



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2022

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 6 April 2022

# Legislative Council

Wednesday, 6 April 2022

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

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

### *Estimates Hearings — Statement by President*

THE PRESIDENT (**Hon Alanna Clohesy**) [1.02 pm]: Good afternoon, members. I have some correspondence regarding the 2022–23 budget estimates hearings. It reads —

Dear President

#### **2022–23 Budget estimates**

The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations (Committee) seeks your permission to hold the 2022–23 Budget estimates hearings in the Legislative Council Chamber in the week commencing Monday 20 June 2022. I advise that the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council has agreed to concede that sitting week for the hearings.

In the meantime, I ask that you advise the Council of the following arrangements for the Committee's consideration of the 2022–23 Budget estimates:

- (1) The Committee will hold hearings in the week commencing 20 June 2022.
- (2) Members are encouraged to participate in the evidence gathering process by asking questions prior to, during, and after hearings, and by nominating agencies to appear for a hearing.
- (3) The Electronic Lodgement System will open for questions prior to hearing on Thursday 12 May 2022, with the release of the Budget, and will close at 5pm on Tuesday 24 May 2022.
- (4) Members may nominate agencies to appear, for the Committee to consider, by 5pm on Tuesday 17 May 2022.
- (5) The Committee will email Members the Procedure Policy, which will set out the key processes and deadlines, and timetable for hearings once finalised.

The letter then provides contact details of the advisory officer, and is signed —

Kind regards

...

**Hon Peter Collier MLC**

Chair

## CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR — KIMBERLEY

### *Petition*

HON NEIL THOMSON (**Mining and Pastoral**) [1.04 pm]: I present a petition containing 558 signatures couched in the following terms —

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

We the undersigned are opposed to escalating and unprecedented levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, acts of violence, intimidation and destruction of property occurring across the Kimberley.

Urgent intervention and changes are required with a co-ordinated approach across Government agencies and the community.

We therefore ask the Government to collectively acknowledge the gravity of the situation and to organise an urgent and adequately resourced deployment of new solutions and the expansion of existing programs where they have proven success to address this crisis.

And your petitioners as duty bound, will ever pray.

[See paper 1207.]

## PAPERS TABLED

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

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS —  
ANNUAL ESTIMATES HEARINGS**

*Motion*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [1.05 pm] — without notice: I move —

- (1) That the house at its rising on Thursday, 16 June 2022 adjourn until 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 9 August 2022 so as to facilitate the annual budget estimates hearings.
- (2) That the annual sitting schedule tabled by the Leader of the House on 26 October 2021 be varied so that the Council will meet on —
  - (a) Tuesday, 30 August 2022;
  - (b) Wednesday, 31 August 2022; and
  - (c) Thursday, 1 September 2022.

President, this motion gives effect to the correspondence you referred to when we started today. It also reflects discussions between me and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, and I thank the estimates committee for its consideration of this. It also reflects discussions held with the parties behind the chair. I commend the motion to the house.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

**HON ROSIE SAHANNA**

*Leave of Absence*

On motion without notice by **Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the House)**, resolved —

That leave of absence for two sitting days be granted to Hon Rosie Sahanna due to urgent personal business.

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

*Motion*

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [1.07 pm]: I move —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that the early years are identified as a critical period in a child's life marked by rapid and significant changes in their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development; and
- (b) calls on the McGowan government to significantly increase its investment in this critical area.

A few weeks ago, I spoke on a motion in this place that was primarily an economics motion, but during my contribution I stressed the fact that I felt it was incumbent on all of us to speak up more for a section of our community that does not have a voice in this Parliament but for whom decisions are made every day by their parents, carers, educators and ministers and their departments and agencies. Of course, I am talking about children. Children and young people make up around 23 per cent of Western Australia's population, with over 417 000 aged between zero and 11 years of age. In 2020, 32 677 babies were born. By any measure, children form a significant part of our community and they need our support, they need priority and they need our attention. I have said many times in this place and outside of it that the early years of a child's life are the most critical. We know that a positive beginning helps set children up for future success. In many ways, early childhood development sets the scene for a child's future health and wellbeing in terms of their physical, emotional, social and behavioural outcomes.

It is for this very reason that access to critical, supportive and quality childhood development services, and family services, early in a child's life is paramount. It is not just me saying that; it is parents, educators, health professionals, researchers and economists. Each and every one of them are saying the same thing; that is, the more time, effort and resources that can be put into children in those early years, the more the dividends that are paid when they grow older. That is not just for the children; it is also for their family and the community as a whole.

Indeed, if we look purely at the economics, a report from the Centre for Policy Development titled *Starting better*, which was released last year, said —

Children who access quality early childhood services are

- More likely to be healthy and happy in early childhood, reducing the need to invest in intensive and remedial support, and preparing them to succeed at later stages of life.
- More likely to succeed in their learning, attaining higher levels of literacy, getting higher grades at school, staying in school longer, and attaining higher post-school qualifications that lead to better careers.

The report states also that recent Australian analysis found that early intervention can save up to \$15.2 billion annually otherwise spent on late intervention.

For me, and I am sure for everyone in this house, although the economics obviously supports early childhood development and the importance of early intervention, what is most important is achieving better outcomes for children and their families. I presume it will be the Leader of the House who will respond to this motion. I am sure she will outline the various initiatives that this government has underway. I have no issue with that. Of course all governments of all political persuasions provide support for the early years. However, what is most important is the priority and the commitment that is given to that, and the ability to think outside the box about new initiatives that would make children's lives better. In that regard, I believe that this government could give greater attention to some areas that would be positive and well received by parents and the community at large.

Because my time today is limited, the first area that I want to focus on is wait times for children seeking to access critical allied health and paediatric services through the government health system. I have raised this before and I will continue to raise it. I am now being contacted almost daily by parents who are literally at their wits' end because of the significant delays that they are experiencing to have their children access vital supports. Over a period of time—a couple of years at least—I have been monitoring the wait times. I raised a couple of those in my contribution a few weeks ago, and I will raise them again because I now have some more information.

I will start with the median wait times for primary school children to access the metropolitan Child Development Service. For speech pathology, in 2019–20, the wait time was 4.8 months. In 2020–21, between January and March, the wait time was 7.9 months. In 2020–21, between April and June, the wait time was 8.7 months. Now, in 2022, it is 8.7 months. For occupational therapy, in 2019–20, the wait time was 3.3 months. In 2020–21, between January and March, the wait time was 6.7 months. In 2020–21, between April and June, the wait time was 7.8 months. Now, in 2022, there has been a slight dip to 7.3 months, but it is still too high. For physiotherapy, in 2019–20, the wait time was 0.9 months. In 2020–21, between January and March, the wait time was 6.5 months. In 2020–21, between April and June, the wait time was nine months. It is now 9.2 months. For paediatricians, in 2020–21, between April and June, the wait time was 16.1 months. It is now 16.4 months. For clinical psychology, in 2020–21, the wait time was 10 months. It is now 12 months—an entire year.

The median wait time for children in regional areas is actually not much better. For example, primary school children in the Pilbara region are required to wait up to 11 months before they are able to access a clinical psychologist. I ask members: is that good enough? Is it good enough that a child needs to wait 16.4 months to see a paediatrician in the public health system? Is it good enough that a child, whether they are in the Pilbara region or in metropolitan WA, has to wait nearly 12 months to access a clinical psychologist? It is not good enough. It is not just me who is saying this. When I raise these figures with parents, they do not believe them. They are telling me that that might be the median wait time, but they are waiting far longer. Two years or three years are the figures that are being repeatedly told to me. I appreciate that a range of reasons may be contributing to these delays. I accept that. In no way am I critical of the allied health professionals and paediatric staff working in country and metro WA. They are doing the very best they can. I accept that all governments can experience challenges in these areas. But it is how they respond that matters. When our government experienced some of these challenges, what did we do? We said it was not good enough. We put in significant funds—nearly \$50 million—to increase the number of staff and child health professionals in these services, and what did we see? The wait lists went down. We also increased funding for child health nurses, as well as introducing child and parent centres, which I will mention in a moment.

What do we know now about the government's actions in this area? We know that the metropolitan Child Development Service sought funding through a business case well before the last budget. We prised out of the government how much it was asking for. It was asking for \$2.5 million. It was not asking for \$25 million—that would have been good. It was asking for \$2.5 million. I consistently asked the government, both in questions without notice and during the estimates hearings, whether that funding has been approved. It was like a Ferris wheel, going around and around in a circle. No-one could provide me with an answer. All they could say was that it was subject to budget deliberations. This was well after the budget had been introduced and tabled. I think the government actually did not know where that business case was at.

I can tell members what I know. The wait times are continuing to increase. During the time I have been asking these questions, between the 2020–21 and 2021–22 financial years, the actual increase in funding to the metropolitan Child Development Service was \$1.4 million. That was it. That was the only increase. That is well short of the \$2.5 million requested by the government's own department, and well short of what is required. While this is going on, children are missing out.

I want to now focus on one particular area. The Leader of the House will probably know where I am going with this. It is speech pathology. Research has consistently shown that there is a strong relationship between literacy development and oral language skills, particularly in the early years of learning. On average, around seven per cent of kids will have some form of language impairment. That is effectively one to two kids in every classroom. Research also shows that if left unaddressed, speech and language difficulties can have a significant and long-lasting impact on a child's health and wellbeing. It can also impact on their educational outcomes and result in poorer literacy and numeracy skills, early school leaving and reduced employment opportunities. Despite this, we know from the answers that have been provided to me that kids have to wait nearly nine months to access even their first appointment

for a speech pathologist. Yes, there are private services, but the reality is that they are out of reach for many families; they just are. Because of that, timely access to government services is critical. I appreciate that the number of referrals for speech pathology is very high. In 2021, according to an answer provided to me, the metropolitan Child Development Service received 9 241 referrals. That is a high number. I understand that.

Are there ways, however, in which we can help reduce the load for that service, as well as increase its funding? I and others believe that there is a way to do that. The Minister for Education and Training will know that for some time I have been calling in a positive way for a trial of speech pathology face-to-face services to be delivered directly into schools. I know that the minister will say that there is an issue of workforce shortages. I say to the minister, most sincerely: has she properly considered that proposal? It is not just my proposal; others have put it. Has the minister determined what might be possible? I accept that the government might think that this is a bit out of the box, but I have to tell members that this is not a novel proposal. This is not something that came out of Donna Faragher's head when she could not get to sleep at night and was thinking of a brand new idea. South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania have all for some time provided direct access to speech pathology services in their primary schools through their respective departments of education. The ACT and Northern Territory also have a form of direct access. Although the way in which it is delivered might vary across jurisdictions, each of them have a system in place, so why can we not at least try it here?

The Department of Education has five language development centres, and they are excellent. President, you and I have been out to visit one of them in my electorate, which I will mention in a moment. Those centres provide early intervention services for students with very severe language difficulties. Equally, they provide outreach services that are also fantastic, but they are limited, because they provide support only to the teacher, not to the child. Notwithstanding that, demand for those outreach services is high. In 2020 the number of schools that accessed it was 333; in 2021 it was, according to the minister's answer yesterday, 436 schools. The demand is there.

Although the government has not initiated a trial, the North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre has taken up the initiative and is piloting a three-year trial program of speech pathology services directly into schools. Last year, nine schools in the centre's catchment area participated in the program and this year, according to the minister's answer yesterday, 22 schools are participating. The demand is there, so I ask the government and the minister to please be bold and to please just give it a go. At the very least, a trial would be a step in the right direction and the government would have my absolute support and the support of many other people.

In the short time remaining to me, I want to talk about another area that I mentioned briefly earlier: child and parent centres. These are locally coordinated, targeted and connected services that are responsive to children and their families, and they actually work. Some call them integrated whole-of-family services; I call them fantastic one-stop shops. The previous government looked at the research supporting these types of centres. We looked at overseas examples and a particular school in Armadale—Challis Community Primary School—that had also developed a hybrid model. What did we do? We funded and established 16 child and parent centres across WA, and also took responsibility for a further five commonwealth family centres that were operating in similar ways, bringing the total to 21.

Many members will know about these centres. They were established in areas in which there is a high level of developmental vulnerability, based on the Australian Early Development Census and other published reports. These centres are focused on vulnerable families and children from birth to eight years of age, but primarily focused on the zero to four years age range. They are designed to close the gap in the development, health and wellbeing of young children who may be at risk of developmental delay. They are operated by non-government organisations and they provide a range of quality, early childhood development programs, including maternal and child health services; paediatric services; speech therapy support; early literacy and numeracy programs; playgroups; and parenting and family support programs—and the list goes on.

According to the Department of Education's most recent annual report, the 22 centres currently in operation provided 590 programs and services, with approximately 74 000 child attendances and 72 000 adult attendances. That is a massive number. Back in 2017 the department commissioned an independent evaluation of these centres, and it found that they were a model of excellence. I refer to a couple of things said in that evaluation. It states —

The centres are bringing services to local communities where they are more easily accessed by those requiring them. In addition, they are linking the early learning, early childhood education and the community services sectors which have previously been largely independent of each other.

The evaluation also reflects on one of the common themes of how the centre had improved access to services. It quotes a coordinator —

*“There has been an increase in attendance of families who do not traditionally access playgroups or children activity sessions due to financial restraints. The integrated services offered to families has increased access but also provided a more co-ordinated and holistic response for families.”*

One coordinator ended by saying that we just need more of them. It is not only the coordinators who are saying this. The former Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit, in a report and follow-up reports, also

called on the government to increase the number of child and parent centres. Despite this, since 2017, only one new child and parent centre has actually been established, in the electorate of Swan Hills. I think that was an election commitment. That is very good; we are very happy with that, but I would like to see more of them.

Last year in the budget estimates hearings, I asked the Minister for Education and Training whether there was a plan to increase the number of child and parent centres. The minister's response was —

There is not a plan to.

She went on to say —

No, there is not a plan for them in this budget. I mean, they do good work—there is no question about that—but no; the answer to that is that there is no plan.

I asked the minister about it again in annual report hearings last week, and I quote her reply from the uncorrected copy —

... there is not a kind of statewide plan, if that is what you were looking for.

I have to say that that is what I am looking for. Given their effectiveness, why is there no strategy? They are effective and the Department of Education's own independent evaluation shows that. The former Commissioner for Children and Young People agrees, as do many other people, so please put some investment into these centres.

Unfortunately, my time is coming to a close for this motion. I say to the government: it is not only me who is asking the government to make children in their early years a priority. I know the government absolutely does put funding into the early years. As I said at the beginning of my contribution, all governments do. Do I think there are areas to which we could give greater attention, such as the wait times right now? Yes, I do. It is an absolute priority, and now is the time, as we head towards the budget, for the government to be ambitious, and it has the capacity to do it. It just needs the will and commitment to do so.

I will leave members with a quote from the *Starting better* report I referred to earlier —

Raising children is the most important thing we do—not just as families, but as a society. It is an act of love and faith in the future. Whether or not we are parents, we share a duty of care for children. We must do all we can to help them grow and flourish.

I could not say it better myself, and I ask members to support the motion.

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Minister for Education and Training)** [1.28 pm]: I thank the honourable member for bringing this motion to the house today, and I want to commend her for the work she has done in her portfolio area. She is well regarded in the sector for her commitment to that work. Certainly, the theme of this motion is one that everyone in this house would share, I am sure. It is certainly the case that this government recognises the increased demand for child development services, and we have made significant investments accordingly. I flag, at the outset, that I intend to move an amendment to part (b) of the motion, and I will move that in a moment.

The government has injected some \$3.2 billion into Western Australia's health and mental health system, including in the area of child health.

I will note in passing the announcement made today by federal Labor leader Anthony Albanese in which he promised that an Albanese government will deliver \$38.4 million for newborn screening. I think that is a great investment and it certainly shows that whether it is on childcare, aged care or Medicare, there is a stark difference facing Australians at this election. Federal Labor cares and I think that that will be rewarded at the ballot box. Nevertheless, I will come back to the motion in front of us today.

We certainly recognise the need to invest in early childhood education, especially in significant initiatives like the investment of \$49.3 million in the early years. We reduced the cost of training for early childhood educators and invested in various school-based initiatives. It is the case, though, that there are significant workforce issues. It is not just about money for programs; we actually need to address the workforce issue. This is not only an issue in Western Australia, but also a national and, indeed, a global issue.

Wait times for child development services are certainly lengthier than anyone wants them to be. A range of factors impact on that, not the least of which is—whether it is because of better understanding in the community about the need for early intervention, whether it is because people are talking about it more, I do not know—that over the last five years there has been a 41 per cent increase in referrals across all Child Development Service disciplines. That is a very significant increase.

It is also the case that the training of some professionals engaged in this area—for example, some of the highly specialised clinicians such as developmental paediatricians—can take up to 15 years. It is not about a lack of investment or a failure to commit to funding; we also have a workforce issue that we need to tackle. But that is not to say that we have not provided additional funding. We certainly have. From November 2021, for example, there will be an additional \$2.5 million a year for the delivery of child development services. That will include additional FTE in the following roles: paediatric registrars, paediatric consultants, clinical nurse specialists, senior speech

pathologists, clinical psychologists and case coordinators. There has been a reduction in wait times as a result. There has been significant investment in diagnostic assessments for autism spectrum disorders. Since early 2021, a further 14 speech pathologists have been trained in ASD diagnosis and six clinical psychs have also completed training to broaden their diagnostic assessment skills.

In respect of speech pathology services, I am aware of the proposition that was put by the honourable member. But it is also the case that through our five language development centres, which provide full-time early intervention programs for the early years for students with a diagnosed language disorder, as at the last census in February this year, some 1 327 students were enrolled in language development centres. Schools can also choose to purchase private speech pathology services, and many of them do. That is one of the purposes of the one-line budget that was put in place by my predecessor, which gives schools the option to choose the services that meet the needs of their particular demographic.

In 2021, some 436 schools accessed outreach services provided by language development centres. I note the point the honourable member made about them being able to train staff. It is no small feat that we have also significantly increased the school psychology service and the chaplaincy service. We made a commitment to increase the number of school psychologists in schools to 100 by 2024 and have increased funding of chaplaincy services by \$20 million so that those schools that want a chaplain but have not been able previously to get one can get one. We are on track to increase the school psych FTE by 47 by the end of this year, which includes additional supervising and lead school psychologists. In respect of chaplaincy, as of a couple of weeks ago, in March 2022, a total of 556 schools had secured a chaplain for this year and that program is continuing to grow.

CaLDEYLink, which is like KindiLink but is for supported playgroups for culturally and linguistically diverse families, is also being funded. We are doing that at two school sites now, one in Maylands and one in Bentley. I think that program will continue to grow. It is a really important way of getting parents who might not be familiar with the school system to attend with their children to a school site and to participate in playgroup activities.

I mentioned the Early Years Initiative, which is a \$49.3 million 10-year partnership between the state government and the Minderoo Foundation. The initiative covers four partner communities across the metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote areas of WA in the central great southern, Armadale, Bidyadanga and Derby. It listens and is bespoke to a particular community. It is focused on place-based solutions. One example in the central great southern is about ear, nose and throat infections, which is one of the top four health issues impacting children in the regions. Families had reported that the specialist services for ear, nose and throat infections were inaccessible. Work was done to simplify the system for families to make referral pathways and better client follow-ups easier by combining audiologist and ENT clinics to make them more accessible. A huge amount of work has been done in that area and it continues.

One critical issue about how we address quality delivery of services in the early years is around the skills that we provide for early years educators, in particular in childcare settings. There is a stark difference between what this government has done in this space and what the previous government did. Our Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative reduced TAFE fees for early childhood education and care courses by up to 72 per cent, and that will continue until 2025. The cost of completing a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care rose to as much as \$10 000 a student—that was the cost for somebody who wanted to work in the lowest paid area of our workforce but with one of the greatest areas of responsibility; that is, the care and education of our youngest children. Under the previous Liberal–National government, fees for that course were over \$10 000. Under our Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative, the fees have been reduced by 72 per cent, down to \$2 400 or \$800 for a person with a concession card. That particular classification was a classic example of how the previous government put TAFE beyond the reach of ordinary families. Ordinary young people—primarily young girls—who thought that they wanted to go and work in childcare just could not afford it. We have made a real difference. Investing in the industry with initiatives like these not only helps working parents, but also provides important upskilling opportunities for educators. Since the rollout of that reduced fee program, there have been 2 380 enrolments in the certificate III of early childhood education and 1 280 enrolments in the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care.

I also want to touch on universal kindy access and the preschool reform agreement that was recently signed between the state and federal governments. Since the 1990s, WA has funded universal kindy provision. The state government funded 11 hours of kindy in public schools and about 75 per cent of those 11 hours were provided in non-government schools. A new agreement was signed just over a month ago. All states, whatever their political persuasion, had tried for years to get the commonwealth to commit to long-term funding—to a four or five-year agreement—because it was a constant one-year rollover, which meant there was no certainty for anyone. We have secured funding for that kindy program for 2022 to 2025. Under this agreement, funding will ensure the provision of 15 hours of kindergarten a week for all age-eligible children in Western Australia and will fund program quality, equity, participation and kindy-prep programs. This will also allow the commonwealth's funding to flow to the state's early education and care sector from 2023 for the small proportion of Western Australian four-year-olds who exclusively get their early years' education in an early childhood setting. These arrangements will be co-designed with the sector so they can be properly implemented when that kicks in.

The government has committed some \$5.1 million into a range of initiatives to improve early childhood education and care for regional families in particular. That commitment includes \$4.1 million to support the viability of regional childcare by working with regional providers to make childcare more accessible and affordable for local families and \$1 million in grants towards retaining childcare workers in regional WA through the establishment of a capped grant fund to local government authorities in regional areas to support them to attract and retain childcare workers. They may use those funds to subsidise accommodation, relocation costs, training and professional development, workshops and seminars et cetera. I am advised that the first round of those grants closed on 8 March and attracted strong interest and applications. The assessments for those are now underway.

