector contributions into the GESB account. The bill will allow what I believe the former member for Mirrabooka, Janine Freeman, referred to as two-way choice. When amendments were debated in the early 2010s, the then member for Mirrabooka, Janine Freeman—she was probably the member for Nollamara or something back then—made the point that the changes that were being made to the State Superannuation Act at that time would allow for only one-way choice. She argued that it would allow somebody to take their GESB superannuation and roll it into a fund like Australian Super, which predominantly services the private sector, but would not allow for two-way choice, as it would not allow somebody to essentially take their GESB account with them and put private sector contributions into it. These changes will essentially deliver on that by allowing two-way choice. We know that reform takes time, but I say to the member for Mirrabooka's predecessor that we got there with the reforms that she was seeking! It is fitting that the current member for Mirrabooka is leading the bill.

I will wrap up my contribution there. Just to rehash, superannuation is one of the great achievements of the labour movement and the Labor Party. It is something that we will have to fight to protect for many years to come. On that basis, I commend this bill to the house.

MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee) [5.51 pm]: It is lovely to get up and speak on the State Superannuation Amendment Bill 2023, particularly given the origins of this great piece of public policy, as outlined by the member for Cockburn. It is worth dwelling on that history, both prior to 1992, when the Superannuation Guarantee (Administration) Act was passed by the federal Parliament, and after that time. It was a significant achievement on behalf of future generations and is intergenerational, given how it tends to the future wealth of people. However, it also has some knobs on it. Like any piece of public policy, it has had some unintended consequences that have impacted how we tend to the national savings plan, which is formed largely by the property ownership of Australians and their superannuation funds and other investments; they are the two principal vehicles.

Before I move to the more contemporary aspects of superannuation and, particularly, the reforms of the state-based system that we are talking about here with GESB et cetera, it is important that we understand the history of superannuation. It is quite a new concept but it came from the idea of a social wage—what we now call a safety net. It is a form of pension or retirement savings. Its earliest forms evolved in ancient civilisations going right back to Rome, funnily enough—a lot of roads lead to Rome!—when various soldiers, centurions, generals and so on were gifted land, income and title for their service to the empire. That continued through the Middle Ages, when nobility and class separation was very much bestowed on the basis of service. The emergence of the modern pension system took shape in the nineteenth century with the industrial revolution and the rise of large-scale employment. Wages and conditions improved principally through the trade union movement, which has given us so much of what we have today in terms of workplace safety and conditions and a modern pay system.

The history of superannuation goes right back to ancient Roman times and came through Europe and North America as the industrial revolution flowed across the world. At some point, different systems evolved in different countries, with compulsory contributions from workers and employers. That was done on an enterprise basis in the US system. We then had the advent of occupational pensions and social security systems. Many countries also developed occupational pension schemes sponsored by employers, often referred to as superannuation retirement plans, providing additional retirement benefits to top-up social security. We can see the melding of the two systems.

It then moved into an area called defined benefits. I am a recipient of a defined benefit to this day from the old Defence Force Retirement and Death Benefits Scheme. Defined contribution plans came about in the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. There has been a significant shift towards defined contribution pension schemes, where retirement benefits are based on the contributions made and the investment returns earned over time. As the member for Cockburn said, prior to the shift to a more modern system, defined benefits schemes such as the old Gold State Super and the federal public service fund were not very portable, were not adaptable and required a certain defined period of contribution before someone could get a benefit. That has changed.

There is global variation. The structure and design of pension systems vary widely across countries, reflecting differences in history, culture and economic and political factors. Some countries predominantly have public pension systems, whereas others rely more heavily on private pensions or a combination of both. Additionally, the level of pension coverage, adequacy of benefits and sustainability of pension systems can vary greatly from one country to another. As labour markets reformed through time, so too did the pension systems.

In Australia, it was the vision of the Hawke–Keating government, with Paul Keating as Treasurer and then Prime Minister, that ushered in a period of great change. We often reflect on the Hawke–Keating era for its visionary public policy setting. Paul Keating's contribution to this country is immense on this basis. This is something that has created intergenerational wealth, to the point that Australia is now one of the top five countries in the world for super funds under management. As of last quarter, we had about $3.7 trillion under management. We sometimes have the fourth or third-largest pool of funds under management. Things got real for both employers and employees in 1992 when the super fund guarantee was introduced, with co-contributions seen as being fundamentally important to a growing nation. That included compulsory superannuation, which mandated that employers contribute a percentage of their employees' earnings into a superannuation fund. We should always remember that the superannuation system and policy in Australia came from the trade union movement. The industrial wing of the labour movement identified, through the Accord, that workers would give up a three per cent wage increase in order to allow the super schemes to get started. This was the great brainchild of Bill Kelty and co, the Australian Council of Trade Unions and many of its constituent unions, and, of course, the Labor political wing. We should always pause to give honour and respect to that history, because it has fundamentally driven what this country now effectively has—a sovereign wealth fund.

Keating also advocated for increased savings during his time as Prime Minister to address the challenge of insufficient retirement savings amongst Australians. They knew then that the age pension was never going to satisfy the needs, expectations or standard of living that had been growing amongst Australians. Legislative reforms introduced during his tenure as Treasurer and then Prime Minister included measures to improve the governance and regulation of superannuation funds, enhance transparency and accountability, and promote competition between fund providers. The introduction of choice of fund followed. Keating introduced the choice of fund provision to allow employees to choose their own superannuation fund, rather than being automatically enrolled in a fund chosen by their employer. The ability to transfer between and consolidate funds has also evolved over time.

Throughout Keating's career, he articulated a vision that would ensure the long-term retirement security of Australians. He saw superannuation as a key component of what he called the national savings plan. Overall, Paul Keating's leadership and vision were instrumental in laying down the foundations of the modern superannuation system in Australia and have had a lasting impact to this day. As I said, Australia is regularly in the top five of funds under management globally, which is a massive achievement for this country. Keating said something really instructive in 1992. He said that he believed that compulsory superannuation would be one of the most enduring legacies of his time in office, providing a lasting benefit to a generation of Australians. He often reflected on the role of government in the construction and management of the superannuation system. He did not give up ownership of that, nor has any other government, particularly of the Labor persuasion, or the responsibility to make sure that the system is transparent and adaptable to a modern economy.

Keating said —

> "Government has a responsibility to create an environment where every Australian can achieve financial security in retirement, and compulsory superannuation is a vital part of fulfilling that responsibility."

When we look at where we are today, moving away from that ancient history and contemporary history, it is interesting to pull up the recent intergenerational report that indicates that Australia is on track for pension payments to shrink from 2.3 per cent of gross domestic product today to just two per cent by 2062–63. That is massive. This is public policy come home to roost in the best possible set of circumstances when the public purse will no longer be burdened as much as it was in the past, or was projected to be without superannuation funds, to drop as a percentage of GDP to two per cent, which is quite a significant amount.

The intergenerational report goes on to state —

> This reduction is due to the increasing proportion of Australians benefiting from superannuation (retirement savings), with those retiring from the mid-2040s having received super payments of 9% or more throughout their working lives.

Notwithstanding the implications and impact of gender issues in relation to time outside the workforce, another thing that needs to be considered is the disparity between women and men in the superannuation system and the amount on which they get to retire.

It is interesting that when we talk about the cost of the age pension, it is easy to talk in percentage terms. In 2018–19, the biggest component of social security and welfare expenditure, which includes the age pension and other income support for seniors, amounted to $46 billion. By 2022–23, it was $54.8 billion. It is a significant contribution from the taxpayers of Australia to ensure that older Australians enjoy a quality and standard of life that approximates what they had during their working lives.

The interplay between the superannuation system and the age pension is palpable and demonstrable as to its impact and the benefits of why we have this system. The continued modernisation of the system and adapting it to ensure it meets both its own intended original outcomes and where it goes in relation to the modern economy is a fundamental point. The bill before us today is one small step towards harmonising that legislation right across Australia between the states with those state-based schemes.