One of the other investments is the Regional Early Education and Development program in the wheatbelt, which was the recipient of \$1.4 million. It was initially formed after a study was done by the Shire of Brookton on governance and management models that could be applicable to childcare services, particularly in the wheatbelt. This was locally driven by the people of the wheatbelt in more than 20 communities across the wheatbelt. REED is a not-for-profit association and provides overarching governance, therefore picking up the responsibility, if you like, for all the back-of-house provisions that are necessary when running a childcare centre. It provides access to the government structures it needs to secure the sustainability of its services. There are now more than 20 approved providers as part of that. That is proof of what can happen when the community and the early childhood education and care sector come together. The government wants to continue to support regional and remote communities in ensuring that children have access to high-quality early childhood education services.

*Amendment to Motion*

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I flagged that I intended to move an amendment to the motion. Therefore, I move —

In paragraph (b) — To delete “calls on the McGowan government to significantly increase its” and insert —  
recognises the importance of

The amendment will be circulated in due course. If it is successful, the amended motion will read —

That this house —

- (a) recognises that the early years are identified as a critical period in a child’s life marked by rapid and significant changes in their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development; and
- (b) recognises the importance of investment in this critical area.

This gives effect to the point that I know the honourable member needs to, should, and wants to make, but is also something that the government is comfortable to live with. I commend the amendment.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [1.43 pm]: I would prefer the motion to remain as it stands. Obviously, my preference would be for this house to agree to the importance of early childhood development services and the early years. With that, I will not oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [1.44 pm]: I stand to support the motion. Even though I would have preferred the original version, I am quite comfortable to sit with the amended motion. It is probably good in a motion like this that we collectively agree on this fundamentally significant issue—that is, early intervention for children. From an educational perspective, a social perspective and a philosophical perspective, one cannot argue against early intervention. It is absolutely vital that we, not just as a state, but as a nation and as an entire global community, understand the merits of early intervention in a child’s life.

I have said this before on numerous occasions and I will say it again: for generations upon generations, we had a misdirected bent on outcomes with education. Everything was focused on the outcome of a child’s education. Everything was focused on graduating. Everything was focused on university entrance. Quite frankly, for generations our universities lead our school system by the nose because it insisted on a four-digit fine grain assessment for university entrance. What happened then of course was that everything was generated towards those final two years of education. We were throwing the baby out with the bathwater because we were missing the point. If we get the entrance component right, the outcome will take care of itself, like anything in life, and that is the case in education more profoundly than ever.

We live in an increasingly complex society and children are going to school with a vast array of social issues—substance abuse, the breakdown of the traditional family and the breakdown of the family structure across the globe. When children are going to school on a daily basis with a raft of issues, it is little wonder that more and more children are falling between the cracks. At last, we as a community are looking towards an education system that focuses primarily on early intervention. Everything will then take care of itself for the exit. As we prepare students for employment and adulthood, it is good that we are starting to look at the early entrance.

I had 23 magnificent years in the classroom. I loved every single day as a chalkie. It was the best job on earth, apart from being education minister. The job of a chalkie when I first went in in 1981 was significantly different from what it was when I left at the end of 2004. The pressures that are bestowed upon teachers at the moment are extreme. Let us try to do some things with our education system to make sure we can overcome those problems. I spoke to the department and said that my emphasis had to be on certain areas and that I would like some support from the department with the independent public schools system, early entrance, integrity behind our graduation, Aboriginal education and integrity behind our funding. The department was magnificent with that. There was a massive era of reform over that period, particularly in 2015, but none more notable than in early entrance. To show that it was not just rhetoric, we did an enormous amount to ensure that we best prepared our education system to enhance the opportunities of every single child—not just those who wanted to move into the golden triangle and go to university. Believe it or not, two-thirds of our students do not go to university, so let us make sure that we look after them as well. Let us make sure that we look after some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged students in society. That is why I felt that early intervention was absolutely vital.

Going way back to the Richard Court government in the 1990s, that Liberal government introduced 11 hours of kindergarten for students in Western Australia. The previous Liberal government did that. We extended it to 15 hours and used the universal access funding. As the Leader of the House mentioned, a number of ministers over the last 10 years have had numerous arguments with successive federal governments that are focused only on the short-term element, particularly over universal access. I know as a minister I had to deal with Liberal and Labor federal ministers to try to get some sort of certainty behind this funding. The funding is only every two years, so it is fine to fund those extra four hours to bring it up to 15 hours for kindergarten, but it makes it so difficult for kindergartens to have any certainty about staffing and resources if they know their funding will be for only two more years. It is a nonsense and it is one of the real problems with our federal system at the moment. Regardless, we were able to increase the funding to 15 hours for kindergarten students throughout Western Australia. I did that as the Minister for Education.

When I came in, I was told by numerous people within the sector that kindergartens needed some sort of direction. There was nothing—fundamentally nothing, no direction whatsoever. I introduced a curriculum framework for kindergarten students. It came with the unanimous—I will say unanimous—support of the kindergarten and early childhood sector. The framework was not prescriptive. There was not too much prescription in what the student had to learn, but kindergarten teachers just wanted to have a framework. I will draw from the media statement at the time I introduced it on 24 August 2014. It says, in part —

The guidelines focus on promoting five areas of learning and development:

- Identity—children have a strong sense of identity
- Connecting and contributing—children are connected with and contribute to their world
- Wellbeing—children have a strong sense of wellbeing
- Learning and thinking—children are confident and involved learners
- Communicating—children are effective communicators.

The curriculum guidelines were framed around those five formulae or themes. They were very well received and provided some direction for kindergarten teachers. In addition to that, we introduced as a government on-entry testing. It was introduced in 2010. I extended and expanded it in 2012. The on-entry testing was intended to provide a framework of understanding for teachers about students when they came to school so teachers had some understanding of the child's capacity. It was to assist the child so they did not get lost in a quagmire of so many other things, in a crowded curriculum, in those early years. The teacher would have some understanding of the learning capacity and capabilities of the individual child. I extended it to include oral language, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, counting, spatial awareness and measurement comparisons. Again, it was very well received and it was done completely with the consent and support of the teaching fraternity and the union. We were trying very hard to assist those most in need.

I am going to touch on the child and parent centres because they are a wonderful initiative. Hon Donna Faragher has already mentioned them but I will go into a little bit more detail. The child and parent centres were initiated early in our term of government and I was fortunate enough to open all 16 of them. I opened the first one on 1 July 2014 up in South Hedland. Minister Dawson was up there on that day as a fresh, new incomer and it was a wonderful occasion. The child and parent centres are a great extension for school environments. They provide a centre for all students in a particular area, not just the schools upon which they are centred, but for a cluster of schools. They are usually in lower socio-economic areas—areas of social need. They provide an avenue for anything up to 10 schools. They provide early intervention literacy and numeracy, speech therapy, psychology services, health, mental health services, parenting support and parenting workshops. If any members have not been to one of the child and parent centres, I strongly recommend that they go and have a look at them. They are magnificent; they really are. As Hon Donna Faragher said, they go to tens of thousands of students. For example, in 2016, our last year in office, 95 000 children and 71 000 adults accessed the child and parent centres and they provided over 614 programs.

I would like to think those child and parent centres will be expanded further because they intimately impact on tens of thousands of students, but there are still so many more students out there who are suffering in silence as a direct result of the fact that they do not have adequate support at school and, unfortunately, they do not have adequate support at home. The child and parent centres supplement that.

The child and parent centres are located at East Maddington Primary School, East Waikiki Primary School, Gosnells Primary School, Mount Lockyer Primary School in Albany, Rangeway Primary School in Geraldton, Wilson Park Primary School in Collie, Challis Early Childhood Education Centre in Armadale, Neerabup Primary School in Banksia Grove, Roseworth Primary School in Girrawheen, Westminster Junior Primary School, Dudley Park Primary School in Mandurah, Carey Park Primary School in Australind, South Hedland Primary School, Brookman Primary School in Langford, Calista Primary School in Rockingham and Warriapendi Primary School in Balga. On top of that, we had another failing from the federal government. It was my mob at that stage. Back in 2015, it had child and family centres at Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Kununurra, Roebourne and Swan. They provided some wraparound services. They did not provide the intimate services that the child and parent centres provide in terms of speech therapy and parental support, but they were very worthwhile facilities. The federal government, in its wisdom, decided it would no longer fund them. It was just going to up and leave those five centres, making them redundant. We found some money in the bottom of the cupboard and we were able to add them to the child and parent centres throughout Western Australia, which increased the number of child and parent centres to 21 throughout Western Australia. We went to the previous election in 2017 to increase that number of child and parent centres throughout Western Australia. Unfortunately, things did not go our way, so they did not get built. I know that the current minister is supportive of child and parent centres. I know that the department is supportive of child and parent centres. I know that the community is supportive of child and parent centres. I like to think that in this round of the budget, when the government is flush with funds, it will increase the number of child and parent centres because they are doing an enormous amount of good out in the community, supporting those children and parents who are least able to support themselves.

Another area that I am absolutely delighted to tip my hat to is the KindiLink program. That falls in line with a number of initiatives we had with Aboriginal education in our term of government. I was very mindful of the fact that, although the child and parent centres were supportive of a number of Aboriginal families, I felt that we could do even more for Aboriginal students. They are one of the most marginalised groups in our community, one of the groups with the lowest attendance rates at schools throughout our community, and one of the sectors of our community that has the lowest literacy and numeracy rates. It is not good enough for First Nations people to have appalling educational standards in the twenty-first century. We have to do as much as we possibly can to assist that cohort of our community. The First Nations people deserve our respect, they deserve our money, they deserve our attention and they deserve our support in ensuring that they have the best possible education they can. We introduced the KindiLink program in 2015. It was 37 kindergartens throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia. They provide three lots of two hours of kindergarten for Aboriginal three-year-olds and their parents, with enhanced literacy and numeracy support, parenting workshops, speech therapy—support mechanisms. We spread them right throughout the state. There are eight in the Kimberley, four in the Pilbara, three in the midwest, five in the goldfields, three in the North Metropolitan Region, eight in the South Metropolitan Region, four in the wheatbelt and two in the south west.

I was delighted to hear at a hearing of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations that that has been increased to 55, so hats off to the minister and the government. I hope we can further increase and enhance the number of KindiLinks throughout Western Australia, because they are doing a wonderful job. I will add an anecdote, which come up every now and again when you are in government. After the last election, in 2021—we had just got pipped at the post!—I was down at Woolworths. I live in Subiaco, and I was walking through Woolies one day when this Aboriginal woman came up to me. She was working; she had a Woolworths' uniform on. She said, "You're Mr Collier?" I said yes. She said, "Your mob lost." I said that, yes, we did not quite get there. I talk to her regularly now. I will not mention her name, because I do not have her authority, but I am sure members will find her if they go down to Woolworths in Subiaco. I will get her authority to use her name and I will mention her. She told me that her granddaughter had gone to a KindiLink program several years before and that had helped her, and she had done really well at school and now she was in high school. She was so grateful. I am not saying that as a vanity. I am just saying that the program works. We have to do more for Aboriginal students throughout our community. The KindiLink program definitely enhances educational opportunities for Aboriginal students throughout Western Australia.

The final point I mention is funding. One of the biggest things I inherited as education minister was an enormous amount of money going into education, but the funding had no integrity behind it; in fact, it was all top-heavy. The secondary education system received a vastly more significant amount of money than primary education. That is to be expected as it costs a lot more to educate a secondary school child than it does a primary school child. But the disparity in Western Australia was much higher than anywhere in the nation. The former Liberal–National government introduced the student-centred funding model, which meant that the funding followed the child. It would cost a certain amount of money for a child in kindergarten, pre-primary to year 3, year 4 to year 6, year 7

to year 10, and then years 11 and 12. I created that extra year 11 and year 12 variable because of the significant changes to the curriculum in years 11 and 12 at that time. We were then able to provide a much more equitable level of funding, at the same time as providing significant extra money for those in special need: those from lower socio-economic areas; those who live in the regions; those with a disability; those who have English as a second language; and Aboriginal students. The money followed the child. We do not have sweetheart deals with schools. We now have significantly more money in the early years of education than ever before. That model was very well received. The current government has retained the student-centred funding model because it works; it does work. I introduced that in 2014. At the start of 2015, after everything was washed up, we found we had another \$46 million waiting to be spent. The director general at the time, Sharon O’Neil, suggested how we could disburse it. I said, “No, let’s go into the early years again, because this cohort had largely missed out.” That \$46 million went into those early years of study. Now there is integrity behind the funding of our education system. We no longer have the situation that two schools, with virtually the same number and cohort of students, receive wildly different levels of funding. I am sorry, members, but that is what our education system was like before 2015. The student-centred funding model has definitely improved the quality of funding in our schools. The Liberal–National government increased funding in education by 73 per cent over its term in government. This made our schools the highest resourced in the nation and our teachers the highest paid in the nation by far.

As I said, I asked the department to focus on five areas during my tenure as education minister but, without a doubt, the most wholesome, the most comprehensive range of reforms occurred in those early years. I make no apology for it, because I am absolutely convinced that in the years ahead we will reap the benefits from making such significant changes to the early years of literally hundreds of thousands of students in primary school.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [2.05 pm]: Let me begin by paying a compliment to my friend and colleague Hon Donna Faragher for making this matter an issue that this house focuses on this Wednesday afternoon. I also compliment the Leader of the House, who moved to some degree an expected but, nevertheless, reasonable, amendment, which Hon Donna Faragher accepted in good grace. She has once again illustrated that discretion is the better part of valour.

The issues of child development do not necessarily consume a significant proportion of this house’s deliberations. We focus very much on issues of not only great impact, emotion and political difference but also on important but more mundane issues, or that is a conceptualisation that we bring to the house. In the course of debate on the Treasurer’s Advance Authorisation Bill 2022, in anticipation of a budget to be handed down in the middle of May, we were scrutinising spending decisions and spending priorities of government. Honestly, and very frequently, governments of both persuasions categorise their expenditure in terms of investment rather than just the outlay of cash. We measure the wisdom of making investments in railways or roads on the basis of benefit–cost ratios and the like. I take this opportunity to illustrate a very basic point, which probably would find unanimous support in the house; that is, the best investment we can make as a society is in the future of our children—in their health, welfare and development. It is important that this house on occasion takes the opportunity to step back, evaluate where it is getting things right and be brave enough to admit perhaps where it is getting things wrong. We are building on foundations laid by previous governments and the decisions of previous ministers, both Labor and Liberal. I think it has been fairly categorised that there has been an upward trajectory in the importance that we place on the issues of child development across the range of parameters, illustrated and described by Hon Donna Faragher. My interest in speaking to this topic is motivated not only by the wisdom of the motion itself and as a parent of young children but also in getting a more holistic view of how we are going in Western Australia.

My attention was piqued by an article by Kate Emery of *The West Australian* last week. It is an article worth reflecting upon. As often happens nowadays, journalists are almost compelled to tweet out the article to drive interest and what have you. It attracted some unfortunate and unfair commentary, which was motivated more by the artwork that went along with the story. There was a picture of Greta Thunberg, which probably drew people to make some incorrect assumptions about the purpose of the article. The article draws us back to the *Speaking out survey 2021* conducted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. I want to reflect on a couple of the findings. This is certainly not a comprehensive analysis, but I think it is worthwhile reflecting upon. For Hansard’s benefit, I am quoting from page 23 of the *Speaking out survey* from November 2021. This compares the perspectives of children in this survey with those in the last survey conducted in 2019. One of the points is —

- Mental health is a critical issue for many children and young people and the proportion of students experiencing emotional distress continues to rise.

Another point is —

- Perceptions of safety continue to be a critical issue in 2021 particularly for female students. Evidence from students is that the perpetrators of physical violence against them are often adults.

Another is —

- Students’ ratings of their overall physical health in 2021 are less favourable when compared to the data for 2019.

This one I found particularly concerning, but it should not come as any surprise —

- The proportion of students reporting having been sent unwanted sexual material like pornographic pictures, videos or words has increased among male and female respondents.

The impact of these assessments is that they come from the children themselves. They are good barometers of their own welfare in an age-appropriate way. The introductory remarks given by Hon Donna Faragher were absolutely perfect in their expression. She said children are spoken to, spoken of, governed for, but very rarely are they listened to in an appropriate manner. I use that as an introduction to another report published more recently by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the *Profile of children and young people in Western Australia: 2021*, which is the most recent report. But before I talk about that, I want to reflect, because as a parent of young children, these decisions are new to me, so I am learning as we go, which is good. If there is hope for me to learn again and develop, there is hope for the rest of us.

The Australian Early Development Census may have been appropriated from a Canadian model; it was introduced by the federal government in 2009 as the barometer or the test for how our children are progressing across a range of domains. I think it is a useful baseline model for us to reflect upon how well we are delivering our obligations to our children in this jurisdiction. The Australian Early Development Census—AEDC—measures performance across a range of five developmental domains: physical health and wellbeing; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills and general knowledge. Those who are interested can delve into the finer definitions of those domains. When these measurements are undertaken, a score is, effectively, arrived at and then we can determine or plot the results in any particular jurisdiction, regionally and like, but definitions also come out of that. If a child falls below the tenth percentile in performance, they are categorised as being developmentally vulnerable, and children who lie between the tenth and the twenty-fifth percentile are categorised as being developmentally at risk.

With that longwinded, but I think necessary, introduction, I refer to page 26 of the *Profile of children and young people in Western Australia* survey produced by the commissioner very recently. It establishes the developmental scores across the state to determine where we may have a problem and where we are doing well, potentially. A graphic of the state of Western Australia on page 26 demarcates Western Australia into its regional areas and illustrates where our children are landing on that AEDC score. Parts of this state have fewer than 20 per cent but more than 10 per cent of children categorised as being developmentally vulnerable, and not only in one domain but in two, which suggests, in a sense, a developmental comorbidity. For example, the wheatbelt, the Gascoyne, Goldfields, Gascoyne, midwest, West Pilbara and East Pilbara returned indices that are cause for alarm, because between 10 and 17 per cent of children living in those regions in Western Australia are presently showing signs of being delayed in their development in two of the five domains I listed earlier.

The story in the Kimberley—I do not think it will come as a surprise to members in this chamber who take an interest in these matters—is grimmer. The adjustment or comparison between years taken is possibly marginal, but between 26.5 and 28.3 per cent of children in the Kimberley are demonstrating a delay in two of those fundamental domains. This is in twenty-first century Western Australia. I do not think that that is acceptable to any of us here, frankly. Those desultory outcomes could be explained away by lots of possible arguments, but if we have proceeded on the basis this afternoon of, effectively, taking the politics out of the debate with the amendment to the motion that we have all agreed to, I think that that is encouragement to us all to tackle more seriously the clear and present failure that is occurring, particularly in regional areas of Western Australia. It relates to the welfare of children in not only their capacity or incapacity to have specialist paediatric appointments, but also their schooling and education; most alarmingly, their mental health; their sense of safety; their protection; and their own personal dignity, because you have dignity from the moment you are born.

Those figures do us no credit as a chamber. They do us no credit as a community. I would like to assume, because I think I can assume, that there are enough people of goodwill and capacity within this Parliament and within the community more broadly to put these issues front and centre. By good fortune and a degree of good management—I will pay compliments to the government when they are due—the government has an unparalleled opportunity to do something about it. That was demonstrated to me yesterday when \$97 million to \$100 million in the Treasurer's advance was still yet to be allocated and when on 12 May we are likely to see an operating surplus north of \$5 billion.

I am not from the input school of policymaking, which is the more money we devote to something, the better the outcomes will be, but I see it as a necessary but inefficient element in securing some success. I really hope to see something meaningful to tackle the problem of adult neglect of our children and young people, which has gone unaddressed and untackled for far too long. I am deliberately attempting to not make a partisan point, because I think that would actually undermine our efforts; it would bog them down in ideology, ego and inconvenient truths. But as a community, I think we need to tackle those truths head on.

I will round out my modest contribution to this debate today by going back to where some of this started. Again, I am a father of young children. Young children present parents with all manner of unexpected joys but also unexpected challenges, and, particularly, health challenges in young children under five. Dealing with a child who is in health distress and who cannot communicate clearly with you on an adult basis is a very traumatising experience

to go through. I do not think my experience is any different from those of any parent in this chamber, who will remember those occasions. Riding in an ambulance with a three-year-old is no joy. Presenting to an emergency department for the fifth or sixth time in a row is no joy. Having a child with persistent health troubles whose cause cannot be determined is absolutely no joy. We all know that. But can we do better, as a polity, to alleviate some of those anxieties, knowing that there will never be such a thing as a perfect, personalised service for every single contingency? I certainly think we can.

I hope that as we transition into what I will describe as a “management” phase of COVID, some of the obvious restrictions and barriers to the attraction and retention of specialists across a range of medical domains will be alleviated. I take the broader point that the Leader of the House made earlier that we are actually dealing with a workforce issue as much as anything else. Providing some measure of reassurance that the borders are open and will not be closed for an extended period will go some way towards addressing those concerns. However, I expect it will take a very long time before we have anything like a workforce profile in Western Australia that is equal to the task of meeting the demand. The Leader of the House made a very interesting point when she said that over the course of the last five years or so, there has been a 40 to 41 per cent increase in demand for these services. It is interesting to hear those facts exchanged in the course of a debate, because I think they actually invite further questions. This might not be the occasion to do it, but I am absolutely certain that our capacity and, indeed, this government’s capacity to meet the very reasonable expectations of parents will be assisted once it grapples with the actual drivers of that demand. Unfortunately, in so far as I am concerned, I can provide absolutely no insight into that.

With that said, I want to again use this opportunity to commend Hon Donna Faragher for bringing to the attention of the house a matter that should be one of continual focus. We should absolutely be rigorous in our assessment of the budget in May. As a community and a Parliament, we should have higher expectations for the delivery to children of the childhoods that they deserve and we will need them to have as we amble on into our dotage.