In many ways, this great piece of public policy is a victim of its own success—$3.7 billion under management is a significant contribution. Basically, it is also a system subsidised by the taxpayer. What it has morphed into these days—in some parts, not all, not for the majority—is basically an inheritance vehicle because of the amount of super that is held in accounts. The tax discounts on the current superannuation industry that are provided by the commonwealth are approximately $45 billion a year. The foregone tax is $45 billion a year. Members might say that is not too far distant from the current cost of the age pension, so are we paying for it now to avoid having to pay for it later? The answer is no, not quite—but we can see the logic in that straight transfer. The tax subsidy is nearly the full cost of the age pension.

Research from the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia found projections indicated that 50 per cent of all Australian retirees will be at what ASFA calls the comfortable retirement standard or more by 2050. That is really important. Over half of the population will be there. The measure requires a balance of $640 000 for a couple and $545 000 for a single in current dollars. It really is interesting. Who is over the comfortable limit and is it fair that the taxpayer continues to subsidise people with more than the comfortable limit or what we would consider a moderate requirement? We should also be mindful of the fact that ASFA has its own bands. It is a benchmark that many do not reach, with the medium balance before retirement sitting at around $285 450. Only half of working Australians expect to reach that benchmark in 28 years' time but more than 300 000 people today have super balances of $1 million or more, while 11 million people have $5 million or more. These are people who have balances in their super funds that they would never be able to spend in ordinary time. It begs the question: do we need a tiered system or a cap on the pool that can be retained? In the high balance world of self-managed funds—but wait, there is more; it does not include those—there are 27 funds with balances of over $100 million, including one with $544 million, set aside for retirement. The initial purpose of a retirement support fund has actually been distorted in some parts, but, as we have said, I have never examined a piece of public policy in this place or considered it in any other place that does not have some unintended consequence. Sometimes they are good consequences, and sometimes they are distortionary, and that is one of those circumstances.

We have to consider that things have been dynamic over time, including the way the age pension has happened. The government put up the statutory retirement age for the purposes of the age pension and notional retirement for super, depending on one's birthdate. When we talk about these sorts of things—again, the bill before the house is adapting itself to those things—we need to consider the changing population demographics. The number of people eligible for the age pension depends on a whole bunch of things, not least of which is life expectancy. People are living longer, although there is a declining birthrate. Those things need to be taken into consideration. We also need to consider the pension eligibility criteria, the benefit levels and the economic conditions—those that affect the unemployment rate and economic growth, for example. Of course, the fifth factor that comes into consideration for any adoption of public policy around super funds is alternative savings behaviour. Without compulsory superannuation, individuals may have saved more or less through other means, such as voluntary super contributions, personal savings or investment. These things will always impact on both the social wage that comes from the age pension or from the superannuation system itself, which is, as I said, significantly subsidised by the taxpayer as well.

The key component here is to contemplate the following questions: What is the purpose of a superannuation fund? Why do we need to adapt them, as we are seeking to do in this bill before us today? Also, what are the other things that create intergenerational wealth? We have talked about it many times, and we cannot go too far to get away from the housing crisis. We are not immune from it here in Western Australia, particularly with low levels of rental vacancy. Largely, those rental properties—those investments—are held by people who are geared into them. It is another piece of what we call middle-class welfare by which people like me—I declare that I have a rental property, like many members in this house—have benefited from the gearing that is subsidised by taxpayers for the purpose of something that actually loses money.

With those comments, it is really important that I leave my final comment on this legislation to how it came about. It is a point for politicians. In 1990, the federal election was one of only five post-war elections in which the government was returned on less than 50 per cent of the two-party preferred vote—48.9 per cent—yet it won a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. It was one of those perverse outcomes. It was also done at a time when the Senate was not owned by the ruling government. That is really instructive for us here today because during the Paul Keating era, there were not too many times when the Labor Party owned the Senate. As a result, all these legislative things that required significant reform had to be done through what could have been a hostile Parliament. When we look at the voting patterns—for my sins, I read some of the 1992 Senate *Hansard*—and align them with the ayes and noes at the end of the *Hansard* debate, we get a sneaky suspicion that although the conservatives opposed it, it was constructed in a way that the vote would get through. When we compare the pairs and those who were not listed on the ayes or nays and were clearly absent, we can see that it was always going to pass on the numbers. It was a very interesting piece of political trivia. To see how it threaded its way through the Parliament of Australia is really an instructive point for us if we contrast that with recent governments and oppositions, for which the default position is "no" and the gold standard of being in opposition is whatever wrecks the government's ideas. If we go back to that period in the 1980s and 1990s, so much reform was conducted based on proper, good policy and it was properly received and properly debated. With those words, I commend the bill.

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [6.10 pm]: Of course, it is an honour to stand here today and talk about the really important State Superannuation Amendment Bill 2023, which will affect public sector workers who have a Government Employees Superannuation Board fund. Participants of this fund will have the ability to do what is called "staple" their superannuation account to them, so they will be able to take their superannuation fund with them and have a choice of superannuation fund wherever they work. It is really just bringing GESB into line with the commonwealth's Your Future, Your Super reforms. It is a little bit overdue, but it is great that we are introducing this. I want to acknowledge the work of the Treasurer in what will be a pretty significant week for her as she introduces another important piece of legislation.

I am someone in this chamber who is deeply passionate about superannuation. Before becoming a member of Parliament, I spent my career as a financial planner. One of the things that I really loved to do was run evening seminars for members of the teachers' union. The seminars grew from being just a couple of people in a room to sometimes quite significant numbers of people, and they were often women who really felt excluded from understanding their superannuation. I certainly felt that that was a fault of the industry I was in; the language used in superannuation and retirement planning had been designed to make people feel that it was a little bit inaccessible. I always really enjoyed being able to provide simple explanations of retirement and superannuation rules so that, at the end of those sessions, women walked away feeling a little bit more empowered about their financial situation. That is something I feel really passionate about. A little bit later in my contribution, I would like to touch on the inequality between the superannuation balances of men and women in this country.

Other government members have talked about the history of superannuation, but it is really important that we acknowledge that history. It is hard to conceive of a single policy that has had such a significant impact on both workers in this country and our whole economy. At this point in time, the superannuation investment total here in this country is about $3.5 trillion or $3.7 trillion. That makes Australia the fourth-largest holder of pension funds globally. That is huge. For such a small country, that is absolutely massive. To put that in contrast or compare us with other countries and their retirement savings structures and investments, it is important to note that according to the United States Census Bureau data, 50 per cent of women and 47 per cent of men aged between 55 and 66 have no retirement savings in the US. That would be quite terrifying. I am looking at a CBS article from 1 March 2023, and I am pretty horrified. I want to use an example from the article to highlight how dire that would be. If we did not have compulsory superannuation in this country, I think that is exactly the situation we would be facing. Our working population would be looking at going into retirement with no savings if it were not for a former Labor government in the Keating era. The article is called "Millions of Americans nearing retirement age with no savings". I want to highlight Maryann O'Connor, a woman who is juggling two jobs and sometimes working up to 11 hours a day, which is not what she was expecting to do at the age of 66. She said, "I would hope to be retired, playing the piano again, just enjoying my life", but, unfortunately, she has no savings nor a 401(k) account, which is loosely equivalent to our superannuation fund. She does not even have enough to cover an emergency and had to sell her home and downsize. In her words, basically, her current financial situation has "been a matter of life and death". As I said, in America 50 per cent of women of preretirement or retirement age have no savings for retirement. I feel that that is pretty significant and a stark contrast to Australia. Nearly 57 million Americans work for an employer that does not offer a retirement savings plan. Again, that is completely the opposite to Australia, where superannuation is compulsory and enshrined in legislation.