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [2.24 pm]: I, too, rise today to speak on behalf of the motion moved by Hon Donna Faragher, and I thank her so much for raising it. As somebody who is an advocate for and believes strongly in early childhood education, this is a very important motion. When I listened to members speak today, it was interesting to hear about the different lenses through which we see early childhood education. In talking about early childhood, Hon Donna Faragher, Hon Peter Collier and the Leader of the House focused a lot on school-aged children. When I talk up about early childhood, I think about the first five years of a child’s life, because it is in those first five years that 95 per cent of a child’s brain is developed. The first three years are when a child’s social and emotional needs are developed. Development in those areas is fundamental to how someone will move through life.

We have talked about schools. Hon Tjorn Sibma drew a very long bow when he spoke about some aspects of early childhood. I have also read the Australian Early Development Census report. It is very interesting, but I recommend that people dig a bit deeper than just the top report to see what is happening. It will come as no surprise or shock-horror to anybody—I am glad members are all seated—that I will focus on early childhood education today. Obviously, nobody will be surprised by that. My opinion is that the early childhood education and care sector is in crisis in this country. It is in crisis because we are unable to attract and retain the quality staff that is required. One reason is the poor wages paid to staff. I sometimes think that whenever I say that, people do not quite understand what I am talking about in terms of what educators do. I will also say that it has been 10 years since I worked in the sector, so I go back and talk to people in the sector and read up on it to make sure that I am getting a lot of the language correct. Just as I was leaving the sector, the early years learning framework was coming in. It had been around for several years, because I was part of the group that discussed how to bring it in.

“Belonging, being and becoming” is a lovely catchy phrase when talking about children, but it actually reflects what we want our children to do. We want our children, as individuals, to be able to grow and develop with their individual personalities, traits, skills and challenges that they may have. We want all of that to happen. In the early years learning framework, there are five areas that educators look at. They are that children have a strong sense of identity—yes, of course; children are connected with and contribute to their world; children have a strong sense of wellbeing; children are confident and involved learners; and children are effective communicators. That goes for all children, from babies up. Babies actually fall in amongst this because babies communicate. Anybody who has spent a lot of time with babies will say that they have learnt the nonverbal cues as to what they want. Is that a cry because they are hungry, they need their nappy changed, they want to be talked to, they want to be given a hug or they want to be with you? You learn. As children learn to babble, you start to pick up, from the intonation of their voice, what they are babbling about. They are trying to copy us. Everything a child does, they learn from adults. I agree with Hon Tjorn Sibma that I think we have let children down a little, because some of the attitudes and behaviours of adults are not what we want our children to learn.

I am also going to reference a report that was in *The Sunday Times* on 3 April by Kate Emery. It was called “Child Care Inc”. Somebody needs to show me where Greta Thunberg was mentioned in that report, because I did not see it. It has nothing to do with Greta; she is a wonderful young woman, but this is not about her. I read the report as well. The report is about the childcare sector and the funding. When I said that the childcare sector is in crisis, I meant through the funding. Currently, it is a \$14 billion industry that is funded mostly by the taxpayer. That means us. She asked, “Are families getting bang for their buck?” I would say no. The federal government is spending

\$10 billion annually on child care, mostly in the form of subsidies to make it more affordable. Let us be honest. I am 100 per cent behind making sure that early childhood education is affordable for all families. What I am not behind and what I do not support, and what we as a community should not support, is the \$46 million net profit that this country's biggest for-profit childcare group made last year. That one group made a \$46 million profit. If that group is getting all these subsidies, where is this profit going? Um! The average wage for childcare workers under the Children's Services Award is \$22 an hour. We have a company that is making a profit of \$46 million, and we have educators who are making \$22 an hour, and then we worry about accessibility and quality.

There are far too many for profits. When I say for profit, I mean investment companies that are running childcare centres for profit across Australia. This has been exacerbated by the current federal funding model. That model does not look at where those funds are going. I read a report recently that stated that approximately 80 per cent of the fees and funds received by not-for-profit centres goes towards wages. I can tell members from experience, as a director of a not-for-profit centre, that that is what we did. Almost 85 per cent of our income went towards wages. We still managed to pay our bills, and we still had to pay a fee for corporate services, but all our money went into investing in the staff, for the sake of the children. The report said that in some, but not all, for-profit services, 54 per cent of the income went on wages. I thought that was quite generous. From my experience, the aim was that 45 per cent of the earnings was spent on wages.

Last night I spoke about how the most important asset of an early childhood centre is its qualified, experienced and trained staff who stay for a long time. We find that generally in the not-for-profit sector and in the community-based centres and the centres run by associations like Mission Australia, Child Australia and things like that, and also the ones that are run by councils, such as Midvale. I will jump quickly to that. Hon Donna Faragher talked about hubs. She will know about Midvale Early Learning and the hub at Midvale. I suggest that all members look at that if they want to know how to provide these services. That is an absolutely beautiful service that looks at the whole community and how we can benefit children from birth onwards. It is said that it takes a village to raise a child. Let us be quite frank: it actually takes a lot of money to raise a child. We should invest more and more money into early childhood. However, I do not think the federal government should continue with the current funding model. For a company to make billions of dollars out of early childhood for people who hold shares makes me feel sick to the stomach, to be quite honest.

This newspaper report refers to a number of centres run by G8 Education. Here in Western Australia, G8 Education owns Buggles Childcare, Great Beginnings, Learning Sanctuary, and Jellybeans Child Care. Each of these was a separate service that was individually owned, and they have all been bought by G8 in the last few years. That is the same company that reported a net profit of \$46 million from operating cash flows of \$84.3 million. It has just this year resumed paying dividends to its shareholders and announced a 3¢ per share payment, having frozen dividends at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those services were eligible for JobKeeper during COVID. Not only were these centres subsidised for the fees for families, but their wages were also subsidised. This opportunity was not provided to services that are run by the City of Perth, the Town of Bassendean and things like that.

For-profit childcare operators account for an estimated 70 per cent of the sector. That 70 per cent of where our children are going are making huge profits. Again, I have to say that I do not object to people running a business and making a profit. That is fine. That is how the economy goes. That is how the world runs. Some of the reports that are coming through, particularly the one that I referenced last night from Metro Institute, talked about the oases and deserts of where these services are provided. One of the things the report said is that while we have this current funding model, childcare operators do not find it worth their while to move to regional areas because they cannot make the profits that they need. That is to the detriment of the regions, because they do not have the services that they require. This is where it comes to needing a village to raise a child. We need to start looking at models of collaboration between councils and businesses, such as with BHP and Rio Tinto in the Pilbara, and private operators—not Serco—to run centres for those communities. What about the big businesses sponsoring the wages of educators to attract them to live in those areas? What about the councils that are getting money from all the people who are living there and all the infrastructure that is going in using that money to invest in early childhood? That is one way of supporting our children going forward.

The member is right. We do not talk about this in this place enough. We talk about everything. We talk about inconsequential things at some points. We do not listen to each other—sometimes we do and sometimes we do not. We do not agree on things, which is perfectly fine—on some things we do, but then we do not listen. Sorry. I am going off topic here. It is just that I was looking around the room. My colleague understands my frustration.

The first five years are the most essential part of a child's life. We need to sit and pay attention and listen to what people are saying and crying out for. They are saying to us that we have an issue in this country. We have a sector that is in crisis. We have a sector that is being run for profit. We have a sector in which children are being used as dividends for shareholders. We have a current federal government that is not doing anything about it. If a centre has raised fees by 41 per cent since that federal government came to power, there is a problem. Hon Tjorn Sibma said that we should not point fingers, and we should be bipartisan. I am sorry. I cannot be bipartisan when I stand back and watch what the federal Liberal government has done. We are all joined together in the fact that we want to do the best for our children, but we cannot stand back and ignore what is happening.

Yes, I am going to mention the federal Labor policy on child care, because although when people say the words “child care” I jump up and down and have a fit because it is early childhood education, “child care” just sounds easier to people. It would be absolutely amazing if one of the things that the federal Labor Party is talking about doing did happen. It has said that if it is elected, it will improve transparency. It will also establish a price regulation mechanism. I might stop parroting on about how childcare providers are making a profit if we could just see where that profit is going. How much is being spent on food for children? A recent report talked about how ridiculous it was and how many cents a day was budgeted for the meals for children. How much is going towards the development of staff? How much is going towards upkeep of the building? How much is going towards corporate services? How much is going to the dividends of shareholders? That is something that I would be fully behind 100 per cent. I do not have young children anymore, but would people who have young children and are paying the fees—\$150 or so a day—not want to know where their money was going? Would they not want to know who is getting a dividend?

I have to mention this article again because it made me laugh my head off. It starts off by talking about how Vijay and Phyllis sold their 14 centres for millions of dollars. Good on them! I used to visit these centres, and that is why I laughed. Funny story: when I worked at the United Workers Union, formally United Voice, Vijay called my team leader at the time, when I was in the early childhood team, and said “Lorna can never visit any of our centres ever again because she told the staff how much they needed to get paid.” I know; how terrible! I went from centre to centre and discovered that very few of them were getting paid even the minimum award. I went from centre to centre, and there were issues from centre to centre. I met Vijay and Phyllis, and I would use my lawful right of entry to enter those centres, because they did not want me going in and talking to their staff. They sold their centres for millions of dollars. Well, that is how business works, but it should not work at the expense of the quality given to our children, and it should not work at the expense of families who are paying extortionate amounts to put their children there, only for that money to end up in shareholders’ pockets.

So, yes, I do recommend having a conversation about early childhood education. In fact, I think we should do it more often. I personally think we should link it to just about everything we do, because I wholeheartedly agree that every dollar we spend on early childhood is \$20 we will get back when they are older. Every child that we can put through school so that they come out being a self-sufficient, happy member of society, the better we will all be. Again, I thank Hon Donna Faragher for her motion today, and I wholeheartedly support it.

**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [2.42 pm]: Noting the time, I might truncate my remarks a bit to give others the opportunity to speak, if they wish, and, of course, Hon Donna Faragher to reply. Firstly, I thank Hon Donna Faragher for bringing this motion to the house in its original form. Although it has now been amended, it still recognises the significance of the early years of our young children, and the importance of making investments in that area.

One of the interesting comments in a survey I read in the course of coming to an understanding of some of the issues around early childhood education and development was a summary in a report from the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*. It states –

Regardless of the industrialized country studied, all data to date reveal that most children at every socio-economic level are remarkably similar at birth. However, inequalities in development emerge early in childhood, usually before school entry. Children who are already behind their peers when they begin school will likely fall further behind.

I think that is really telling. As most parents would know, our kids are like blank pieces of paper when they arrive, and what we do and how we raise them, and the opportunities they have from a very young age, goes into shaping who they will be and the opportunities they will or will not have. That really tells me how important it is that we invest in making sure our education and health systems have services available for our young kids.

Hon Lorna Harper touched on the early development of children. It is, of course, a fact that the pace at which our brains develop up to the age of about five is never repeated throughout our lives. It is incredibly important that early intervention occurs for some of the challenges that kids face at those young ages. That is where we need to make sure that we properly invest in all sorts of services. It is not just about education; it is also medical services, psychological services and so on, to ensure that our kids do not miss out on whatever opportunities can be made available to them through not being able to participate.

Some surveys were done in a report that appeared in *BMJ Open*, which is an open access medical journal. It talks about some of the characteristics of developmentally vulnerable kids in our country and makes the point that children living in the ACT and Western Australia have significantly higher chances of being vulnerable. It also points out that the smallest levels of inequality and developmental vulnerability were found in New South Wales and Tasmania, whereas the highest levels were found in Western Australia and Queensland. I think it is important that we understand that the chances of vulnerability are increased in Western Australia, certainly according to the results of that survey. That aligns with what we see with what the Commissioner for Children and Young People said in the report referred to by Hon Tjorn Sibma, *Profile of children and young people in WA 2021*. That clearly shows some of the areas of Western Australia where we need to do a lot of work in improving opportunities for our young people to access the services they need.

I am a parent, as many members are. Hon Tjorn Sibma made the good point that we all face challenges as parents; some of those challenges are easier to deal with than others, but the important thing is that we have the opportunity to access the appropriate services to deal with those issues. I have five children, a couple down in Esperance and a few up in Perth. In comparing access to services between the two, in my experience although the services provided in regional areas are different, the access is actually easier. That is via telehealth, not in-person access, so it is maybe not quite as good, but it is still very good. One of my kids needed assistance down in Esperance, and the services available via our telehealth and other services were not bad; they took a long time to get into, but from there the actual paediatric services needed are not available in regional areas, so she had to come up to Perth for those. It took some time, and it is still an ongoing thing, but it is a very good service once you are in the system; it is just that early access. To me, that is very telling of a fundamental issue with resourcing. I am not pinning that on this government; I think it is something that all governments need to invest in, and in the spirit of this motion, it is really an issue on which we can all come together and agree—the importance of investment in this area.

Services in Perth have very different issues, but again, they are even harder to get into—particularly for issues requiring psychological and neurological services. They are incredibly hard to get into. In fact, I would say that they are impossible to get into unless you either have a lot of money or can become an inpatient at Perth Children’s Hospital, in which case you can get to the service for the time you are in the hospital, or at least an initial consultation. Some of those services could be offered out of hospital so that money can be invested in providing those services differently from how they are currently being provided. That would improve outcomes for young people and allow them to better access the services that they need.

Earlier I referred to a report titled “Making early childhood count” in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, which points out—I want to reflect on this because I think that it is useful—that Western Australia has a very well-developed approach to collecting data called the “linked data approach”. Essentially, data is collected through administrative processes through the health system or the education system and linked to children so that predictions can be done on developmental trajectories and so on. We have a very well-developed system in Western Australia, one of the best in the world in that respect. That is incredibly important because it offers us a real opportunity to understand what we need and what the trends will be. The article says that this particular system is good because it also allows data to be collected from highly transient populations and populations that otherwise might not be responsive to surveys and so on.

Acknowledging that there is an opportunity to collect that data and to further analyse that data will give us an opportunity as a society here in Western Australia to invest heavily in the services and the basic needs of our young people, particularly for those kids before they enter school—the zero to five-year-old age group—whereby we will have an opportunity to make a huge difference to their outcomes not just in a health sense, but also educationally. Of course, the benefit is that we end up with kids who are able to make good contributions later on in their lives, to go on further and gain education themselves, and to improve their outcomes. At the end of the day that will obviously add up to reduced costs for government, so the net benefit will flow on.

I am going to leave my contribution there because I know there are others who want to contribute to this important motion, and Hon Donna Faragher will want to reply.

**HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural)** [2.52 pm]: I would like to begin by thanking Hon Donna Faragher for bringing the motion to the house today. It is an important motion. I wholeheartedly support the idea of expanding and always endeavouring to do better in delivering childhood education and care. There is no arguing, and I concur with everyone else who has spoken, with the fact that early childhood education is crucial to the development of our young people. It is crucial to the outcomes of their lives as we look forward to what they can achieve. We get better health outcomes. We get better earning potential for those people and we get better contributions to the community—a whole range of things that tell us unequivocally that what we are doing for our young people in terms of their early education is vital.

I also concur with Hon Lorna Harper’s comments that some practices in early childhood care are almost commodifying our young people because we open that up without scrutinising how we enable people to deliver childcare. It is always a worry when we see people as commodities rather than as human beings first and foremost and what we can offer them and how we can support each other. It is the responsibility of the whole community to look after our young people. We cannot be all things to all people, so we need experts and trained people, and people who have vested interests in advocating for the more vulnerable and for those who advocate for the different ranges of young people in our society. I am not talking about only a generic group of people but people with a range of abilities and from different cultural, social, ethnic and religious backgrounds. They all need us all to think about how we are going to contribute to their education in a fair and equitable way to ensure that a level playing field exists for everybody and that all our young people have the full range of opportunities opened up for them.

One way in which I think the McGowan government has done this is through the announcement of the \$1.8 billion for the women’s and babies’ hospital so that we start right from the very beginning of their lives. I think that it was an incredibly important announcement in terms of providing safe and high quality care right at the moment of birth, even through prenatal care by preparing parents and families for the arrival of a baby.

There have been other contributions at a federal level. The announcement made by the Albanese government for a newborn screening program —

**Hon Colin de Grussa:** That's a bit presumptuous!

**Hon SANDRA CARR:** I am always incredibly optimistic, honourable member!

Anthony Albanese's commitment to a newborn screening program is a vital initiative. It will ensure the early detection of any issues from the outset and give young people the very best opportunities right at the beginning of life.

I would like to talk about some of the contributions that the McGowan government has made to the regions. The Leader of the House, Hon Sue Ellery, spoke about the Regional Early Education and Development Inc program. REED is incredibly important and I am really proud that the McGowan government delivered it. As I move about the Agricultural Region—my electorate—people in those communities tell me that there is an unmet labour need. There are people in the community who want to go out and work but demand outstrips supply in terms of what can be provided in early childhood care and education. REED is helping to facilitate that. It is a growing model and is proving to be very successful. It started in the wheatbelt and its tentacles are expanding throughout the regions at an exponential rate. The model is proving to be very successful and helpful for regional people by building capacity for early childhood education and care.

Most recently, the Shire of Mingenew announced that REED will help in the governance of its childcare centre. Such developments are particularly important in regional areas because they allow people to get out into the workforce. It might sound a little counterintuitive to be saying that there are people out in the workforce when we talk about providing care for children, but it is really important that families are able to contribute to a community and to see their value in terms of contributing to their whole community and the workforce. It allows the families within which those children live to feel positive. It is a good outcome when young people see models of what someone going to work and managing budgets looks like so they can emulate that behaviour as they mature into their own adult life.

It is really important that we have this discussion today, particularly with the federal election coming up. I know that I have already predicted the election outcome—it was accidental but insightful, too. The fact that childcare fees in Australia have increased by 41 per cent is alarming, particularly in the context of high demand for a workforce that we cannot seem to fill. The federal government cannot seem to create the space in which child care is affordable for all people. People cannot enter the workforce because the system is penalising the people we most need to get into the workforce.

In the past 12 months, childcare costs nationally have soared by 6.5 per cent, and it is even worse in Perth, where it has soared by 8.6 per cent. Something is going wrong here and it needs to be addressed and fixed. The cost of living in this nation is already a problem and childcare is one of those areas in which the Liberal–National government is failing the Australian people. Just under 73 000 Australians are not able to enter the workforce due to the cost of childcare. That is pretty much twice the size of my home town who cannot get a job because affordable childcare has not been provided to them. However, on the flip side, an Albanese government would have a particularly helpful plan; it would reduce the cost of child care. It would make it easier for mums and working families with children to get ahead. The federal opposition is looking to create a better future—one in which early childhood education and care sits at the centre, making sure that the average person can secure the employment they need and also have access to high-quality child care that is complemented by high-quality trained carers. One of the ways the McGowan government is supporting that initiative is with its Lower Fees, Local Skills program. Fees are down by 72 per cent for early childhood educators and carers to make sure that we can get people into those jobs.

One of the other things the McGowan government has done is inject about \$1 million into regional communities to help them secure and keep early childhood educators in the community. There is an issue with providing staffing in those areas. If we do not provide an easy way for those people to access the training they need and if we do not help out the shires in those regions to secure employees and help them find accommodation in the regions, we will simply perpetuate the same problems of our young people not accessing early education and care and not getting the school readiness they need, and it will set up people in the long term for lower expectations, reduced outcomes and fewer optimistic outlooks into their adult lives.

One of the other things an Albanese government would do that is particularly important is increase the childcare subsidy rates for every family earning less than \$530 000 a year with one child in care. It would keep that higher childcare subsidy rate for the second child and additional children in care. It would extend that subsidy for increased outside-school hours. Ninety-six per cent of Australian families—that is, 1.26 million families—will be better off under Labor's proposed childcare reforms. The Albanese Labor Party—I keep saying "government"; I am feeling incredibly optimistic today—is also looking to get the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to design a price regulation mechanism to drive down out-of-pocket costs for good—a permanent drive-down. This is really important. The Productivity Commission will conduct a comprehensive review of the sector with the aim of implementing a universal 90 per cent subsidy for all families. It will also develop and implement a whole-of-government early years' strategy to create a new integrated approach in the early years and develop a program of action.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot):** Member, I am obliged to interrupt you at that point and offer the mover of the motion five minutes in reply.

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [3.03 pm] — in reply: Thank you, Acting President. I thank all members who made a contribution to debate on this motion—the Leader of the House, Hon Peter Collier, Hon Lorna Harper, Hon Tjorn Sibma, Hon Colin de Grussa and Hon Sandra Carr. I am sorry I had to stop her at that point. I moved this motion for two reasons: first, to recognise the importance of the early years; and, second, to call for greater investment in this area. I think it is fair to say that for all members who have made a contribution today, there is agreement on all sides of the chamber. We now have an amended motion and I am of the view that it will be agreed to at the end of my five minutes, which is a good thing. Hon Sandra Carr said that she was really pleased that this motion was moved in the lead-up to the federal election, perhaps giving her an opportunity to raise a number of initiatives that actually are not particularly relevant to what I was putting forward here right now. I suppose my response to that is that that is fine—Hon Sandra Carr can do that. I am pleased that we are talking about this motion in the lead-up to the upcoming state budget, because that is what is important to this house right now.

I do not resile from the concerns I raised at the beginning of my contribution. I think the motion has been dealt with in a very measured and fair way and I agree that it is good that we are talking about children and have been able to do so for the past two hours without yelling and screaming across both sides of the chamber. We have had a proper conversation on this, and that is good. However, I want to implore members on the other side that in the case of wait times for children accessing allied health services, paediatricians and clinical psychologists, now is the opportunity for them to raise their concerns about the significant delays that children in this state are facing. They are waiting far, far too long to access those services. The minister acknowledged it and I think everyone would acknowledge it. I want to remind members again that currently in this state the median wait times for children accessing these services are as follows: speech pathology, 8.7 months; occupational therapy, 7.3 months; physiotherapy, 9.2 months; paediatrics, 16.4 months; and clinical psychology, 12 months.

The importance of the early years from birth to around eight years of age is the general figure, but I will use zero to five. It is not good enough that we have to tell the parents of a four-year-old who needs support through a speech pathologist or paediatrician that they have to wait that long. They are telling me that it is much longer than that. It is not good enough that a four-year-old child has to wait two years to access a paediatrician. This is not good enough. We can do better than that. The minister has said that funding has increased. Well, according to the advice that has been provided to me, the increase was \$1.4 million over the past financial year. More investment is needed. I accept that there are workforce issues, so what is the government doing to incentivise people actually going into the workforce? What is it doing? I will continue to advocate for speech pathologists in schools. That is one avenue that we can take to help address these problems. I thank the government for supporting this motion, albeit slightly amended. I ask the government in a month's time, when the budget is handed down, to put greater investment into this area and it will be applauded for it.

Motion, as amended, put and passed.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS — CONSIDERATION

### *Committee*

The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Dr Sally Talbot) in the chair.

### *Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations — Eighty-fifth report — Consideration of the 2021–22 budget estimates — Motion*

Resumed from 23 March on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier —

That the report be noted.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I have a full three minutes to recap where we were at with debate on this committee report. I spent some time a couple of weeks ago saying that the improvements in the operations of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations were excellent. The work it has done is fantastic. The more it moves along a model to a Senate-style estimates process, the better it is in my view. I would encourage it to continue down this path of true accountability. I have to say that it is probably the only serious accountability mechanism left in the Parliament, which is incredibly lopsided. Unfortunately, we do not have the level of scrutiny in the chamber that we used to have in the previous Parliament when the numbers were very even. It was up to each side, the Labor Party and the Liberal Party, to work with the crossbench to try to garner the numbers to get things through. I note the frequent times that members of the Greens WA—the one party that is left of the Labor Party—voted with the opposition because they were determined to hold the Labor Party to account. That occurred frequently. Hon Kyle McGinn knows well how often that occurred because he was sitting on the other side of the chamber. The Greens did that because they wanted to hold the government to account. Sadly, after the last election, that level of scrutiny and accountability was lost, to the detriment of the Parliament of Western Australia and to the detriment of the community and the people of Western Australia who no longer have that level of scrutiny—that gold standard that the Premier promised us all the way back in the lead-up to the 2017 election. We know that he recently qualified

his position, sort of in the manner that I suspect the Attorney General will be doing in a couple of days. The Premier qualified his position in Sydney; there is a bit of a trend here. He said that sometimes there would be a gold standard of accountability; it would happen on occasions. I am very pleased that it would happen on occasions and I suspect that the only time I have seen those occasions in any serious way has been in the operations of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations of the Legislative Council. It is a magnificent outcome. That committee has done fantastic work and I would urge it, for the sake of Western Australia and its people, to continue its work.

**Consideration of report postponed, pursuant to standing orders.**

*Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People — First Report — Annual Report 2020–21 — Motion*

Resumed from 8 December 2021 on the following motion moved by Hon Kyle McGinn —

That the report be noted.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I very much look forward to this report because we spent two hours on a very important motion that the whole house agreed on. It is very important that we continue in that trajectory and that fashion and we have a sensible debate on important motions, rather than politicising and trying to question the decisions made by the voters of Western Australia in March 2021. The membership of this house is a direct result of the voters' decisions in March 2021. I think the voters' decisions should be respected, rather than being questioned. I shall come back to the report.

Several members interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I certainly would not agree with Hon Peter Collier's self-defeating comments that we do not have an opposition. We have an opposition.

**Hon Peter Collier** interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I will talk about the report very soon. I was only giving you the courtesy, sir, of responding to your comment. In any event, I shall go back to the report.

Several members interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I think the report has been moved and we have two hours left on this, so I shall continue. I will address my remarks through the deputy chair.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Dr Sally Talbot):** Hon Pierre Yang, you do have the call.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I have spoken on a number of occasions on this very important report. It documents the activities of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People in both the fortieth and the forty-first Parliaments. Page 2 lists the reports tabled by the joint standing committee between 1 July 2020 and 7 December 2020. The three reports are: *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe*, which was tabled on 13 August 2020; *Annual report 2019–20*, which was tabled on 15 October 2020; and *In their own voice: The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*, which was tabled on 26 November 2020.

I wish to take today's time to look at one of the reports I have mentioned, and that is the fifth report of the joint standing committee, *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe*. Deputy Chair (Hon Dr Sally Talbot), you would recall from our time on the legislation committee, at times that committee was extremely busy. We were meeting on Mondays of a sitting week and, of course, for a few hours on Wednesday mornings of a sitting week. I remember, Deputy Chair, you were the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislation. Hon Nick Goiran, Hon Colin de Grussa and Hon Simon O'Brien were also members. I remember that you had to juggle the responsibilities as both the chair of the legislation committee and the chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. It was a sterling job that you did juggling those responsibilities and leading both committees as the very capable chair. I, of course, did not know how much work was involved in that joint standing committee, except from looking at the reports. Many reports were produced by that joint standing committee. I can testify to the amount of work that the legislation committee put in during those four years. I learnt a tremendous amount from yourself, Deputy Chair, as the chair of the legislation committee and of course from the deputy chair of that committee, Hon Nick Goiran, and all the other members of the Standing Committee on Legislation in the fortieth Parliament.

Coming to report 5 of the joint standing committee in the fortieth Parliament, I wish to talk about the first chapter in particular.

**Hon Nick Goiran:** Member, are you satisfied with the number of members witnessing this speech at the moment? Normally, you would not be very happy.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** Sorry?

**Hon Nick Goiran:** Maybe one of your colleagues will make some efforts. You are busy; you cannot be the Whip and give a speech at the same time.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** You are asking whether we have a quorum. I think we do have a quorum at this point. Certainly, having counted the room, I am satisfied as the Whip that we have a quorum in this place. Thank you very much for raising that point.

Coming back to the report, the World Health Organization talks about —

Stopping the epidemic of violence against children can provide wide-ranging and substantial health, social, and economic benefits, both nationally and globally, as well as for subsequent generations.

I am glad that the committee in the fortieth Parliament opened the report with that set of words. That is a very important point. I am glad that in the fortieth Parliament this committee opened its report with that set of words, because we are setting ourselves up for success if we ensure that young people in every country get the best they deserve in terms of care, education and future job opportunities. We all have a duty to make sure that the next generation of Australians are taken care of and are supported. That is why I am particularly pleased that the committee opened its fifth report with those words.

Earlier this afternoon, we debated the importance of supporting children and young people in their early years. We also heard from Hon Lorna Harper last night about the decision by the City of Perth to close its childcare centre in the city. When I travelled on the train, which is a while ago now, I noticed that childcare centre but I had never been to it. I watched the video about the news of its closure and saw the inside of that centre. It is a tremendous tragedy that a decision has been made to close that down. I also heard from Hon Sandra Carr about the initiatives of an Albanese Labor government to support investment in the early childhood sector. It is very important to note that.

**Hon Donna Faragher** interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I heard from Hon Donna Faragher in her contribution, but this is my time to comment on the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled *Annual report 2020–21*.

Deputy Chair, I have 22 seconds left to wrap up my contribution on this occasion. I may have the opportunity later to continue so that I can get to the other parts I want to talk about in the fifth report of the joint standing committee, which was tabled in the fortieth Parliament in August 2020, and I look forward to that opportunity in the next 50 minutes.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** I, too, rise today to speak on the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. This is a rather short report, but it does outline the very comprehensive work of the committee during the reporting period between 1 July 2020 and 7 December 2020, which spans the fortieth and the forty-first Parliaments. I note some of the work both parliamentary committees conducted, which is included in this report. I will probably start with information obtained during the fortieth Parliament.

The report states that during the course of the reporting period, it concluded one inquiry, tabled three reports, held eight deliberative meetings and took evidence from two witnesses. Quite a lot of work was done in the public hearings. A hearing was held on 16 September 2020 with Colin Pettit, the then commissioner, and Mrs Natalie Hall. I am sure I have mentioned previously the reports in the fortieth Parliament that included *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe* tabled on 13 August 2020; the *Annual Report 2019–2020* tabled on 15 October 2020; and the final report, *In their own voice: The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings* tabled on 26 November 2020.

I also mentioned in this place before that I had the privilege of serving on the committee for the month of the reporting period that occurred during the forty-first Parliament. During that short time, three deliberative meetings and one briefing were held. I had the opportunity to meet then commissioner, Colin Pettit, and Mrs Natalie Hall on being appointed to that committee.

As we all know, and as mentioned by Hon Pierre Yang, the committee does important work for children and young people. It is well known that children are our future, so we need to do our very best to support them in any way that we can. Investing in our children and young people is possibly the best investment we can make for the future of Western Australia.

I note Hon Donna Faragher's motion today. I believe that both sides agree on the importance of children and investing in them. It will not be long before many of those children, who are our future, will one day fill this very chamber and no doubt will try to do a better job than we have done in this role. We should keep this in mind when we think about children in general and how we as a government need to always make sure that we support them.

As I mentioned, I had the privilege of meeting the former Commissioner for Children and Young People Colin Pettit at the meeting noted in the report in June 2021. I once again thank him for his great service as commissioner. He did some great work in his time. I believe he served as the Commissioner for Children and Young People for approximately six years. We will discuss some of that period in considering this report and when we debate other reports that come before this place. I have no doubt that the new commissioner will do an equally fantastic job in this role.

I am not sure that I have talked in depth about the new commissioner, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, but many members will know that she took up her appointment in January 2022. I will read from the information package I have on Jacqueline. It states that Jacqueline is passionate about the future of children and young people and believes that

the role of commissioner brings high expectations from our young people so they have a strong voice to advocate for their views across government. It is important to note that Jacqueline has a long history of working in education, child protection and Indigenous affairs. This acknowledges the amazing credentials of the new commissioner. I know she will do some great work in this very important area, which is certainly very important to me and, as we saw today, to many members across this chamber. She is a woman with great experience and has held some very senior executive roles in her career. I look forward to the work she does in her new role.

As we always do, it is very important to recognise the staff, who play a very important role for all committees, and in this case ensure that we work to the highest of standards to get the best outcomes for children and young people. Noting that, I take this opportunity to thank the principal research officer, Dr Sarah Palmer, who I thoroughly enjoyed working with during my time on this committee, as well as research officers Lucy Roberts and Ms Catherine Parsons, who do a great job in informing us and making sure the committee runs as it should and that we get the best outcomes we possibly can with committee work.

I also thank the current committee. The updated membership included me. I thank the chair, Robyn Clarke, the member for Murray–Wellington; the deputy chair of the committee, Hon Neil Thomson, member for Mining and Pastoral Region; as well as the remaining members: my delightful parliamentary colleague in this house, Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, member for North Metropolitan Region; and Rebecca Stephens, the member for Albany.

Both inside and outside the reporting period of this report, we have seen some really, truly great work done by the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and I want to put it on record that the committee should be very proud of its accomplishments. I recently finished reading the report *Exploring the decline in wellbeing for Australian girls: August 2021*, which started from the Speaking Out Survey that was conducted in 2019. The report, released in August, is troubling, and there are a lot of things in there that we need to look at and address, but it is really important that this committee is doing all this fantastic work to make sure that Parliament and many of us are aware of the challenges that children and young people are facing.

It was a delight to be on the committee. I will continue to have an active interest in all reports that the committee presents to Parliament because I know how important it is and the important work that it does for the most vulnerable people in our community and those who do not necessarily always have a voice: our children. Thank you for the opportunity to be on that committee, and I really do hope I get to speak on some future reports as well.

**Hon NICK GOIRAN:** My view is that unless there are members who still have further things to examine, the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Annual report for 2020–21*, can be noted. It was debated twice in this place, on 10 November last year and then on 8 December. Every member will take the opportunity to consider different elements of the report. The element that I had spent some time examining on 10 November in particular was the work by the then Commissioner for Children and Young People on a report entitled *Independent review into the Department of Communities' policies and practices in the placement of children with harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings*. That piece of work was undertaken primarily in the reporting period, but not exclusively, so the annual report did not specifically touch on that, albeit it that the committee indicated that it had invited the then commissioner to a briefing to meet the new members and outline his recent and ongoing work. It also indicated that in the months ahead the committee would review and report on the commissioner's annual report and other key recent reports published by his office.

One of those reports is the report to which I referred. However, on 10 November we did not yet have the benefit of the committee's second report. I draw to members' attention that the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People is listed at 6 on the notice paper for our consideration. The report, which was tabled on 18 November, specifically deals with a number of reports, including this one to which I have referred. I have already drawn to the attention of the government on two previous occasions the necessity for it to provide a meaningful, substantial response to that report, noting in particular that three recommendations were directed to the Minister for Child Protection in addition to the six recommendations that were directed to the department. That has not yet occurred, and I remind the government that it has an obligation to provide such a response.

That said, it is not a response to this first report by the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People and it is a matter that I do not intend to prosecute until such time the government provides a response when we consider the second report listed at 6.

**Hon SANDRA CARR:** I rise to also speak on the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Annual report for 2020–21*. I note that the annual reporting period spanned the end of the previous Parliament, the fortieth Parliament, and the start of the current Parliament, the forty-first Parliament.

This committee met for the first time on 2 June 2021 with four new members. It had only one month of operation before the end of the financial year, so it is indeed a brief report of only three pages. The committee had an important starting point, which was to hold briefings with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit. Mr Pettit's tenure was to end in November, so the report thanked him for his dedicated service, which was important to recognise.

The committee tabled the report titled *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligations to be child safe*. Child safety is a very important consideration of this Parliament. The committee looked at what was required to ensure that organisations are working with children to implement the national principles of child-safe organisations.

If we move a bit further into the report, we see that in the fortieth Parliament —

During the course of the reporting period 1 July 2020 to 7 December 2020, the Committee:

- concluded 1 inquiry
- tabled 3 reports
- held 8 deliberative meetings
- took evidence from 2 witnesses.

The report also states —

During the period 1 July 2020 to 7 December 2020, the Committee conducted one public hearing, taking evidence from 2 witnesses to assist with its investigations ...

As an outcome of its investigations, it tabled three reports during the period of 1 July 2020 to 7 December 2020. Those reports include *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligations to be child safe*, which was tabled on 13 August 2020; *Annual report 2019–20*, which was tabled on 15 October; and *In their own voice: The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*, which was tabled on 26 November 2020. It is important that we, as a governing body and a Parliament, discuss and consider the way in which we incorporate the voices of young people in the work that we do.

Hon Donna Faragher’s motion today looked at early childhood education and the value that it brings to young people’s lives and our community as a whole. We want to raise strong, capable and well-educated young people to ensure that they can fully participate in the full range of opportunities that society provides for them. One of the ways in which it provides opportunities is through participating in and understanding the political process. We need to ensure that they can harness their own voice and rights within society by understanding and participating in the political process. One thing that the WA Parliament does very well is its parliamentary education service, which reaches out to schools and delivers regional education programs to make sure that our young people are well informed about how the parliamentary process functions. It does that by bringing in a range of paraphernalia to help young people understand things like preferential voting and the different houses of Parliament. The other avenue, of course, is to bring young people into our beautiful building here, so that they can engage on the ground with what it is like to be in Parliament. Our wonderful education officers in the WA Parliament bring the whole process to life for young people, by taking them around the building and telling them stories about what is happening in the current day in Parliament and also some of the different ways that Parliament has operated historically and how some of its processes have evolved. Youth Parliament is also an excellent avenue for young people to participate in and learn about the parliamentary process in a supportive environment. They find themselves in these seats in these rooms and really engage with and understand what it means to be a member of Parliament and to be active in the political process. It is a great way to demystify what Parliament is.

We spend a lot of time educating young people to follow a series of rules or to behave in certain ways without realising that decision-making processes involving such things as boards, committees or groups have developed and constructed those laws. One thing that we often forget to do is to involve young people in those processes. For example, I know from my own experience as a teacher that within a school context we often forget that young people have some excellent ideas, thoughts and values as well as a whole range of experiences that they can bring to constructing rules and expectations around how they should engage in the school environment. When we actively engage young people, we find that they are a lot more capable and a lot better informed than we gave them credit for. I can give a good working example of that. The last school that I worked at before I changed careers was in the process of employing a new principal. In the months leading to up to that, I surveyed all the students who came through my door—on any given day, it was 80 to 100 students in a school the size I was teaching in—about the kinds of attributes they thought should be in the job description file for the new principal. I asked them what they would want. We did it each day. We kept it on the board and they would add to it or cross it out. We came up with an excellent JDF, which we shared with the employment agency so that it could see the kind of leader the students were hoping for in their environment and to whom they would respond. Interestingly, it was pretty much the kind of leader they ended up with. It was a really empowering experience for those young people to engage in that process. That is really quite similar to the participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings, in that it is the same process—they debate and put forward ideas and see that their voice matters and their ideas have commonality. Finding that common ground to put forward rules, ideas or whatever the case may be is really important. I think that it is an excellent opportunity if we keep engaging and encouraging young people to use their voices.

I think the leadership of young people is a significantly under-harnessed resource, so I am really pleased to see that part of the work of the committee is to examine that and make sure that it really harnesses the voices and wonderful insights of young people in our Western Australian community. That will show them that they are not

powerless in our society, and that if they engage in our democratic process, they are far more likely to maintain their rights, freedoms and the kinds of things we all hold dear so that we can, in all honesty, hand on heart, call ourselves a democracy. If people do not understand that or do not see the value or importance of personal participation, we run the risk of a slow and steady corrosion of what we know to be democracy. It is really important that we encourage, maintain respect for and really value the voices of young people and keep guiding young people in the direction of utilising their voices to make sure that they have their say in the community in which they live. For that reason, I am really pleased to see that as part of the first report tabled by the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I wish to continue where I left off about 20 or so minutes ago, but I wish to change tack slightly by looking at a discussion paper referred to in the first report of the committee, *Annual report 2020–21*, called *In their own voice: The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*. We heard from Hon Sandra Carr about the importance of ensuring that young people learn about democracy from a very young age. That is very important. I think Western Australia in particular is doing very well in that respect. As members would remember, many schoolchildren have visited Parliament when it has sat or been in recess. Unfortunately, due to the COVID situation, that is not happening now, but I certainly look forward to the passing of COVID cases in Western Australia so that we can again welcome young people and other visitors from the community to this place so that they can see in person, not just online, democracy in action. The discussion paper tabled by the joint standing committee back in November 2020 talked about the importance of ensuring that children in Western Australia are heard. In paragraph 1.1, the committee noted —

During the Committee’s work over the last four years, a number of witnesses raised the importance of hearing the voice of the child by directly referencing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC was ratified by Australia on the 17 December 1990. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history, embracing all aspects of a child’s life.

Taken together, the provisions set out the civil and political rights to which children are entitled and affirm the substantive rights of children to have a voice—including in public decision-making. The specific right of children to form and express views freely in all matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight, is set out in Article 12.

Article 12 is a well-established legal principle and there is growing evidence that it is being implemented into public decision-making process internationally. In spite of this, decisions that affect a child without the child’s view having been sought are commonplace.

I want to draw from an example that we all saw last year, when children were protesting about the lack of action on climate change. This has been demonstrated by the Morrison Liberal government. In the recent federal budget, there is nothing about climate change. There is also a lack of action and a lack of funding for the aged care sector. There is no respect for people who work in that industry to provide care for our elderly Australians. There is also a lack of support for climate action. A lot of people in the community are noticing that. The budget is aimed at garnishing votes, but I think Australians are smart enough to see through the smoke and when they go to the ballot box will make the decision to elect a government that has the best interests of all Australians at heart and makes decisions on behalf of all Australians.

We remember those children who wanted to express a view about their observation of the lack of action on climate change in this country. Let us face it. It is for many a casual responsibility. However, a lot of state governments, including the McGowan Labor government, are doing a lot in that space. The children who wanted to express a view were brutally shut down by some conservative commentators, with words to the effect, “They should stay in school. That is what they should do.” That kind of comment is very unhelpful. That degrades the very essence of our democratic principle of freedom of speech. That does not mean that when we turn 18 years of age, all of a sudden we have freedom of speech, but, the day before that, we cannot voice our opinion. It does not work like that. People form their opinions as they grow older. I dare say, members, that when we were teenagers, we all thought we knew best. We knew everything. That turned out to be quite incorrect. A lot of the time, my parents were right, and I was wrong. I do not know whether that is a common experience shared by other members; members can speak for themselves.

To come back to the point I was making, children have the right to voice their opinions. For adults to say, “Your place is in school; go back and learn”, is quite unhelpful in fostering the harmonious society that we all try to subscribe to. We all want to create a better community for the next generation. This committee’s discussion paper is an important reminder to all in the community that just because someone is younger and has not yet turned 18 does not mean that we can ignore their opinions. Children have the right to do that. We live in a free country. We should not say that just because someone is not 18 years of age, I am sorry, but they have to go back to school and cannot voice their opinion about climate change. When we are gone, they will have to deal with the issue of an ever changing climate. They will have to deal with the unfortunate situation that the people before us, and us, have created for the next generation. The committee is onto something very helpful and very useful. It is reminding people that we live in a free country, and that all members of this community, whether they are 80 years old or eight years old, can and should be able to express their views.

I wish to talk about another aspect that is related to the discussion paper in the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Annual report 2020-2021*. That is the progress and achievement that is being made in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. It has a more structured method of providing guidance for young people who want to participate in parliamentary proceedings. Page 5 of the discussion paper noted by the committee states —

The Committee received direct evidence from the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) in the United Kingdom (UK) regarding their experiences in helping children and youth provide oral evidence to a parliamentary inquiry.

I do not have sufficient time today but I certainly look forward to talking about this aspect more.