That is all thanks to the union movement, working hand in glove with the then Treasurer Paul Keating, back in the early 1990s. Bill Kelty was the head of the Australian Council of Trade Unions during that time, and the idea was largely born of the union movement and its desire to ensure that workers have dignity in retirement. Certainly, Paul Keating identified that a significant problem was facing our economy and that, more broadly, government would have to fix the problem. Government was not going to be able to provide an income stream for our ageing demographic, so it had to think outside the box about what it was going to do because it could not sustain the age pension, which was going to explode as our population aged. Hence, the superannuation industry and the superannuation guarantee were born of that idea.

It started at a very low amount; it was 3 per cent. I know that the member for Cockburn also identified this, but I would like to say that 3 per cent sounds quite paltry to us now, but at the time the Liberal Party, the National Party and the business world were screaming from the rafters that 3 per cent would be ruinous to the economy. Obviously, we now know that working people will need to contribute 15 per cent from day one when they start their working life to have enough to meet their requirements for a comfortable retirement. This had to be negotiated, and it was a very heated and fierce debate across party lines. Eventually, that became legislation, which was fantastic.

Like the member for Cockburn, I would like to take the opportunity to remind this place that every single time a Liberal government came into power federally, it reneged on the promise to keep the superannuation guarantee contributions as they were meant to be and had been predicted from day one. Under Paul Keating's original plan, they were meant to continue to grow, but every single time Howard or Abbott got into government, they systematically tried to pick apart this incredible and transformational system, which ensures that working Australians have dignity in retirement. They did it every single time.

I remember being quite shocked when I got into financial planning. It is probably still true to this day that I was and probably remain the only person involved in financial services in Australia who is a member of the Labor Party. I was certainly a lone voice when, as a 22-year-old or 23-year-old, I started working as what they call a para-planner, which is like a paralegal in a law firm—someone who does all the research for the financial planners and writes up the financial plan and the strategy. I remember at the time I was writing up a financial plan for a financial planner's client, who was a same-sex client. There was all this debate because the team was like, "Oh, what are we going to do because once this person dies, their superannuation won't go to their partner?" I remember saying that was ridiculous and I asked why that was the case. They said that the government—it was a Liberal government at the time, of course—was opposed to introducing any measures to allow a member of a same-sex couple to be the beneficiary in a superannuation context if their partner died. It was a constant reminder of the Liberal government's bigotry, really. But anyway, I saw over the years, as governments changed from Labor to Liberal, unfortunately, that everything we had tried to put in place to improve the lives of working Australians in retirement was always unpicked, as I said, or frozen or the government would say, "Oh, well, we'll just park it over here and we'll resume the increase in the contribution rates in time." Of course, it never happened. Thank God we have a federal Labor government now so that we can, hopefully, continue on that trajectory of increasing those super contribution guarantees.

The superannuation guarantee is not the only element of superannuation that the Liberals like to target. They have always tried to take down industry super funds. We have all seen the ads featuring "From little things, big things grow". The thing that I was most proud of as a financial planner was working for an industry super fund. I was so proud because I did not get paid commission. I remember going to the interview and my future boss asked me whether I knew I was not going to get paid commission. I said, "Yes, isn't it fantastic? You're not going to pay commission to me for giving advice to people about their retirement savings." I think they thought it was quite strange. Again, only Labor governments see the value in this.

I remember sitting around a table with other financial planners in Perth. The then Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation, Hon Bill Shorten, was doing a review of the way financial planners charged commissions on superannuation funds. Every single financial planner around the table except for me was bleating about how difficult it was to sustain their businesses and Bill listened really patiently and he said it was so interesting that every single financial planner he met talked about the impact to their bottom line, but he was yet to meet a single working Australian who saw that it would impact them negatively, because it does not. Industry super funds are important because they are designed to ensure that all the benefits of that superannuation fund go back to the members because they do not have shareholders. They are always there for the members. Again, this is another great initiative born mostly out of the union movement. I think that they have clearly proven over many, many decades that they can outperform most of the retail funds or managed funds run by the big financial providers.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms C.M. ROWE: I am a big supporter of the industry funds and I know that because they are often established from the union movement. The Liberals, philosophically, really take great umbrage to people getting a better deal than the big end of town. I know that really keeps them awake at night, but I think industry super funds are fantastic. Like I said, thank God we have a federal Labor government to protect the integrity of those funds, hopefully, well into the future.