**HON DAN CADDY:** This is the second time that I have stood to speak to the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Annual report 2020-2021*. That report was presented to this chamber by my good friend Hon Neil Thomson in September last year. Today has been a pretty exciting day in the chamber. We have had the opportunity today, through the excellent motion moved by Hon Donna Faragher, and now in this debate, to talk about young people and opportunities for young people, and that is always an exciting thing to do. As Hon Klara Andric said, and it is a cliché, but it is the truth, young people are our future. The more we talk in this place to let young people know that we value their voices and their contributions, the better it will be for everyone. I will get to that later, because I want to refer to one specific thing in one of the reports that is mentioned in this annual report.

Last time I spoke, I thanked the former Commissioner for Children and Young People, but what I did not get to, to echo something else that Hon Klara Andric said, was to thank Dr Sarah Palmer and the rest of the committee staff for their hard work on this report.

The annual report mentions two other reports that were tabled by the committee earlier this year. The committee actually tabled three reports, one of which was obviously the previous annual report, which is fairly standard. One of those was *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe*, which was tabled in August. The other was *In their own voice: the participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*. I found that report extremely interesting. When we talk about giving children a voice, one of the titles within that report was “Meaningful participation needs meaningful supports”. I have had a look at this part of the report. Basically, the committee outlined how difficult it was sometimes—they were unforeseen difficulties as far as I could tell from reading the report—to engage with some young people and get them involved in the process. I read this some time ago, but it was milling around in my head this morning when I was listening to the contribution of Hon Donna Faragher, excellent as it was, and the contribution from Hon Lorna Harper.

We talked in this chamber this morning a lot about the importance of education and early childhood education. I think it was Hon Lorna Harper who had all the statistics. She is obviously far more knowledgeable in this area than I am and somewhat of an expert, as is Hon Donna Faragher, with her experience. One of them, I think it was Hon Lorna Harper, talked about the influence of the first three years of a child’s life for moulding that child into who they are, how they will think, how they will process things and how they will basically start out in life. That will go a long way towards determining the sort of life that they have. I just want to read a little excerpt from this report. It states —

When the Committee first started to look at the participation of children as a standalone issue, it was hoping to gain evidence directly from children and young people about the different ways they might like to participate in a committee inquiry.

It then talked about the difficulties that were met and it listed some of them; I will not go through all of them. It included matters of consent; it is self-identifying and obvious what that is, but the one that struck me that I was thinking of this morning when I was listening to honourable members talk to the motion was the capacity of children to answer questions. I thought that was interesting. Does some of that go back to our pathways of education, and does some of that go back to the opportunities and environments we provide our younger people at an extremely young age, well before they are in a position to participate in committee inquiries? Does that go back to those formative years, which, as we heard this morning, is what moulds these children towards what they will be, people who are capable of absolutely participating in those inquiries? Across the chamber, as I said, was the topic of education of our children at all ages. Obviously, this committee process would grab children as young people, as young adults, at the end of that journey.

It strikes me that it is obviously the responsibility of all adults, of everyone, to not only provide a nurturing environment for young people, but also provide education. Whether we are talking about formal qualified educational staff or talking about parents, the onus is on every single one of us to make sure that our young people, whether they are our family members, our children, or in the case of paid professionals, other people’s children, or sometimes, for not just paid professionals, but for all of us to have that influence on young people to get them to that point. It is especially incumbent on those of us in this place who have leadership roles in community to do what we can do to make sure that the structures within the state, or within our jurisdiction at least, are as robust as possible and are as helpful as possible to all of our young people.

It is well known that education and educational opportunities for people is not equal. That is the case, obviously, right across the world, but we get that within the country, within this jurisdiction of Western Australia and even within smaller areas. Members of the other place may well notice disparities within a single electorate, especially those with larger electorates. We need to do what we can. We need to try to equalise as much as possible. It is important to note that that ought to be done by improving. I am not a fan of equalisation for equalisation's sake, when sometimes things are dumbed down to the lowest common denominator; I do not think that serves anything. I believe in allowing the best to be available to everyone in society and all our young people, especially our young children at the start, after what we heard today.

Members would be well aware of the inequities that existed in tertiary education in this country prior to the election of the Gough Whitlam Labor government. When people today talk about their life journey—I am not just talking about people in this chamber, or people in our profession, but people all over, some highly educated and highly successful people—they thank a lot of people. They thank everyone, but they will often thank the Gough Whitlam Labor government because without that change and the equalisation of the tertiary education playing field, those people, some of the best and brightest people in the country, may not have been able to go to university to get that first start. They may not have got their foot in the door towards their degree, which then may have gone on to become a masters or a PhD. Brilliant legal minds have been admitted to the bar who may not have had that opportunity in the past. It is the entire journey of education.

**Hon KYLE McGINN:** I rise again to make a contribution to this report. It has been a good debate, listening to members talk today. It has definitely made me think about an event or a project the YMCA runs in WA. Hon Dan Caddy touched on a report that I spoke to last time I was speaking on this annual report, which is *In their own voice: The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*. I want to give a big shout-out to the Youth Parliament, which plays an amazing role within WA to engage young people with the system. The Y puts in a massive effort to involve young people the entire way through the process, from the training to the camp in July, when they come into Parliament and have their mock-style Parliament. They go through all the procedures, the standing orders and everything else, which I think is pretty amazing.

A young lady named Amy Astill, who is an intern in my office, was lucky enough to be a Premier last year and has now gone on to become a coordinator with this year's Youth Parliament. She first entered the Youth Parliament as a member, progressed up to Premier and has now progressed to become a coordinator. Giving children and young people the opportunity to get a taste of what Parliament is about in their own combative, debating educational format serves the future of this state really well and ensures that Parliament is not seen as something abnormal. That is what the report, *The participation of children and young people in parliamentary proceedings*, really brought home to me. Over in the United Kingdom they try to break down barriers with mock hearings and picture books et cetera about what it will be like when they get there. The Y does a fabulous job on Youth Parliament here in WA and I give a massive shout-out to all of them.

**Consideration of report adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.**

**Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.**

### **FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL 2021**

#### *Second Reading*

Resumed from 16 March.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [4.10 pm]: I say at the outset that I am the lead speaker for the alliance on the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021. I say to the Minister for Emergency Services that I intend to use this bill to bring down the government!

A government member: It's only Wednesday.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I will carry it through; I will make a Churchillian contribution to the debate on this bill.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** You can bring them down tomorrow—Thursday is the day.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I will do that.

The alliance is very, very supportive of the intent of this legislation, which is to ensure that we do all that we possibly can to prevent outlaw motorcycle gangs from using guns. No-one can argue against that; it is simple and as plain as day, and the alliance supports that. Our only issue—it is why we cannot give qualified support at this stage—is that we have been, let me see, approached by a number of gun enthusiasts, gun organisations, gun associations and farmers from across the length and breadth of Western Australia to express their concerns that perhaps they are roadkill in this process. They are peripheral damage and their lives as legitimate gun owners will be seriously and adversely affected as a direct result of this legislation.

The briefing we received from the minister's office, from Western Australia Police Force and the advisers was very good indeed. It was comprehensive and they answered all our questions. I thank those advisers and WAPOL very much for their very comprehensive appraisal of our concerns. Quite frankly, I am satisfied with the response

we received from the minister's office. I thank Peter Zappelli from the minister's office for coordinating that. As I said, the response we received was quite comprehensive. The minister provided sufficient solace in the other place to clarify the issues that have been raised by a number of gun enthusiasts and associations. Having said that, doubts still remain in the firearms industry, shooters associations and some members of the farming fraternity. They are concerned that their rights as legitimate gun owners right now will be diminished as a result of this legislation. Anything that the minister can provide to—dare I say it—facilitate their comfort in this area would be very much appreciated. I have been through the contributions to the debate on this bill from the other place and the contributions that have been provided in writing from WAPOL and, as I said, personally, I am quite satisfied. But I do not own a gun—never have, never will—but some people quite legitimately do. I do not diminish that—they quite legitimately do. If we can alleviate their concerns in any shape or form, it would be very much appreciated because, fundamentally, the intent of this legislation is to ensure that outlaw motorcycle gangs in particular are targeted, and no-one can possibly argue against that. They can rant and rave and carry on all they like and put different tattoos on different parts of their bodies to get around the law, but that will not remove or diminish the desire of pretty much all law-abiding citizens of Western Australia to ensure that they do not in any way, shape or form put members of the public at risk. If members have ever wanted an example of how they have put the public at risk, they can look at the assassination of Nick Martin, who, as we all know, was shot at Perth Motorplex in December 2020. It was a hideous, heinous crime that was done illegally—obviously. Unfortunately, other members of the public were affected, if not physically, certainly emotionally. As a direct result, yet again, of the good work of WAPOL, Taskforce Ravello made an arrest and the offender was convicted of murder; 100 police officers were involved. They raided club houses and homes of gang members, with 102 charges being laid against individuals for 267 offences and more than 50 firearms seized. That in itself shows that there are some, dare I say it, unpleasant characters out there who have decided to use firearms to do harm—not to legitimately use them on a farm or at shooters clubs, associations or whatever it might be. If they want to harm their own, so be it, but when they involve the community, which they did at Perth Motorplex—that is just one example—we will support anything the government does to diminish that threat.

I will go through elements of the bill and highlight yet again the concerns that have been raised by people who have come to us. I do not mean to diminish any associations whatsoever. I know there was talk down in the other place that was a little, dare I say it, dismissive of one or two of the associations, which is not helpful. I will put it in a collective drum or band and say that they all pretty much have the same concern; namely, they do not want their rights as legitimate gun owners diminished as a result of this piece of legislation. If we can get that, that would be fine. First of all, I will go through some elements of the bill and then highlight a couple of areas again. I will actually do a bit of the minister's work for him because I will go through some of the responses to questions we asked during the briefing because I want to get them in *Hansard*.

Firstly, the bill introduces a firearms prohibition order—FPO—scheme into the Firearms Act 1973. This will mean that the police will be able to make an FPO against anyone whose possession of a firearm would likely result in undue danger to life or property or if the person is not a fit or proper person to possess a firearm. That is basically it in terms of the intent of the bill.

Clause 6 introduces new definitions and modernises others including “ammunition” and “firearm”. I will get on to those in a moment because they have caused a bit of dissent among some members of the firearms industry in terms of whether or not the definitions in the bill have changed the shape of the landscape of firearms, which is something that we need clarified. If we do not get clarification during the second reading reply, I would like to go into committee, as will other members. I will let other members specifically deal with the definition of “firearm”. Ideally, I would like to think that we will be able to clarify that before we get to committee.

Clause 53 introduces the firearms prohibition order scheme, which will provide police with new powers to ban individuals from possessing firearms including handguns. An FPO can be made by the Commissioner of Police or be delegated to an officer of the rank of commander or above, must be served in person, and will remain in place for 10 years from the date of service. Once served with an FPO, the person will become a “prohibited person”, which will prevent them from having any access to firearms or related items. I guess people are a bit concerned that if they are somehow inadvertently or mistakenly identified as a prohibited person, that may prevent them from owning a firearm.

When an FPO is in place, police have a number of potential enforcement powers available to them, including to stop and search persons; enter and search places; and stop, detain and search the vehicle of the person in question. Several offences will apply to prohibited persons who breach their FPO, such as failure to surrender firearm-related licences or permits or failure to surrender firearms. A person in breach of such an offence will face maximum terms of imprisonment of one to 14 years and fines between \$4 000 and \$75 000. As with other states and territories, firearm prohibition orders will be able to be made against persons under the age of 18 years. This is intended to cover juveniles associating with persons who are involved in illegal activities involving firearms.

Secondly, the bill refers to illegal manufacturing, unlawful firearms activity and firearms technology offences—for example, making it illegal to possess or use firearms technology to manufacture plastic 3D firearms. This includes

technologies such as a 3D printer, moulding device, drone, digital design of a firearm, major firearm part and prohibited firearm accessory, including ammunition. These offences will ensure that anyone who has contributed to the production of an illegal firearm will be guilty of a crime, and reflect outcomes supported by the former Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management to address the illegal manufacture of firearms. The issue of the possession of such things as 3D printers and welding devices has again created a bit of a frenzy within the industry in how far that will go, and I will address that a little more specifically in a moment.

Thirdly, the bill will increase penalties for firearms-related theft offences under the Criminal Code and offences targeting drive-by shootings or discharging a firearm at a house or other building under the Firearms Act. For example, clause 68 will insert a special case of stealing a firearm, which will attract a higher penalty of 14 years' imprisonment. Also, an amendment at clause 69 of the bill will insert a special case of being in possession of a stolen or unlawfully obtained firearm, which will attract an increased penalty of 10 years' imprisonment. Finally, the bill will introduce a firearms amnesty so that members of the community may hand in their unlicensed firearms, major firearms parts, prohibited firearms accessories and ammunition without fear of prosecution for possession. I know that one of the associations has written directly to the minister on the amnesty and I will address that in a moment.

That deals very briefly with the bill itself. As I said, the intent is quite clear. Everyone gets that. That is not an issue, and the alliance most definitely supports the intent of the legislation. However, as I said, one thing that we want to make sure is that we give a cast-iron, clear, unambiguous guarantee to legitimate gun owners and licensed gun owners that their lives will not be diminished as a result of this. This legislation is not targeting them. As I have said, I am quite comfortable with what the minister said in the other place, but I understand there is still some concern out there that perhaps a level of ambiguity exists. I will go through a few of those issues with the minister now.

One issue that has been identified is the ambiguity of definitions—for example, “ammunition”, “major firearm part” and “prohibited firearm accessory”. Another is the scope of the prohibition. With regard to the definitions, I understand that the minister clarified a number of the concerns that were raised in the other place, but there is further clarification needed, particularly on the terms “ammunition”, “firearm part”, “repair” et cetera. There is a concern whether that is somewhat shifting the goalposts, and whether, as a direct result of that, legitimate firearm owners will be captured by the legislation.

Another issue that has been raised is the lack of clarity surrounding transitional arrangements for people who possess items that are currently unregulated but will become regulated. Another issue—this has continued to be raised even after the contribution of the minister in the other place—is in relation to the reloading of ammunition, given that ammunition is included in the bill as a major firearm part. It is critical that it is made clear that the firearms licence authorises reloading and the reproduction of the reloader's own component, such as casting lead bullets. Another major issue is the repair of firearms. Given the ambiguity of the difference between maintenance and repair, it is critical that it is made clear that a firearms licence authorises things necessary to keep a firearm in a safe working condition. That was again dealt with quite extensively in the other place.

A consistent issue has been raised on proposed section 23AF, “Participating in unauthorised manufacture, repair or dealing in firearms and other things”. It has been suggested that this section will have the potential for unintended capture. “Firearms technology” spills into firearms literature and online resourcing such as reloading data. “A thing” includes any number of tools and workshop equipment commonly found in homes, and “a substance or material” captures a huge number of items that are available at Bunnings. There needs to be clarity on these definitions. Similarly, there is significant potential scope in the term “firearms technology” from a licensed shooter's perspective. These provisions will directly impact many things that are integral to a licensed shooter's participation in firearms activities.

With those issues having been raised, as I said, I was approached by several shooters organisations and associations and individuals. It was a broad cross-section. I feel, as always, as a member of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, we have to listen to everyone. I do not think that the concerns raised with me were spurious. Those people were not in any way being obstructive; I think that their concerns were quite legitimate. The thing that was compelling to me was that the concerns that I have raised, which I have identified very loosely there, have been consistent across the board within the industry. With that said, I provided the minister's office with some of those concerns. They addressed them both in the briefing and in written form, which they provided to the alliance, and I thank the minister's office for that. I intend to go through a few of the main issues that continue to be raised, because that will clarify that this information has come directly from the minister's office. This is not hearsay; this has come directly from the minister's office. I would appreciate if the minister would confirm in his response that the responses that I give still hold weight and are still legitimate, and that there is no ambiguity behind the responses, because I think that the responses that have been provided are not ambiguous.

The first concern was whether the bill is nationally consistent with other states. This was an important issue that was raised by several people. The response from the minister's office was that the FPO scheme already exists in five other states and territories—New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria—and is largely consistent, with minor variations to suit the legislative context of each state. The illegal manufacture of components arose from a national agreement through the Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management in October 2018. New South Wales and Western Australia are the only states to date to develop bills to specifically

enact the agreement. However, it is expected that all other states will update their legislation in the future. The national firearms amnesty arose from a national agreement made by police ministers across Australia to introduce a permanent national firearms amnesty from 1 July 2021. I assume that that remains the same, that no other jurisdictions have introduced similar legislation, and, in addition, that that information remains current.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 1639.]

### QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

#### CORONAVIRUS — HOTEL QUARANTINE

**294. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

- (1) How many hotel rooms are currently being booked by the government or the Department of Health for the purposes of quarantine on a full-time basis?
- (2) How many of the rooms are currently being used for quarantine?
- (3) For what period of time are the rooms booked and for how long have they been held?
- (4) What is the total cost of the rooms per day?
- (5) Will the minister please provide a breakdown for each hotel booked for quarantine of the number of rooms booked, the total actual occupancy and the daily cost as of today?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The member's question cannot be answered in the time provided. An answer will be provided on the next sitting day.

#### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACT — SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOUNTS

**295. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Treasurer:**

- (1) As at 4 April 2022, how many special purpose accounts are currently operational?
- (2) How many of those accounts identified in (1) are accessible to the McGowan government under section 20 of the Financial Management Act 2006?
- (3) As at 4 April 2022, what was the balance of all current operational special purpose accounts?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. I have seen the question. The answer is not in my folder. I will try to track it down.

#### CORONAVIRUS — SCHOOL CAMPS

**296. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I refer to the decision to postpone or cancel school camps.

- (1) Since the introduction of high case load settings on 8 February 2022, has the minister received any proposals for consideration from camp school providers that identify potential procedures that could be implemented across camp schools to enable them to safely reopen?
- (2) If yes to (1), when did the minister receive the proposals and have they been forwarded to the Chief Health Officer for consideration, and what is the current status of those proposals?
- (3) Has the Department of Education updated its school camp policy since 2020 to the standards that other countries are now doing so they run camps, including rapid antigen testing of students and teachers prior to leaving school for camp; and, if yes, can the minister please detail the changes?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1)–(2) I have met with camp providers, and my parliamentary secretary has as well on my behalf. We have received from them information about their practices to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in camps. As I have said publicly, the Chief Health Officer will review his advice to postpone school camps during the second week of the April school holidays based on the status of the pandemic at that time. Materials received from camp providers will be incorporated into those that the Department of Education provides to the CHO at that time. One of the issues that camp providers raised was the desire for an outdoor education advisory group to provide regular advice to the Department of Education. I have tasked my parliamentary secretary with establishing that.

- (3) No. A range of protocols and procedures are implemented in different jurisdictions. Although it is largely not a regulated industry, I am aware that they work within industry standards and guidelines to maintain safe practices. The Department of Education will update its policy in accordance with the Chief Health Officer's advice.

#### COMMUNITIES — POLICE RAID

**297. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Leader of the House for Community Services:**

I refer the minister to question C174 asked on Tuesday, 15 March 2022 and question 165 asked on Wednesday, 16 March 2022.

- (1) What "possible criminal conduct" was allegedly committed by the female Aboriginal woman whose home was raided by the Western Australia Police Force?
- (2) Was any possible criminal conduct committed by the eight public officers referred to WAPOL by the Department of Communities' investigations and professional standards directorate on 21 January 2022?
- (3) If yes to (2), by how many of the eight public officers and what was the possible criminal conduct?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Department of Communities advises that a response to this question cannot be provided within the time frame. The honourable member may wish to place the question on notice.

#### GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

**298. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Climate Action:**

I refer to Western Australia's emissions of 91.8 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in the National Greenhouse Accounts 2019 and the government's commitment to setting an interim target regarding emission reductions in the coming months. What percentage of the 91.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent of WA's emissions are attributed to WA emissions?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Climate Action.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is developing an estimate of greenhouse gas emissions from operation of government agencies and government trading enterprises.

#### METROPOLITAN HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS — LITIGATION

**299. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the media reports of the East Metropolitan Health Service's litigation against Dr Marian Sturm and the impact this litigation has had on patients accessing some forms of stem cell therapy.

- (1) Are metropolitan health service providers subject to a model litigant policy?
- (2) If yes to (1), does this policy include consideration of the impact of litigation on individual patients and patient health outcomes?
- (3) Do metropolitan health service providers have an overriding duty of care to patients and the public?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. To allow for a fulsome and accurate response, I ask the member to place his question on notice.

#### CORONAVIRUS — SCHOOL CAMPS — SUPPORT PACKAGE

**300. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Minister for Education and Training:**

I refer to the \$3.5 million package to support school camp providers announced on 11 February 2022.

- (1) As at 31 March 2022, how many providers have applied for a grant as a result of the following circumstances —
  - (a) late cancellations in weeks two to four of term 1;
  - (b) cancellations in weeks five to seven of term 1;
  - (c) cancellations in weeks eight to 10 of term 1; and
  - (d) cancellations or postponements beyond term 1?

- (2) How many of the providers identified in answer to (1) have received —
- (a) the full grant payment/s applied for;
  - (b) a partial payment; or
  - (c) have not been approved for a grant?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1) As of 31 March 2022, a total of 40 applications had been received from 26 organisations. Some organisations have submitted more than one application in the grant round and therefore this response is related to application numbers and not provider numbers. Nine applications have been split to allow grant recipients to be notified of the outcome of finalised camp assessments where possible. These nine applications are included in the figure above. It should be noted that applications may be for multiple camps across all time periods identified. As such, applications may be included in multiple parts of the response, which will therefore not total the 40 applications received.
- (a) 29;
  - (b) 25;
  - (c) 31;
  - (d) four.
- (2) As noted above, organisations may apply for funding for multiple camps throughout term 1, 2022. Therefore, approval data cannot be applied to the time periods identified in (1). The department does not record data in the format requested. Applications are recorded as “approved for funding”, if eligible, whether this be fully funded or partially funded, or “not approved for funding”. As of 31 March 2022, 20 applications had been fully assessed and applicants were notified of the outcome. Of these, 19 applications were approved for funding, one applicant was not approved for funding and 20 applications are still under assessment.

METRONET — ARMADALE RAIL LINE

**301. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the minister’s unacceptably evasive response yesterday in relation to the timing of, and reasons for, a decision that will have a significant impact on thousands of Western Australians. Reminding the minister of the government’s alleged commitment to gold-standard transparency, I ask the following questions again.

- (1) On what date was the decision made to shut down the Armadale line for up to 18 months?
- (2) How many shutdown options were examined and what were they?
- (3) Will the minister table the advice that led to the preferred option being selected; and, if not, why not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) On the topic of transparency, it is noted that successive leaders of the Liberal Party have refused to allow this government access to the business case for the Forrestfield–Airport Link project, despite the project being nearly complete. Nevertheless, the contract for the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal project is yet to be awarded, and discussions are ongoing with the preferred proponent. Ordinarily, the operational impact of these contracts, such as shutdowns, are not announced until after the contract is awarded. However, in the interests of transparency, the state government deemed it appropriate to inform the community of the shutdown early. As a result, we now have the opportunity to undertake significant community consultation on replacement services.

ABORTION — INDUCED

**302. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Leader of the House representing Minister for Health:**

I refer to the answer to question on notice 491 that informed the house that as of 31 December 2021, there have now been 31 cases of babies who have showed signs of life after an abortion procedure.

- (1) Has the department reported each of the last five deaths to the coroner?
- (2) If yes to (1), when?
- (3) If no to (1), why not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

To allow for a fulsome and accurate response, I ask that the member place his question on notice.

## COMMUNITIES — HOUSING ASSISTANCE

**303. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Community Services:**

I ask this question on behalf of Hon Sophia Moermond. I refer the minister to the three vulnerable Noongar Yamatji sisters Alicia, Tyler and Adamma who have been left without a guardian or a home after a realtor evicted them from their property in Perth last week. The girls have been left in this situation following the death of their father and sole guardian, Aubrey Roe, who sadly passed away a week after his first Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. To complicate matters, Adamma, who is studying her final year of high school, has a rare heart condition—truncus arteriosus. Community organisation Victoria Park Youth Accommodation has been unable to find the family accommodation.

- (a) What steps has the Department of Communities taken to urgently help the family?
- (b) Has the minister made representations to the Minister for Housing in an attempt to resolve the issue?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (a)–(b) The Department of Communities has been in contact with the family since January 2022 to discuss options and supports available to access accommodation either through the private rental market or through community service organisations as well as the requirements to apply for public housing assistance including application instructions and offering to help complete an application.

## CYCLONE SEROJA — RECOVERY GRANTS

**304. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I refer to the \$104.5 million disaster recovery funding package for cyclone Seroja-impacted communities and the answer to Legislative Council question without notice 60 asked on 17 February 2022 in which the minister stated —

This is a reimbursement grant program. Final approval cannot occur until the works are completed and an invoice is provided.

- (1) Will the minister adjust this program to allow a portion of funding to be paid up front in the same manner as disaster recovery funding has been distributed to flood-impacted communities in Queensland and New South Wales?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Noting that several of these programs are due to close on 31 March 2023, will the minister extend this date to ensure that impacted residents do not miss out on important recovery funding should they be unable to complete the works within the coming 12 months?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

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

- (1) The tropical cyclone Seroja primary producer recovery grants and small business recovery grants already include provision for the payment of an initial claim of \$15 000 consistent with provisions of the disaster recovery funding arrangements—DOFA—and the recent announcements in Queensland and New South Wales.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) The date of 31 March 2023 within the recovery and resilience grants program is for the receipt of applications. It is designed to ensure an eligibility assessment of applications prior to the applicant incurring expenditure. This date will be monitored to ensure applicants are not adversely affected.
- (4) Not applicable.

## PUBLIC HOUSING — NUMBER

**305. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to question without notice 307 asked on 17 June 2021.

- (1) What was the total number of state government public houses on —
  - (a) 30 June 2021; and
  - (b) to date?
- (2) How many of the houses were vacant?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1) (a)–(b) As at 30 June 2021, there were 42 661 social housing properties across the state, of which 35 279 were public housing properties, increasing to 42 922 social housing properties as at March 2022, of which 35 501 were public housing.
- (2) Public housing properties are vacant for a number of reasons, with the majority of properties undergoing maintenance repairs and they will be re-tenanted once complete. Current vacant properties represent fewer than five per cent of total public housing stock.

The data is in tabular form and I seek leave to have that part of the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

## Public Housing Vacancies:

As at:	Returning	Not-Returning
30 June 2021	1,033	481
31 March 2022	1,385	420

The vacant properties as at 31 March 2022 include properties that have been spot purchased through the McGowan government's record investment towards increasing social housing stock. These properties are currently undergoing minor maintenance works before being occupied by applicants on the public housing wait list.

## LIQUOR RESTRICTIONS — KUNUNURRA

**306. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the police decision to enforce section 114 of the Liquor Control Act in Kununurra on 26 March due to requests from WA Country Health Service.

- (1) Was the minister made aware that WACHS staff had requested that WA police enforce section 114; and, if yes, on what date?
- (2) Was the minister notified that staff were concerned about the ability to handle a COVID-19 outbreak; and, if yes, on what date?
- (3) How many COVID-19 patients have been admitted into Kununurra Hospital since 28 March?
- (4) At any time in the last four weeks has the Kununurra Hospital emergency department reached capacity?
- (5) If yes to (4), on what dates and for how long?
- (6) To the minister's knowledge, was the evocation of section 114 considered earlier than 25 March 2022; and, if yes, when?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I just make the point that when the subparts are included in the question, it is effectively a nine-part question. The member's question cannot be answered in the time provided. An answer will be provided on the next sitting day.

**The PRESIDENT:** Before I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition, I will go back to Hon Dr Brian Walker in recognition that he has a second question in his own right.

## METRONET — ARMADALE RAIL LINE — GRADE SEPARATIONS

**307. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:**

I refer the minister to the response she gave me yesterday when I asked about grade separation at specific junctions on the Armadale line. Noting that her response did nothing to address any of the specifics I had asked about, I will try to make my question clearer for her.

- (1) If, as suggested yesterday, the government continues to work on a plan to remove level crossings across the heritage lines, how does its planning to date impact upon grade separation at Kelvin Road and at William Street?
- (2) What consultation has been undertaken to date feeding into that ongoing plan and with whom and when was it undertaken?
- (3) What future consultation, if any, can we expect to see as the planning proceeds?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) The state government continues to investigate options to remove level crossings along the heritage rail lines, including at Kelvin Road and William Street. This planning work is ongoing. Conversations with the City of Gosnells and various state government departments have been ongoing and will continue.

## PERTH MINT — JEWELLERY RETAIL

**308. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:**

My question without notice has been redirected to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum. Someone must have it, hopefully.

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I will ask it and someone might be able to find it.

**Hon Sue Ellery** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** All right. I refer to the Perth Mint.

- (1) Is the Perth Mint currently retailing jewellery and when did this practice commence?
- (2) What section of the Gold Corporation Act 1987 empowers the mint to retail jewellery?
- (3) If the Perth Mint is not empowered under the Gold Corporation Act to retail jewellery, under which part of which act is it empowered to do so?
- (4) Is the Perth Mint competing with jewellery retailers across Perth in terms of jewellery sales?
- (5) If yes to (4), why; and, if no to (4), why not?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I answer on behalf of the parliamentary secretary.

Honourable member, it is not in any of our files, but there are people watching so we will track down an answer for the member and provide it as swiftly as possible.

**Hon Dr Steve Thomas:** I got the redirection notice so it must be in the system somewhere.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I got the redirection note too, so it is in the system.

## FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION — SHAREFARMING

**309. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:**

I refer to the minister's response to question without notice 643.

- (1) Did the Forest Products Commission publicly release the June 2021 review into payments to sharefarmers before the end of 2021; and, if so, can the minister please table the report?
- (2) If no to (1), why not and when will the report be publicly released?
- (3) Will the minister respond to that report and by what date?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The Minister for Forestry has provided the following answer.

- (1) No.
- (2) The report contains commercially confidential information. A copy of the report was provided to the Office of the Auditor General on 15 July 2021.
- (3)–(4) The internal audit report was produced to support system improvement, as well as to validate historical payments. The report found no systemic issues with sharefarmer payments.

## POLICE — OPERATION TIDE AND METH BORDER FORCE

**310. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

- (1) How many police officers are currently allocated to Operation Tide?
- (2) How many other staff are currently allocated to Operation Tide?
- (3) How many police officers are currently allocated to the meth border force?
- (4) How many other staff are allocated to the meth border force?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

- (1) There were 184. As of 11 April 2022, Operation Tide will have 70 police officers.
- (2) There were 27.

- (3)–(4) The Western Australia Police Force advises that 100 police officers and 20 specialist support staff have been committed to the meth border force. Based on operational requirements, additional resources may be allocated to meth border force action to strengthen the Western Australian borders. The Western Australia Police Force is currently engaged in the biggest expansion of police officer numbers in a four-year period in the history of the state, resulting in a 15 per cent growth in overall officer numbers. These officers will be assigned by the commissioner based on operational needs.

COMMUNITIES — SERVICE PROVIDERS — HOMELESSNESS

**311. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Homelessness:**

I refer to the increasing demand for homelessness services, the rollover of many homelessness services contracts for over a decade, and the proposed two-year extension of contracts due to expire on 30 June 2022.

- (1) Has the Department of Communities undertaken any modelling to determine the increased cost of delivering these services since the contracts were first awarded?
- (2) If yes to (1), will the minister please table that modelling?
- (3) Do the proposed contract extensions include funding increases sufficient to meet increased sector wage costs?
- (4) If no to (3) —
  - (a) why not; and
  - (b) will the minister commit to increasing funding?
- (5) If no to (4)(b), why not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1) The Department of Communities has not undertaken modelling.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Existing contracts have been extended and additional funding to address wage costs has been provided to the homelessness sector in the form of the commonwealth social and community services pay equity agreement 2012 and state equal remuneration order.
- (4)–(5) Not applicable.

CORONAVIRUS — CONTACT TRACING

**312. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the government's announcement that exposure sites will no longer be published on the wa.gov.au website as of 1 April 2022.

- (1) Does a positive result on a PCR test or a rapid antigen test, when reported to WA Health, trigger contact tracing and notification of potential close contacts?
- (2) If yes to (1), does such contact tracing utilise check-in data from the SafeWA or ServiceWA apps?
- (3) If yes to (1), does such contact tracing utilise paper contact registers?
- (4) If yes to (1), what is the advice or direction given to potential close contacts?
- (5) When was the last time WA Health utilised information from a venue's paper contact register?
- (6) How often are paper contact registers audited for compliance?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

Again, I make the point that the agency has been asked to provide a lot of information in a very short time. Despite that, the answer is that the member's question cannot be answered in the time provided. An answer will be provided on the next sitting day.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICE — AUDIOLOGISTS

**313. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the metropolitan Child Development Service. What is the current median wait time to access an audiologist through this service for children in the primary years of school?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. That was a valiant effort despite being distracted, honourable member. The answer is 1.9 months.

## WASTE LEVY FEES

**314. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Treasurer:**

I refer to revenue lost to the state government through the unlawful and systemic avoidance of waste levy fees. Following a commitment given at budget estimates hearings in October last year, has Treasury consulted with its colleagues at the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to quantify the amount of revenue lost annually?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

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

## BROCK BURSTON — POLICE PROSECUTION

**315. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister for representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the ABC article on 10 December 2021 titled “East Kimberley education worker cleared of criminal charges after leaking dire school attendance figures”, which reported that after a two-day trial in Kununurra Magistrates Court, Brock Burston was found not guilty of improperly releasing confidential information.

- (1) Who was the prosecuting authority in this case?
- (2) How many hours were recorded by those prosecuting the case?
- (3) Was there any other associated expenditure; and, if so, how much?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

- (1) It was the East Kimberley prosecuting office of the Western Australia Police Force.
- (2)–(3) A response to these parts of the question cannot be provided within the required time frame. The honourable member may wish to place these parts of the question on notice.

## CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY — ACTS

**316. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to directions issued pursuant to a state of emergency under the Emergency Management Act 2005 and pursuant to a public health state of emergency under the Public Health Act 2016.

- (1) How does the government determine which act will be utilised to give effect to each direction?
- (2) Of the directions issued pursuant to the Emergency Management Act 2005, which directions could not lawfully be made under the Public Health Act 2016?
- (3) With regard to the utilisation of both acts concurrently for the purpose of the COVID-19 response, how is the Public Health Act 2016 deficient and therefore requiring the powers of the Emergency Management Act 2005?
- (4) Given that WA has now been operating in a state of emergency for almost two years, why has the minister not amended the Public Health Act to address the deficiencies identified in (3)?

**The PRESIDENT:** Leader of the House, are you going to answer that?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1) The decision on which act will be utilised to give a direction is made having regard to operational and legal considerations.
- (2) This question seeks a legal interpretation or opinion, contrary to standing order 105(1)(b).
- (3) I refer to the answer to (1). The decision to use one act over the other does not mean that the other act is deficient.
- (4) Not applicable.

## GOVERNMENT REGIONAL OFFICERS' HOUSING

**317. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to question without notice 442, asked on 10 August 2021 by Hon Colin de Grussa. As I read this question, I note that there is a typo and I assume that the person answering it will have done a better job of answering it than I have done of asking it, but I will go ahead and ask it.

- (1) To 31 March 2021—it should be 2022, obviously—
  - (a) which government departments have requested a GROH property for their staff; and
  - (b) how many of the staff in each department in part (a) have requested a GROH property?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1) (a) GROH is provided to a number of client agencies across the state. As this part of the answer is in tabular form, I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Central Regional Tafe
Department of Education
Department of Finance
Department of Communities
Department of Justice
Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage
Department of Transport
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Department of Fire & Emergency Services
Forest Products Commission
Legal Aid Commission
Northern Regional TAFE
Pathwest
Dental Health Services
South Regional Tafe
WA Police Force
Water Corporation

- (b) Client agencies continually submit and update requests for GROH to enable them to meet forecast and changing demand as part of their workforce planning. The Department of Communities has a live GROH client portal and is unable to identify the exact property request from client agencies as at 31 March 2021. The member can take this and if it makes sense to him, that is good, but if he needs to ask another question tomorrow, perhaps he can do that. These requests fluctuate throughout the course of a year as business needs change and do not always indicate an immediate demand for housing.

CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY — PLANNING

**318. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Planning:**

I refer to the answer to question without notice 255, asked on 24 March 2022, about the number of decisions being made under clause 78H of the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015, which indicated that the minister does not know how many decisions have been made under this provision.

- (1) Will the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage assess the effectiveness of clause 78H?  
 (2) If yes to (1), when will that assessment be finalised?  
 (3) If no to (1), and given the unprecedented nature of the provision, why not?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage regularly monitors the effectiveness of the clause 78H notice in consultation with the local government sector.

CORONAVIRUS — HEALTH MODELLING

**319. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:**

I refer to the number of new daily COVID-19 cases, the daily hospitalisation rate of COVID patients and the number of COVID cases in ICU compared with the modelling done by the Department of Health.

- (1) Does the Premier have faith in the COVID modelling released in February this year, and is this modelling accurate?

- (2) If no to (1), what alternative modelling is the Premier using or does he have access to?
- (3) If yes to (1), at what point will the Premier use the modelling to deliver an exit plan for restrictions?
- (4) With patronage of 45 000 people at Optus Stadium on Sunday, what does that equate to in square metres per person?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) The COVID-19 modelling can be a useful indicator of potential scenarios based on specific assumptions. As the Premier has previously stated, modelling is difficult to apply to the Western Australian context due to the world-leading vaccination rates. I note the Department of Health publishes a bi-weekly report each Tuesday and Friday on Western Australia's COVID-19 outcomes. Each report compares actual cases, hospitalisations and ICU admissions against scenario modelling.
- (4) The Chief Health Officer's advice on 24 March 2022 recommended that a 75 per cent capacity for major stadiums, including Optus Stadium, be implemented. This was effective from 12.01 am on Thursday, 31 March 2022. There was no requirement for a square metre capacity limit for the AFL game at Optus Stadium on Sunday, 3 April 2022.

ESPERANCE PORT — WASTEWATER DISPOSAL

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

I refer to the treatment and disposal of onsite wastewater at the port of Esperance.

- (1) Does the treatment and disposal of wastewater at the port of Esperance require specialised equipment and specific accreditation, experience and skills related to performing that function?
- (2) If yes to (1), does the contractor currently engaged by the Southern Ports Authority to perform this function comply with those requirements?
- (3) Have there been any safety or environmental matters, reportable or otherwise, related to the treatment and disposal of wastewater at the port of Esperance during 2019–20, 2020–21 and 2021–22 to date?
- (4) If yes to (3), can the minister table those matters?

**Hon SUE ELLERY replied:**

Tora, tora, tora!

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

- (1) Specialist equipment is used to ensure compliance with environmental licence conditions.
- (2) Employees and contractors must comply with licence conditions.
- (3)–(4) No licence breaches for wastewater treatment or disposal were recorded, one matter was self-reported and the other two matters were of a minor nature.

WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATION — WASTE REFORM

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

I am lucky today, President.

I refer to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's reform work undertaken since the release of the *Closing the loop: Waste reforms for a circular economy*.

- (1) How close is the department to completing its reform work?
- (2) Has the minister received a briefing on this work?
- (3) Does the minister anticipate being able to deliver on this reform work through legislative and/or regulatory amendments before the end of this calendar year?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

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

- (1) The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is preparing a decision and regulatory impact statement following the completion of public consultation. Following the publication of the statement, drafting instructions will need to be prepared.
- (2) Yes.
- (3) The drafting and introduction of bills is a decision for cabinet.

**PERTH MINT — JEWELLERY RETAIL***Question without Notice 308 — Answer Advice*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [5.04 pm]: I advise that the question asked by Hon Dr Steve Thomas will be provided tomorrow.

**CLIVE PALMER — LEGAL ACTION  
ESPERANCE PORT — IRON ORE EXPORTS***Questions without Notice 272 and 281 — Answer*

**HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House)** [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide answers to Hon Wilson Tucker's question without notice 272 and Hon Colin de Grussa's question without notice 281, asked yesterday. I seek leave to have both incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave denied.]

**Hon SUE ELLERY:** I will happily read the answers to the questions not asked by the honourable member who lodged the opposition, such is his wont.

The answer to the question from Hon Wilson Tucker is as follows.

Yes, the Attorney General. It is a longstanding convention for the state to fund the cost of legal proceedings that apply to government ministers. These protocols have been applied by consecutive governments of all political persuasions over the years. A breakdown of costs is not available as the case is still ongoing.

The answer to the question asked by Hon Colin de Grussa is as follows.

- (1) Contracts, licences and leases currently in place in relation to the export of iron ore from the port of Esperance are —
  - (a) port use deed expires on the earlier of —
    1. the date falling five years from the commencement date;
    2. the date on which a quantity of product is not materially more than 30 million wet tonnes in aggregate has been shipped from the port following the commencement date; and
    3. the date on which the current iron ore exporter notifies southern ports that the iron ore deposits within the Koolyanobbing iron ore operation have been exhausted and can no longer produce product in commercial quantities;
  - (b) port access and services agreement expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (c) port lease shed 2 expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (d) port lease shed 4 expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (e) RCD licence expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (f) fuel tank storage licence expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (g) shed 1 licence expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed;
  - (h) shed 3 licence expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed; and
  - (i) temporary pricing agreement expires on the date the port use deed expires, unless renewed.
- (2) Accounting under the applicable contracts is yet to be finalised for the quarter to March 2022.
- (3) No.
- (4) Not applicable.

**CYCLONE SEROJA — RECOVERY GRANTS***Question without Notice 277 — Answer*

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [5.07 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Martin Aldridge's question without notice 277, asked yesterday, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Answer

- (1) Completion of building works is a requirement of the joint State-Commonwealth funding arrangements, in order for reimbursement payments to be authorised. To date, \$1,096,772 has been spent through that arrangement.  
  
Importantly, building works does not capture all of the investment into response and recovery efforts. More than \$21 million has been disbursed by relevant recovery agencies to the affected communities. This includes \$9 million from the Community Welfare and Outreach Package being used to operate the Four Community Recovery Hubs and \$6.5 million available from the Clean-up and Restoration that was critical in the initial recovery and response phase.

(2) Grants received and awaiting approval are as follows:

Grant	Applications received	Applications waiting approval
Recovery and Resilience grant	328	291
Heritage Grant	40	34
Small Business Grant	50	1
Primary Producer Grant	67	17

(3) The following actions are in place to ensure grant funding reaches those in need include:

- Regional Grant Tours are conducted by of grant administrative staff
- Case management of all grant programs to assist applicants
- Changes to disbursement arrangements for the Resilience and Recovery Grants enabling suppliers to be paid directly for works completed so applicants are not out-of-pocket
- Advocacy with the Insurance Council of Australia to improve performance of the insurance industry in resolutions of claims
- Engagement with building suppliers contractors and the construction industry.
- Advertising and promotion of grants programs across a wide range of media outlets and community service providers
- Promotion of grant programs through a variety of media channels
- Community meetings to provide information about the grant program
- Identification of barriers to uptake of the grant program

---

## WATER DEFICIENCY DECLARATION — ESPERANCE

### *Question without Notice 269 — Supplementary Information*

**HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development)** [5.07 pm]: I have an answer to Hon Colin de Grussa's question without notice 269 that was asked yesterday in my absence. It appears that part (4) of the answer was omitted. I will now read it in to save the indignity of leave not being granted. The answer is —

- (4) In March 2020, work was undertaken to remove excess vegetation regrowth, repair collector drains and install culverts at the collector drains. The 34-hectare catchment surface was also rolled and graded.

## FIREARMS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

### *Second Reading*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan)** [5.08 pm]: Prior to question time, I was going through some of the issues raised by members of the alliance and the responses that had been provided by the minister's office.