Another issue that I would like to touch on around superannuation is that one of the critical components of superannuation is the beauty of compounding interest and the preservation rules that mean we cannot access our superannuation moneys until we reach what is called preservation age. That has increased over time. I think it originally started at around 55 years of age and it has gone up, depending on when someone was born. I think I will be able to access mine when I am 67 years of age. This is an incredibly important element of the superannuation system because it allows those moneys to accumulate uninterrupted with the effect of the compounding interest.

Every single time a federal election has rolled around in the past 10 years, the Liberals have just been so opportunistic and tried to suggest that if they get in, they will allow people to access their superannuation moneys to buy a home. It is so detrimental to people's retirement, but, of course, it is so thoroughly populistic. They are such populists—always. It is so terribly predictable of the Liberals and Nationals to go down the path of saying that they will give people access to their superannuation so that they can buy a house. Of course, people think that that is a good option and I do not blame people because it is hard to get access to a property these days. That is not the answer. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul, and it just ensures that people are impoverished or, at least, what they will have as a nest egg in retirement is heavily impacted because they have interrupted that compounding interest effect. I always get very, very hostile when I see that policy wheeled out again as something that should be considered because it just so basic. They are so populist.

Anyway, the last thing that I want to talk about is the superannuation gap that exists and persists, unfortunately, between what men have in retirement versus what women have. I have a couple of reports here that really highlight it, but I would just like to, firstly, look at one. It is a little bit older. It is from February 2020. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency, a federal government agency, looked at "Women's economic security in retirement". This paper goes through some of the main issues that affect men's superannuation balances versus women's superannuation balances. I will just highlight a few of the issues raised in this report. Women have lower lifetime earnings for a multitude of reasons, but often because they are more likely to work part-time due to caring responsibilities or have time out of the workforce entirely for having children. They have more precarious forms of employment and often take large chunks of unpaid time for caring responsibilities at the end of their parents' life. They are taking time off to have children and then at the other end of the scale, when their parents are getting elderly and moving into aged-care facilities, they take on that unpaid caring responsibility. Again, that potentially interrupts their capacity to earn a full-time wage because they take on part-time work to do that and undertake those roles.

There are a couple of other factors as well. Understandably, it impacts the bottom line and what they currently have. The thing to note before we look at that is that a cohort of Australians still does not have superannuation at all. In fact, 23 per cent of women and 13 per cent of men have no superannuation. In every category, women are even more disadvantaged than men, which is really terrifying.

A report was done by AustralianSuper in conjunction with Monash University. I believe this one might be a little bit more recent. It is titled *The future face of poverty is female*. This report goes into a lot of detail about what impacts women's precarious futures. A lot of it is around superannuation and what leads to the inequality at the end of their working life. One thing really stood out, which I had not thought about until I read this report. Yes, there is an unequal distribution to this day of unpaid domestic work and, as I have talked about, the breaks in work history. The other factor I had not considered is the impact discrimination has on women's ability, capacity and interest in working full-time. Discrimination may be being bullied, sexual harassment or pay gap issues so they see their male counterparts getting paid greater amounts. The report highlights that this factor really influences women's engagement in the labour market. I thought that was very interesting. There are things at play other than the issues I have already mentioned. It is complex, but the statistics are real and quite frightening. I want to end my contribution by highlighting that women in Australia on average earn literally $1 million less over their lifetimes than men. They retire with $136 000 less in superannuation. That is from a report that was released last year on International Women's Day. I have a copy of the report for *Hansard*. It was done by the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce. It is a very comprehensive report around some of the complex factors that lead into that. The research suggests that the biggest driver of the gap in retirement savings is still the gender pay gap. We talk about it a lot and it is still really persistent. It is still the highest in the country here in Western Australia. It is worth noting that, from the incredibly comprehensive report, it remains the most impactful component of why women are retiring in a much poorer way, in many regards, than their male counterparts. This report found that women earning medium wage would accumulate about $393 000 in their super. This is $151 000 below the level of what is classified as a comfortable retirement amount. That amount has been identified by the Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, so the report is quoting quite a well-touted amount.