A government member interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I hope you are.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Can I get a sense of what is going on, please?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** We are just having a little tete-a-tete.

**The PRESIDENT:** I can see that, but I would really like to know whether that is an interjection?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, it was just a bit of friendly banter. We are trying to catch up.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, honourable member. You are very social, and I appreciate that, but your role is to make a contribution to the second reading.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It is to bring the government down, and I am about to do that, President. Look and learn.

**The PRESIDENT:** Okay, honourable member. I am not even going to dignify that with a response. I remind you that you have the call and you have 40 minutes.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you, President. I will not take all that time, but I will take most of it.

The last issue I spoke about was with regard to consistency amongst the states. The next issue pretty much captures the issues that determine the consistency of all issues. The second reading speech stated that this bill is targeted at outlaw motorcycle gangs, so do licensed firearm owners have anything to worry about? The response from the minister's office was that licensed firearm owners were not doing anything illegal and have nothing to worry about. That, in essence, captures everything but the specific issue; however, I will pursue that during the committee stage.

Another issue that was raised quite consistently amongst the alliance was consultation. Firearm representative bodies wanted to know whether further consultation on some elements of the bill would take place. The response

stated that the Western Australia Police Force, the office of the Minister for Police, the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia and the Western Australia Firearm Traders Association met in February 2022 to discuss the bill. The bill as it is will not be amended; however, issues with the act, which sit outside of the bill, may be resolved at a later time and this would involve further consultation. Since then, there was an amendment to the bill in the other place, and I want to know whether there has been further consultation. That has been highlighted in a letter that I received and I know the minister also received. In what form will that consultation take place? I think that would help to alleviate a lot of the concerns from the various organisations and associations.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Are you now talking about consultations on the next changes to the act?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes; I am talking about further implementation. I will go through that in a moment.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Okay. Just not the bill that is before us—not the amendment bill before us now—but the changes to the act that have been announced subsequently?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes. It is with regard to implementation. Bear with me on this one, because I have received a letter and I will refer to it in a moment because it covers that a little bit further.

Another issue of concern that was raised was that the bill will significantly increase the penalty for the repair offence, but the bill does not define what falls within a repair. The response from the minister was that section 19(4) of the existing act outlines the offence for unlawfully repairing a firearm or ammunition. This offence has a penalty of five years' imprisonment. The bill will delete section 19(4) and replace it with proposed section 23AD, "Unauthorised repair of firearms and other things", which has a penalty of 14 years' imprisonment. If anything, proposed section 23AD provides greater clarity—that is emphasised—on what constitutes "repair" than what is in the existing provisions under section 19(4). Section 19(4) includes the repair of ammunition, which firearm owners have identified is confusing. The provisions under proposed section 23AD will remove ammunition from the offence to give firearm owners greater clarity. The WA Police Force recognises that licensed firearm owners may want more clarity on what maintenance activities they will be able to do on their own firearms without it constituting a repair under the legislation. The WA Police Force will be updating information on the WA Police Force website to provide guidance to licensed firearm owners. That is important, because that issue continues to be raised with me and other members.

Another question was: how will firearms technology manufacture legislation be applied to firearms enthusiasts who own blueprint diagrams of firearms as part of their hobby interests? The response from the minister's office was that people who undertake genuine research can seek approval to possess firearms technology from the commissioner under proposed section 23AK. It will be an offence for a person to possess firearms technology without approval or a licence. Firearms technology allows for unskilled and unqualified people to create unlicensed firearms, which has significant safety consequences.

Another issue that was raised—this is quite a consistent issue—was the difference between manufacture and repair. The response from the minister's office was that the bill does not change the concepts of repair and manufacture from what they have always been under the act, with the exception of clarifying that repair of ammunition is no longer a component of the repair offence and the inclusion of major firearms parts and firearms technology to the scope of what can be added to certain licences. The WA Police Force recognises that licensed firearm owners may want more clarity on what maintenance activities they are able to do on their firearms without it constituting a repair or manufacture under the legislation. The WA Police Force will be updating information on the WA Police Force website to provide guidance to licensed firearm owners. This is a significant issue, minister. If there is anything the minister can add to this issue for us tonight or tomorrow, it would be very much appreciated. This continues to be an area of concern with the associations and legitimate firearm owners.

Another issue was: how will the firearms technology manufacture offences be applied to manuals? For example, a firearms owner is going to have a manual that comes with the firearm. The manual may have instructions for repair and technical drawings et cetera that fall under the definition of "firearms technology". The response from the minister's office was that the possession of a firearm manual owned by the firearm owner is considered part of responsible firearm ownership and will therefore not be an offence. If a person has a series of manuals for research purposes, they will be able to apply for an approval from the commissioner. The technology offences target people who access blueprints and designs with the intention to build an unlicensed firearm. I understand that. I do not think we can go any further with that one, I have to say. I think it is quite clear. If the manuals refer specifically to that firearm, it will not be an offence because that would be a legitimate manual. Another issue was: are the manufacture and technology provisions in the bill aimed at unlicensed firearm owners or legitimately licensed firearm owners? I think I have just answered that. Those provisions are targeted at anyone producing unauthorised firearms. This includes any licensed firearm owner who illegally develops firearms in their back shed.

Another question was: is reloading ammunition for a firearm an offence under the bill? This has been raised quite consistently. The answer from the police, through the minister's office, was that the act is silent on reloading ammunition, as it always has been. However, section 16A specifies that a licence holder is entitled to possess, carry and lawfully use ammunition for that firearm. The WA Police Force has confirmed that this covers reloading. Personal firearm licence holders have always been entitled to reload ammunition for the firearms listed on their

licence for personal use. They cannot reload ammunition for calibres that are not on their licence and cannot reload ammunition for supply or sale to others. This may need a little bit more clarity for some of my colleagues during the committee stage. I am quite comfortable with it, but I am not sure whether some of my colleagues might need some clarity around that.

Another issue was: can a person reload ammunition for their neighbour or friend? This is not uncommon on regional and rural properties in WA. It is and always has been the position of the act and of the WA Police Force that people should not be reloading ammunition on behalf of other people. There are safety risks associated with reloading ammunition that people are not familiar with and they should either stick to reloading their own ammunition or go to a supplier if they want someone else to do it. I had a couple of emails from farmers on this issue so that is of concern to them. However, the minister has already answered that it has always been the case that people should not reload ammunition for others, so this bill does not change that action.

Finally, what is the cost or process for a manufacturers' or repairers' licence? The intent of the legislation is not that firearm owners will go out and get a repairers' or manufacturers' licence in order to repair their own firearms; the intent of the legislation is that if repairs are needed, a person should take their firearm to a repairer or a dealer. People should not be repairing firearms without proper training and qualifications. Costs are approximately \$309 for an original firearms licence and \$61 for annual renewal, and \$626 for an original repairer and manufacturers' licence and \$225 for an annual renewal. I note that the process for obtaining this licence is quite involved. With that said, that pretty much captures all the issues that were raised and all the responses that we received, which, as I said, as a novice in the area, I am quite comfortable with. But I know that some other members have some other issues.

The Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia, SIFA, which has been in contact with me quite regularly, as have a number of the other associations, has written a letter to the minister and outlined these legacy issues from the debate in the other place. It covers the concerns I have just been through, but it feels its concerns were not clarified in the Legislative Assembly. This will come as no surprise to the minister's advisers, because the minister has already received this letter to get some confirmation or clarity behind these issues raised. It was a letter to the minister written on 20 March 2022, for the benefit of the advisers. I will not read the whole lot; I will read part of it. It acknowledges the clarifications that the minister provided in Parliament regarding the issues it raised; however, it feels there are several other issues that licensed firearm holders in Western Australia are concerned about. I will read in a couple of those issues. It states in part —

The most pressing issue that needs to be addressed with the legislation is the ability for licensed firearms holders to be allowed to replace certain firearms parts (ie. stocks, grips) as part of everyday maintenance of their licensed firearm.

Many licensed firearms holders engage in multiple forms of shooting (i.e., hunting and target). These different forms of shooting require different firearm configurations, which may require, for example, a stock to be changed to comply with the rules of a specific competition.

Licensed firearms holders can often use the same firearm for both hunting and target shooting provided that certain parts can be changed. Under new legislation, each time a stock is changed, the firearm needs to be taken to a licensed repairer following an administrative process which could take a number of days.

This would mean it would no longer be possible for a licensed firearms holder that wants to engage in recreational shooting one day and competitive shooting the next, or even on the same day.

An unintended consequence of this legislation could be that rather than taking their firearm to a licensed repairer to change a stock, or grip on multiple occasions, licensed firearms holders may make the decision to purchase additional firearms.

Instead of owning a single firearm with three different stocks, or interchangeable barrels, given the cost and inconvenience of having to take these items to a licensed firearms repairer every time they need to be changed, a licensed firearms holder may make the decision to purchase additional firearms for each stock they possess.

This situation would not just apply to stocks, but to other firearms parts also. Essentially this legislation could make it more economic and practical to own multiple firearms for multiple situations, as opposed to a single firearm with multiple interchangeable parts (e.g. a switch barrel rifle).

The potential for more firearms in circulation throughout WA is contrary to the intent of this legislation. That is why we are proposing an amendment to the legislation based on the following:

- Basic tasks, such as the changing of certain firearm parts (i.e., stocks, switch barrels etc.), conducted by licensed firearms holders should be categorised as maintenance under the new legislation.

This will allow licensed firearms holders to make simple changes to their firearms to cater for multiple forms of shooting and differing lawful circumstances without creating a legislative/regulatory regime which may make additional firearms more attractive from an economic and convenience perspective.

As I said, from a novice's perspective, I can see some merit in that. The minister addressed the issue in the other place, but as far as SIFA is concerned, this perhaps needs either further clarification or a potential amendment. The second issue states —

In addition, the industry is still seeking further clarification on section 23AG (offences relating to firearms technology), which appears to prohibit the possession of all plans, drawings etc, even if they are found within a perfectly legal publication, such as an encyclopedia.

This kind of provision would be unenforceable and will cause a great deal of confusion for the general public, as drawings and plans of firearms, as previously stated, can be found in perfectly legal publications such as books in a public library.

I am not as convinced by that point, I have to say. It is the bleeding obvious in a lot of instances. If someone is going to access a magazine or manual et cetera for general interest, I do not see that as an issue. If the minister could provide some sort of clarity beyond whether that is a criticism, other than what has already been provided, I would appreciate it. It goes on —

We hope that you understand that there is an urgent and desperate need to address these concerns before the Bill becomes legislation, as at that point it will no longer be possible to do so. Regulatory adjustments simply won't be enough to address these fundamental issues.

SIFA just wants to put on the record once again that it fully supports the State Government's move to tighten laws to make it more difficult for firearms to end up in the hands of unlicensed individuals.

However, we are concerned the proposed legislation—while targeted at bikies and outlaw organisations—will have a significant impact on law abiding citizens and could have significant consequences (the potential for more firearms in the community) which are contrary to its intent.

To conclude my contribution, and I think I have said this enough times, the alliance will enthusiastically support the bill if these concerns are addressed. Personally, I think the minister, the office and the Western Australia Police Force in particular have gone a long way to doing all that they possibly can to placate the concerns of licensed firearm owners that they are not the target area of this legislation. The unambiguous target area of this legislation is outlaw motorcycle gangs so that we do not have the situations that we saw when one group of bikies decided to defeat their opponents by shooting them. In essence, what happens then, of course, is that members of the community will be in danger, and that is exactly what happened in this instance and on numerous other occasions. We have no problems with the intent of the legislation, but these issues have been raised comprehensively by legitimate gun owners. I can only assume that shooters associations and gun owners associations across the board, both domestically in Western Australia and across the nation, plus a host of people from the regions, from farmers, are legitimate and their concerns, as I said, are consistent. Although at large the issues to my mind have been addressed, there are still a few concerns out there, and other members who will make a contribution today may add weight to that. I implore the minister to provide that solace to this place, to the alliance in particular, and we will enthusiastically support the legislation.

**HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition)** [5.27 pm]: Thanks to Hon Peter Collier for outlining very well the position of the opposition. I will take a little time to consider the history and my history around firearms before we get to the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021 in its current form.

Unlike our lead speaker, Hon Peter Collier, I have been around firearms for most of my life. Members might think that the current circumstances around licensing may be of concern, but let me describe to members my first exposure. I was not born in Queensland, but I grew up there. It might be said that Queensland was a little more gung-ho in terms of firearms than many other states, back when I was a lad quite a few decades ago now. I remember when, at about 12 years old, my brother and I bought our first rifle, which was a .22 calibre. We walked into the gun shop on our own and walked out with a rifle that we had saved up for. That was pretty normal many years ago. We were taught very early on to handle guns. We grew up on a property, so there were always guns around. My father had very strict rules around gun handling and gun safety. They were an integral part of life. I guess unlike Hon Dr Brian Walker, who gave a speech around animals yesterday, we were people who shot and ate our own animals, which might come as a bit of a surprise to some members. The secret is that if you give them names that sound tasty, it is not quite so bad. If a sheep is called Lamb Chop or a steer is called Steak, it just seems more appropriate. If Hon Dr Brian Walker wants to go back down that path, that is a way he might get around those circumstances.

A member: What did you call your dog?

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** It is my wife's dog so it is not going to get eaten. Thank you for that little image. No, is it not a hot dog or sausage dog!

I have been around firearms for a very long time. My foray into gun ownership in Western Australia was in the early 1990s. As a practising veterinarian, it is probably reasonable to say that I have euthanised a heck of a lot of animals over the years. In most circumstances chemical euthanasia is a reasonable prospect, perhaps a little exciting

and not as easy as people think, but it is at least deliverable. However, in some circumstances it is downright dangerous. I have described in a previous speech, Acting President, being chased by a bull with a broken leg and barely escaping with my life. Those are the sorts of circumstances in which being able to euthanise at a distance is pretty useful.

It was astounding that in Queensland, where I graduated, veterinarians were running around with large pistols. They did that because they thought they were safer to travel with, particularly in transport. Certainly in the early days there were plenty of pistols around in what we called the gulf country, as there would have been up north here, where the cattle were that much wilder and it was more dangerous, and if they were mustering on motorbikes, carrying a long rifle was quite difficult and quite dangerous. These things were relatively common in the early years. Veterinarians in Queensland could apply to get a pistol licence. I put out there that although I am a fair-to-average shot with a rifle, with a pistol, I might as well throw the gun as fire it, because I am dreadful, so I never entirely went down that path. Having been exposed to that history of gun law in Queensland, my first firearms licence in Western Australia was to euthanise fit and well animals. The licensing section informed me that euthanising sick and dying animals was not a valid reason to have a firearm in Western Australia. I had to get letters from two property owners to say that I would go and shoot perfectly healthy kangaroos and rabbits on their property, because that was a valid reason to have a firearm. I thought that was a bit incongruous, to be honest. I think that perhaps it was fitting a proposal into a box. In the end, I went and got two letters. I did not go around shooting perfectly live animals on people's farms; I used it as method of euthanasia.

There was an incident that drove me to gun ownership in this state. I was called to a property to euthanise a number of sheep. I think they were quite mistreated. There were cancers and all sorts of things amongst the flock, which had not been looked after appropriately. The property owner had a .22 calibre rifle but could not bring himself to euthanise what was, I think from memory, in the order of 10 to 20 animals that were really bad, and asked me to do so. I loaded up his gun with his bullets. About every third or fourth bullet would fire. Two out of three or three out of four bullets were misfires. I decided that I was in an incredibly dangerous situation. At that point, I had a choice. I could use what would be some rather unsavoury methods of euthanasia or keep going and run the risk, hoping nothing would blow up in my face. I decided at that point that if I was going to be in that role, in that game, I would need to have equipment appropriate for the job, and that is why I put in an application for a firearms licence. Interestingly, the secret to euthanising cattle and horses in particular is that you want large calibre, low power, so I ended up with a .44 Magnum, which had a really good effective range from where I am standing to the end of the chamber. Further than that and you might as well throw the rifle, but it was designed for the specific purpose of euthanising large animals. I am talking about a thousand-kilogram animal that is unrestrained and angry. That is what it was designed for and it was very, very good.

I give this introduction, Acting President, to say that I do not come to this debate and this argument not knowing about firearms. I have been a licensed firearm owner for quite a long period. I take the view, as does Hon Peter Collier, that the intent of the bill before the house today as it reads is very good. The intent of the bill is explained in four pillars. I take this from the second reading speech the minister delivered. There are four key reforms. The first is a firearms prohibition order scheme. I would have thought that would make sense to everybody. There is a group of people who should not hold firearms, and as long as the order is sensibly applied, it is an eminently sensible position to take.

The second pillar, if you will, relates to unlawful activities and firearm technology offences. Again, I think Hon Peter Collier and I are in furious agreement with the government that the capacity to manufacture particularly 3D plastic firearms is a horrendous thought. I know it is remarkably common in America. I do not know how common it is here but obviously the technology is here so we have to assume it is happening. I will come back to some of the fringe elements around the technology because the key to this will be to make sure that it is appropriately used and targeted so that we are not capturing people who we have no intention of capturing. We will rely on the common sense of those enforcing the laws to make sure the people targeted are genuine threats to society rather than the others. I get that sometimes there is some confusion and that a threat to society sometimes does not look like a threat to society until they take an opportunity to act on it. We will have to rely on that.

The third pillar, if you will, is the increased penalties. I think everybody agrees with that. The fourth and final pillar is to legislate for a permanent firearms amnesty. Again, I do not think anybody could possibly disagree with a voluntary amnesty. It just makes sense that people have the capacity to hand in firearms they want to rid themselves of because they no longer want, need or should be keeping them. I have to say that a lot of firearms are probably inherited firearms. There are still a lot of those out there. The firearms that we grew up with were often, and in our case were specifically, ex-World War II .303 calibre rifles.

A member interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** World War I! There you go; the member is going back even further. There were plenty of those rifles floating around, as people had brought them back. It is kind of astounding to think that returning soldiers would carry their rifles with them and walk out with them at the end, but, I tell you what, in my youth almost every farm had a .303 of some form and they were pretty much all ex-military. The .303 is a fairly powerful rifle

and it has a fair bit of kick. It was not a gun that young people used a lot but they were certainly the most common on farms. The other one obviously is the shotgun, which is a different kettle of fish. I will come back to more specifics around calibres later.

The first and most important question for us to talk about today is less related to the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021 and more related to the intent of the government partly in this bill and partly in what appears to be a publicised agenda going forward, and that is the bit that concerns me. The publicity that the Minister for Police has sought over this legislation, and potential further legislation, is going down a path that is kind of designed to alienate a group of people. That may be unintended, and I am prepared to accept that because the minister who will provide a second reading response is a very sensible fellow and he may well tell us that the intent of the government is an incredibly sensible outcome. But the publicity sought by the Minister for Police does not engender confidence that that is where the government is going, so it would be useful if the government could tell us a bit more about its genuine intent. The critical question that needs to be asked—partly as it relates to this bill but probably this is a much longer discussion about legislation that the government is flagging going forward—is this: is there a place for licensed recreational shooting, by which I mean shooting as a hobby and for recreation? From my reading of the bill, it does not exclude recreational firearms or recreational shooting.

Australia has a long history of recreational shooting. It is not just about the Michael Diamonds of the world, because there have been some great competitive shooters. Often they came out of World War I and World War II. For example, Donnybrook had a rather famous gentleman by the name of Glen Mitchell, who won Australian championships in long-range and large-bore shooting year in, year out. He died in his mid-90s; he might have been in World War I even, but he would have been young at that point. He nearly reached 100 years of age in the year 2000. Would you believe that? Unfortunately, he died in a tractor accident when he was 96 years of age. He was out on the tractor on his farm. He was immensely robust. That is a dangerous occupation on occasions. He was an outstanding rifle shooter, and he is not the only one. Western Australia has a long history of competitive rifle shooting. The question the government should answer for us is: do those people who engage in recreational shooting have a right to do so, and will they be supported by the government to continue their hobby, be it rifle shooting or pistol shooting? Such people do not represent a huge proportion of the population. Is it the intent of the government that recreational shooting will no longer be accepted as a part of society in the twenty-first century? This is a genuine question that I would like us to address as part of this process, because it was indicated to me during the briefing that this legislation before us today is obviously not aimed at taking working firearms off licensed firearm holders. Nothing in the bill suggests that farmers who use firearms for the purposes of farming are about to be stripped of their weapons.

I am not suggesting that there is anything along those lines in this bill. This bill is the very sensible promulgation of some good ideas. But when the police minister releases to the media—obviously from police sources—a photograph or a map of where licensed firearms are being held, that would tend to suggest that the fact that licensed firearms exist in the community at all is a bad thing. This was an action specifically by the Minister for Police. I understand that he released it to a range of media outlets, so it was obviously part of the government's campaign in this area, if you will. It was obviously designed to shock and outrage by describing how many legal firearms there are in the community. Surely, this refers to legal firearms. I am not suggesting that the police minister had or released a map of illegal firearms in the community because that would be a nonsense. We have to assume that the map that the police minister released to the media—it looked like a metropolitan map to me—was a map of legitimate, presumably, recreational shooters. It was obviously meant to garner support for gun laws. The fact that there are quite a number of recreational shooters in the community was being used by the police minister, Hon Paul Papalia—a good Burekup boy—to suggest there is something terribly wrong with the situation that exists with legal firearms ownership, which is a very different position from the one in the bill that is before the house today. What concerns me is whether we are moving from a sensible step to one that takes a much more, let us say, moral position on firearm ownership, particularly recreational firearm ownership. That is the question that I would particularly like the government to address. Is recreational firearm ownership a legitimate pastime that, if it is not supported, will at least not be attacked, or is this part of a program to effectively end recreational shooting? That is an absolutely critical question.