I refer to an article in *The Guardian*, "Women earn $1m less than men over lifetime and retire with $136,000 less super, study finds". I quote —

> Men have higher average salaries than women in 95% of all occupations, including those where women dominate the workforce. For example, women account for 99% of all midwives, and yet are paid on average 19% less.

Think about that for a moment. It is very troubling. It continues —

> There are about 80 occupations in which men make up 80% or more of the workforce and that workers receive an average salary above $100,000.
>
> By contrast, no occupations in which women make up 80% or more of the workforce pay an average salary above $100,000.

It is talking about female-dominated industries, which are often lower paid caring roles. It is driving at female-dominated industries, which are quite often valued less from a societal point of view and paid less. That is what it is referring to. I see the Leader of the Opposition's look over there. In the article, which is from last year, a senior economist from the Centre for Future Work said —

> "there's been a noisy political debate about super in Australia for the past week, but this data shows that based on median income data Australian women will earn $136,000 less … over their working life".

In the end, it not only impacts women and their superannuation, but also affects our overall economy because there is less money, they are working less, and less money is going into the economy during their working lives and then in retirement. I am mostly concerned that women are a particularly vulnerable cohort when they get to that stage in their life when they want to be retiring and hope for comfort that they do not have to think about the cost of living, rent and all those concerns.

I think I will leave it there. I will make a final comment on the disparity between what men and women have in their super. Women are still retiring with a third less super than men on average. That is significant. I know that the federal government is looking at some fantastic measures to address that. The federal government established this working group—the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce. It is taken really seriously, of course, because it is a Labor government. I would like to end by saying I am always so proud of the legacy of Labor governments but, when it comes to the impact of superannuation from the early 1990s and hopefully long into the future, we have the union movement to thank for the superannuation system we have. It was Labor governments in the era of Keating and the subsequent Labor governments that followed. It is never, ever thanks to a Liberal government that workers can be protected, from an industrial relations point of view. They are always trying to tear down unions or any protection mechanisms for workers. This is a timely reminder that we all forget about superannuation. It is something we do not think about until we get to our later stage of life, but we all ought to give it some thought and acknowledge it is Labor governments that do these transformational pieces of legislation. On that, I absolutely commend the bill to the house.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.37 pm] — in reply: I rise acting as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer today to bring the second reading debate to a conclusion. I want to thank all members who contributed to the debate this evening. I thank the Leader of the Opposition as the opposition lead speaker and I will come to the questions he raised shortly. I also thank the other speakers who contributed. I thank the member for Cockburn for his contribution in which he highlighted, as did all speakers, the role the trade union movement has played in establishing universal superannuation as an entitlement for working people in this country and what a significant piece of public policy that has been. The member for Cockburn talked through the history and the significance of those funds to both the economy as well as working people as retirement savings. I thank the member for Willagee for his contribution. I thank him for taking us back to Roman times in his contribution this evening. It was a really important recognition that superannuation sits in a suite of reforms that have been implemented by federal Labor governments to improve the social wage for working people, recognising that quality of life is not determined by just the income people might receive, but having a social wage also provides a safety net of support, which is one way that Labor governments have made a real difference to working people in this country over a long period. Finally, I thank the member for Belmont for her contribution in which she made a really important recognition of the gender pay gap that exists in superannuation, the reasons for that and the fact there is still much work to be done to ensure women retire on superannuation and do not retire into some form of poverty when they do so. I also thank her for sharing her history. As a former financial adviser, she is incredibly well equipped to talk about the issue of superannuation.

The bill before us deals with the GESB scheme and, as others have highlighted, ensuring that stapling can occur onto people's accounts. The Leader of the Opposition raised three main questions that he was seeking some illumination on. Firstly, in respect of timing, the bill will introduce two concepts of stapling, if you will. The most straightforward and the one that will be implemented on royal assent is for a public sector worker in the GESB scheme who leaves that employment or gets complementary employment while still employed and wants to make payments into their GESB scheme. This legislation will provide for that; whether it is a second job while they remain in the public sector or whether they leave and go to new employment, GESB will effectively be stapled to them. It will be administratively straightforward for GESB to receive those funds from an alternative employer. That will start on royal assent. However, a delay will occur for an employee with an alternative employer who accepts employment in the public sector. In the first instance, they will be able to exercise their choice of fund. I am sure that the aspiration of GESB would be that a new employee, on being provided with information about the fund—the Leader of the Opposition referred to the Treasurer's second reading speech in which she referred to information on fees, performance and insurance—would choose GESB as their fund. In the event that they do not choose it, the next option will be that the stapled fund will receive the funds. It will not be GESB; it will be another fund. It could be any fund. It will be more complex for existing government employers to make those superannuation contributions because instead of their current practice, which for some time has been to pay GESB, they will have to interact with the Australian Taxation Office portal and keep the required records. There is meant to be some development of their capacity before those changes are implemented because there could be some consequences if the systems do not run well. As we have heard tonight, people's retirement savings are fundamental to their considerations. Hence there will be a delay, which is envisaged to be six to 12 months, to allow those employers to build capacity and have the systems in place so that the transition happens smoothly and without any difficulty.

I think the Leader of the Opposition's second question went to the West State Super and Gold State Super funds. As he correctly observed, they are legacy funds that exist in GESB. They are constitutionally protected. No new employees are able to access them; they exist simply for the employees who are in them now. In the event that those employees leave, they will not be able to make payments into the legacy funds. They will be able to open a new GESB accumulation-style fund, like everyone else, for their new employer to make contributions into. The benefit will be that all the superannuation of an individual will still be held in GESB, albeit in two different funds—the legacy fund and the new accumulation-style fund. That will make it administratively easier for the employee and will also help with insurance premiums and the like. It will still be a benefit compared with opening an entirely new account in a new fund. There are longstanding reasons why the Gold State and West State schemes are no longer available to people. While people are working in the public sector, they are able to make payments into them. If they leave the public sector, they can make payments into a GESB fund, but it will not be the protected or legacy-style funds.

The legislation will wind back some amendments that were introduced in this place and became legislation in 2011. I am advised that they were investor-related services procurement amendments that were intended to be addressed by Treasurer's guidelines at the time in 2011. However, subsequent to those amendments passing in this place, the State Solicitor's Office advised that it could not be done. Since that time, it has been intended to revoke the provisions. This is the first opportunity to do so. Obviously, those amendments were not significant enough to warrant a separate piece of legislation, but now that this bill is in this place to make substantial changes around stapling, it is the first available opportunity to make those more administrative changes. Hopefully, that satisfies the issues that the Leader of the Opposition raised.

I want to conclude by once again thanking everyone who made a contribution to the debate on this bill. I particularly want to thank the staff from the Government Employees Superannuation Board who have joined us today. They have worked hard over some period of time to make sure that this bill could be brought before the house, including consulting with unions in particular and the organisations that will be affected on behalf of working people. I thank Ben Palmer, Frank Meschino and Brendan Davies for their work on this bill. I also thank the advisers from the Treasurer's office for their assistance in ensuring the progress of the bill through this place.

With that, I bring my contribution to the debate to an end.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.45 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [6.46 pm]: I am not going to say anything other than that I thank the parliamentary secretary and the advisers who have come along and sat patiently waiting for their moment to have some discussions, which never arrived because, of course, the answers to the questions I posed were adequately explained in the second reading debate.

With that, I conclude and once again put on record the opposition's support for the legislation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.