I thank the government for providing the briefing, which was organised by Hon Peter Collier. It was a good briefing and it addressed many of the issues that I will raise in a minute about the technicalities of the bill. I will refer to some of them anyway to make sure that we have them on the record and that we are dealing with them in the right place. At the end of the briefing, I made a comment that was poorly received. I want to explain this because it relates to the point that I am making. I suggested to those who were briefing us that, in my view, Western Australia police want to see as many firearms out of the community as possible, whether or not they are legitimately licensed. Obviously, they want every unlicensed, unregistered gun gone, and nobody opposes that. I do not know, but criminals probably do, although they do not get to speak in the Legislative Council—I do not think. I put it to the police that they want to minimise the number of guns in the community. That suggestion was met with a little outrage, I have to say, by the police officer representing, who suggested that that was absolutely not the case. I think he said something like, “Let me guarantee you that's not the case.” I said, “Okay; that's good to hear”, because I would then assume that that would mean it is not just a matter of getting rid of guns for the sake of getting rid of guns

necessarily. At the time I said that I do not think that is necessarily a bad policy, and I suspect that in many states and at different times in this state, the unofficial police policy has been to minimise the number of guns in the community to try to minimise the risk. I get that and I am not necessarily completely opposed to the principle. I think it needs to be applied judiciously and fairly, but the basic concept is that if there are X number of firearms in the community, having fewer is probably not a bad idea, unless the owner has a very valid reason for the firearm's existence. I will come to valid reasons a little bit later as well. I am trying not to make this contribution too long, but it is a very important issue. I was assured by presumably a serving police officer—he was in uniform—that it is not the police's intent or unofficial policy. But then I look at the statements, comments and media of the Minister for Police. They would seem to give us a completely different, contradictory and pretty much opposite view. That is the bit that concerns me.

The Minister for Police, apart from releasing a map presumably of legitimate licensed firearm owners—I think he may have been trying to scare people—also released details of the number of licensees and the number of firearms. He released material that said that the number of guns has increased from 218 765 in 2009 to 349 492 in January this year, so it has apparently gone up by 60 per cent. At the same time, the number of registered gun owners has remained relatively static at a bit over 89 000. Assuming the police minister's numbers are accurate, he is concerned that individual licensed firearm owners now have more guns. If the concern is about the number of guns in the community and whether people have a legitimate reason for using them, simply throwing those numbers out there, I guess in an effort to scare people, needs to be considered carefully. I would have thought that we should focus more on the number of people than on the number of guns. A lot of sporting shooters have a large number of firearms. I have to say, I swear that some of the sporting shooters in particular have more firearms than cricketers have cricket bats. Again, this comes back to the question of the legitimacy of recreational shooting, because, again, the intent of this bill looks remarkably sensible, as long as it is applied well, which is why the opposition is happily up there supporting what the government is doing. But the intent of the police minister, and we have to assume by extension the government, appears to be very different, because that is the message that they are giving.

In lending support to the bill before the house today, I would really like to know the government's position on recreational shooting. Can recreational shooters expect it to become harder and harder to pursue that sport? Ultimately, the government has a massive majority in both houses. If it wants to outlaw recreational shooting, that is exactly what will happen, and firearms will be left to those who can demonstrate a genuine need, such as farmers and no doubt security personnel et cetera. If that is the case, we should at least let people know well in advance and have an honest debate about it, because I think that is the important part. I want an honest answer to the question of where the government is going and what direction it is going to take on this, because the police minister—not the legislation; I am sure not the minister who has carriage of the bill—is obviously vilifying or demonising gun ownership. If that is the case, and if that is directed at recreational firearm owners, we just need to know. Personally, I am not a recreational shooter, so it is not going to worry me, but there is a group of people who are worried. I think an honest answer on precisely what is the intent of the government going forward would ease our nerves and might just ease the nerves of a lot of the members of public who are recreational shooters. I think that point is critically important.

Having said that, I have been around long enough to see lots of pretty fake reasons for people to have firearms. Like I said, I had to apply for a letter from two farmers to become licensed when I had no real intent of going onto their properties. If I had to prove it for the licensing branch, I could have gone out there and shot things, but the reality was that I was using my firearm purely for euthanasia and the removal of pain. But we could have done it, and there are plenty of reasons out there. I remember debates that everybody should be allowed to have automatic weapons and everybody needed to have semiautomatic weapons, and I have heard lots of specious reasons over the years why these things are required.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** You only need a semiautomatic if you're not a good shot.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I tend to agree. It was put to me, and I guess that is probably right. There are two reasons that are generally given for using semiautomatics. The first is if someone is shooting foxes because they are taking lambs, chickens or whatever and the fox is on the run, they can follow them with their shots as they go, and that is their argument, so I think it is probably a valid argument that they are not a good enough shot.

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes, it means that they missed them with their first shot; I think that is probably right. If they are in a spotlight and they are stuck, that is different, but those are not always the circumstances. Another argument—I do not think that this is valid either, but it is the argument that was given to me the most—was someone who has an orchard and a huge flock of twenty-eight parrots, for example, or vermin.

A member interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** We are not talking black cockatoos here; we are talking species that people are permitted to remove if they are damaging their crop. That applies across the board. If someone is running a commercial business, for example, there is no protection for feral animals, but there are valid reasons why someone might need

to cull even some native species. Members might remember the days of getting tags for kangaroos, for example. That was certainly the case, and it was managed; obviously, in the old days, the Department of Agriculture would say, “Yes, we recognise you’ve got a feral problem you can’t control, and you are allowed to go out and cull; we will give you 50 tags to cull the numbers back.” In the south west it was mostly western grey kangaroos, but around Australia the numbers vary. I would suspect the poor old kangaroo is probably the most common recipient, unluckily for them. We should probably make it camels, but that is a whole other argument.

People could get permission to go out there and shoot. Of course, the argument was that when there were big flocks and so many birds, semiautomatic shotguns were the most effective tool. They may well have been the most effective tool; however, in my experience, the problem was that someone would only ever get a couple of shots away anyway and the whole flock would disappear.

A member interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes, that is right.

We can go back to the arguments about the most appropriate weapon. I tend to agree. A lot of people want a certain type of firearm, particularly extra large firearms. The truth is that if someone is going to shoot a camel, they would probably want a fair bit of stopping power. The .44 Magnum that I had was probably appropriate, except the camels can get reasonably close before the gun is accurate.

**Hon Alannah MacTiernan** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes. Some property owners do have to deal with camels. I always found them to be grumpy, toxic beasts for the most part. I worked on a few as a vet, which was an interesting experience. A cranky camel, particularly the males in mating season, are formidable opponents. We digressed a little.

The firearms that can be licensed today are adequate for all the things that we might do in Australia. The only thing I am not experienced in is crocodile hunting. I do not know whether a specific firearm is needed for that, but we do not get too many in the south west, so I think I am okay. The firearms that can be licensed are probably appropriate at the moment. It sort of comes back to the question of whether the firearm is used in a genuine sporting event. If someone’s sporting prowess is large bore long distance, is that a legitimate recreation in the future? That is the type of question that the government needs to address during this process. I will add a few other bits and pieces that specifically relate to the bill, but I will leave the minister with this question: what is the future for recreational shooting, not given the bill before the house today but given the actions of the Minister for Police, which are presumably endorsed by the entire government? That is the question that I think the government should answer.

I return to the bill before the house today. I want to raise a couple of technical issues. Obviously, most parts of the bill are quite simple and make a lot of sense. The prohibition orders are fine. The people who should not have firearms are probably hard to identify sometimes. The police have the power to do that, but they cannot be held to account because they cannot pick people in advance sometimes. I have a great deal of sympathy for the police in that sense.

The part of the bill relating to illegal manufacturing and technology probably needs a bit of debate. The increased penalties are fine and the amnesty is fine, as is the intent of the government in the long term. There are a few parts of the bill relating to technology that those who shoot are a little concerned about. Most of those things have been addressed, but perhaps the minister should look at them and address them. The first is the reloading component. For recreational and farm shooters, whom I class as recreational because their firearms are part of an occupation, it is not worth considering reloading lots of common calibres, because they can probably be bought at a cheaper price than it would cost someone to reload. A few people love the thought of reloading. Again, it is almost a recreation for them. For the most part, the .22 calibre would be too hard to reload. There are arguments around the .308, which is also a very common calibre. There are some unusual calibres that are more difficult to get. Again, there is capacity for those people who reload to be registered—sorry; I forget the exact term—for that. That is fine. If a group of farmers get together and one is a very keen reloader and reloads for the other people around him, that will become an illegal act. They can reload for themselves but they cannot reload for somebody else unless they are a registered seller of ammunition. Some people may get caught up in that, unfortunately. I ask the minister to address that reloading component and perhaps give us some examples of how recreational reloaders will fare under the system and how they will be expected to respond. Some limitations will be placed upon them under the bill before the house, but I ask the minister to explain what may occur in that case.

The second part of the technology that concerns people relates to the manuals. This came up during the briefing. I know that I have raised it and I am sure others have. Obviously, we assume the target is people who are getting technical information and technical manuals with the intent of altering, building, constructing or manufacturing firearms. That is very different from the World War II tragic who just loves collecting magazines that have drawings of Sten guns and Bren guns and a lot of that historical material. I assume that the application of the bill would come with a degree of commonsense, and we would be looking at some of it being applied. The old guy who just happens to have some old magazines because he loves to read World War II paraphernalia is a very different prospect from someone who has plans, drawings and a 3D printer. A view on the application of the penalties around that sort of

information would be useful. It certainly would help reassure that group of people. Again, it is not a very big group of people, but there are people who like to collect that sort of information. If we had some information on that, it would be very useful to debate.

The minister will be pleased to know that I am coming to the end of that process. I think I have addressed the critical components of the bill. As was well said by Hon Peter Collier, it would be helpful to get some reassurance on some of those issues. It would be most helpful if the Minister for Police stopped demonising gun ownership across the board. There is a very big difference between a licensed gun owner, whether they are a recreational gun owner or somebody who is using a gun as part of an occupation, like a farmer, and a gun owner who probably should not have guns. That is a very big step from a non-licensed gun owner. That is obviously the group of people we want to target. During his second reading response, the minister may be in a position to give us a few statistics on this issue, apart from simply providing us with the number of guns out there. The salacious details that the police minister seems to be focused on are not of much value in the debate. Can the minister give us some information? The sorts of things that would be useful include the number of firearms that are stolen from licensed firearms holders each year. I am not sure what that number is; it might be a very big number. Also, how many licensed firearms are stolen and subsequently used in crimes that we are aware of? I would also be interested in some gun crime statistics. How many gun crimes are committed in an average year? Maybe the minister could give us the statistics for a few years so that we can compare them. In how many of those cases were the guns illegal versus licensed?

This is why I kind of understand the push to get all the guns out of the community, which is impossible. Plenty of crimes are committed by licensed gun owners with their licensed guns. The crime is usually horrible and is more commonly turned inwards on the family than anything else. They are horrendous crimes, but, to be honest, whether the gun owner had one gun or four guns probably did not make much difference because I suspect that they would have used only one of them. The outrage over whether there are twice as many guns as there used to be, or 40 per cent more guns than there used to be, but the same number of gun owners probably is not the biggest target here. That is why the legislation of itself is good. It will give the police the capacity to remove firearms from people, however many they have—whether it is one, four or 12. Some sporting shooters probably have 12 firearms. This legislation will give the police the capacity to remove all their guns, and that is a highly appropriate move. The numbers would be interesting. The number of guns being used in crimes would be a useful statistic. If the minister could throw some of that stuff in, I would appreciate it.

I read that one of the great impetuses driving the Minister for Police was the assassination of a bikie at a motoring event.

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** Yes. I am interested to know whether it was a licensed firearm or an unlicensed firearm. Would that person have potentially had their guns removed? I understand that they were an ex-veteran. There are a lot of former serving soldiers who undertake recreational firearms activities. If that is going to be the case that we use, would the legislation that the government is proposing to introduce—not so much this legislation—have had a significant impact? That is the information I would be keen to get. I do not know how much the minister can get in the time frame available, but we will not finish today. Assuming that Hon Peter Collier does not bring down the government tomorrow, as he has suggested, although there is plenty of time yet, the minister might be in a position to give us some of the information about those things.

A member interjected.

**Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS:** I was just saying that we can come back tomorrow, as long as Hon Peter Collier does not bring down the government before we get answers! Some of that information would be very useful, minister.

I will finish there. I have probably taken a little longer than I intended to, but I think they are really important issues for the minister to provide information on. As Hon Peter Collier has said, the bill before the house is a reasonable step. Let us sort out a couple of these issues. The bill before the house is probably not the issue that is frightening lawful gun owners; it is the further intent and the sensationalism and demonisation that appears to be coming from the police minister. It might be unintended; and, if it is unintended, he might be able to correct the record. It would be good to see him explain exactly how he expects to treat recreational gun owners, sporting shooters and those groups of people. The bill before the house is a sensible bill. The intent of the government in the longer term, particularly the intent of the police minister, is the question. If we could address some of that, I think that would really help.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [6.13 pm]: I have to say at the very outset that, having listened to what honourable members have been speaking about, I am completely in accord with what has been said so far. There have been very many good points. Among those very good points, the point that was repeated was that we can inherently support the intent of the Firearms Amendment Bill 2021. I do not see anything wrong with the idea of keeping the community safe and reducing access to weapons that can be used for mass destruction. But we could also reinforce the point that maybe we have some elements that are wrong. It also has to be said that when the fundamental underlying legislation, the Firearms Act, is mentioned to a police officer, it always brings a wry smile, because it is a mess of legislation that is difficult to fix and it would require a mountain of effort to rewrite. It should be rewritten, but perhaps not now.

I am one of a few members in this house who is a gun owner. There are several of us here. In referring to Hon Steve Martin—sorry; Hon Dr Steve Thomas. I keep getting these names mixed up; it is very confusing!

Several members interjected.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** They are indeed.

I made comments in my speech yesterday about not killing animals. It is something I have done, of course. For example, there is evidently a need to remove foxes from land. That is absolutely not a problem. Do people like doing it? I think if someone likes killing or hurting animals, there is something wrong with them, but doing something that is needed is an entirely different matter.

Members have to bear in mind my background. I was born in Malaya during the Malayan emergency. Some of my earliest memories are of going into the house and seeing weapons stacked against the table way above my head, because the soldiers and planters had come in for their tea or their lunch as they were basically defending us—and rightly so, because my father was one of the victims of that emergency. His side was ripped out by a shotgun blast. He survived, but his manager did not.

Seeing weapons of all kinds being used in a terrorist campaign is part of my genetic make-up. I have been there and seen how guns can be used to cause destruction, but I also know how to save lives. I am not nearly as experienced as others; I had a very inglorious career in the Territorial Army in the United Kingdom, but I did learn how to kill humans very effectively using the 7.62 millimetre self-loading rifle and the general-purpose machine gun. I was occasionally involved in having to cart that heavy machine gun around and I knew how to use it. The targets were not living targets but were simulated human targets. We have this point of view that people who serve are trained to end human life.

The third part of my experience is as a recreational shooter on farming land. Clay pigeon shooting is a lot of fun, but clearing the land of, say, wild dogs or foxes is certainly very useful. Also, if someone happens to run into a kangaroo and they have not killed it, it is a lot nicer to shoot it rather than run over it again with the car. These are practical reasons why people would want to have access to weapons.

Although I will absolutely support this bill, there are a few points that we need to look at. First, we looked at the Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Bill, the aim of which was bikies and outlaw motorbike gangs. I think it is fair to say that under our current legislation, the police have quite enough power at their disposal to deal with these events rather than needing us to further amend the Firearms Act. These are very specific laws and I expect that the police would use very sensible laws to keep us safe in the community. The minister said that outlaw motorcycle gangs and firearms are synonymous, but recreational shooters are not an outlaw motorcycle gang. The bill will certainly target criminals, but the impact on legally authorised firearms owners, manufacturers and repairers is present. This may be an unintended consequence that needs to be addressed. It might be possible to have a closer look at the ramifications of the law that is being amended.

I was also brought up in a household in which I was told that if I cannot say anything good about something, do not say anything at all. So I will point out that there are aspects of this bill that I thoroughly approve of. I think the amnesty is an eminently admirable part of the bill. There are three other key reforms that we ought to approach with more caution. I am not going to take up much time. Firstly, time is short and, secondly, there are more erudite speakers to come, so I simply point out that I will cut my speech short and defer to others by saying that I will support the bill once I am happy that the points that have been raised by the speakers before me and will be raised by the speakers yet to come have been addressed. I will be happy to support the bill, which has an admirable intent and ought to be carried forward, once we have assured ourselves that the problems that we foresee in the future will be addressed.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

## **CORONAVIRUS — BORDER RESTRICTIONS**

### *Statement*

**HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan)** [6.20 pm]: During the recess, I had the very distinct honour, along with a few of my parliamentary colleagues, to attend a festival dinner for the Punjabi community in Perth. It was organised by my friend Deep. It was a great night. It was a huge success and the food was incredible, which any member would know if they have been to similar events. But the reason I rise to talk tonight is in response to an impromptu speech given on the night by a respected elder of the Punjabi community who had just flown into Perth a matter of days prior. He was moved to speak because the previous speaker had acknowledged that there were a few members of Parliament present at the dinner. He took the microphone without a prepared speech and proceeded to tell those assembled about his and his family's journey over the past two years living in India with a son who was an international student based here in Perth. He spoke about the initial fear that would grip any parent when a pandemic breaks out and they have a child or children on the other side of the world. He talked about the frustration they felt when the international and state borders within Australia were closed, and about their feelings of helplessness. He then described briefly the horror of COVID as it swept across India and the realisation of just how devastating

to human life this disease is. Members may recall the images that came out of India when COVID hit its peak over there. They were, by far, some of the most disturbing images I have seen during the pandemic. I am sure everyone here would join me in saying that we all felt very deeply for the Indian people at that time.

He talked about the moment he realised that his son was in possibly the safest city in the world during the pandemic and the moment that his frustration, and even anger at our hard border policies, turned to absolute relief and absolute certainty that we had done the right thing, and, further, their desire to keep the borders closed for as long as necessary to mitigate the virus to the greatest extent possible.

As part of our work in this place, most of us hear speeches day in and day out. This was one of the most moving speeches I have heard in my time in this place, both impromptu and from someone who, to my knowledge, is not a regular public speaker. Despite speaking off the cuff, he spoke eloquently and with real emotion about his and his family's journey through COVID, who were separated by borders that were firmly closed. He gave a unique point of view two years into the pandemic from someone with the most important of vested interests—a child in a foreign land. He spoke of the government's border policy and how it affected them. Later in the night, he shook my hand—it was the firmest of handshakes—and said, “Thank you for keeping my son safe. Please tell Mr McGowan thank you for keeping my son safe.” I told him I would pass on that message, and so tonight I do so.

### **NORTH EAST METROPOLITAN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE**

#### *Statement*

**HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan)** [6.23 pm]: I do not intend to keep the house for long. I seek some clarification. I appreciate that the Leader of the House; Minister for Education and Training is out on urgent parliamentary business, but if Minister Dawson is happy to alert the minister to my query, that would be helpful.

Yesterday, I asked the minister a question on the North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre. I asked the minister how many government primary schools fall within the centre's catchment area. The minister responded by saying that the North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre does not have a catchment area and that students can be referred from anywhere. I must admit that I am a little confused. I am not questioning the minister; I am just seeking some clarification. Members may recall that earlier today in the motion that I moved on the early years, I referenced the North East Metropolitan Language Development Centre and the pilot program it is undertaking with speech pathologists. Its website refers to the fact that schools are able to participate, provided they are in the catchment area. I have also looked at some of the other language development centre websites following the minister's response, and most tend to refer to either an intake area or a catchment area. When I did some further investigation and saw it on Schools Online, I found that it says there is not an intake area. There does seem to be a bit of a discrepancy. I am simply seeking some information and raising it today in the hope that the minister might be able to find an answer by tomorrow.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** The minister is watching and she will provide an answer to you tomorrow.

**Hon DONNA FARAGHER:** Thank you very much.

### **ALIER CHOL RIAK — TRIBUTE**

#### *Statement*

**HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan)** [6.25 pm]: I rise to talk about Alier Chol Riak, a Western Australian who was murdered at Docklands in Melbourne a few weeks ago, on 13 March. His tragic death was very painful to his family, whom I know. Family and friends who knew him remember him as a very lovely young man. Alier Chol Riak was an accomplished young man with a fine character. He was a rising basketballer and the pride of our South Sudanese community. He came from a wonderful, loving and proud family of Chol Riak. Alier's memorial was held at John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School in Mirrabooka on 26 March. It was attended by Dave Kelly, the Minister for Youth; Meredith Hammat, the member for Mirrabooka; and Dr Anne Aly, the member for Cowan. Also in attendance were John Aciek, president of the South Sudanese community in Perth, as well as family, friends, many members of the South Sudanese community and, of course, Alier's sporting community.

I wish to share a little bit about Alier. He was born in Kenya in a refugee camp. His parents are Ayen Malek and James Chol Riak. The family now lives in Ellenbrook. Alier was an excellent basketball champion and he attended John Septimus Roe in Mirrabooka. I will quote some of the words that were shared around by Alier's colleagues. This is a quote from his school —

He was an inspiring young man and student. He loved giving back to his community and came back to visit each year to reconnect with staff and talk to our Basketball students and run skills sessions with them.

Alier was a valued member of our community and made deep connections with his fellow classmates and staff. He was a leader and a passionate sportsman who always had a basketball in his hands.

We are deeply saddened to know a young man with such a bright future, has passed away under such tragic circumstances.

Alier played for the Warwick Senators and then coached them. He inspired many young people through this sport. He made other migrant youths feel like there was a place for them in Australia. Alier earned a basketball scholarship to the United States, which is very difficult to do. He went to Minnesota to play basketball and study a bachelor of arts degree at Winona State University. He finished university in 2021. Upon his return to Australia, he signed up to play for the Darwin Salties in the National Basketball League, division 1, north. But, sadly, he died before he could even wear his uniform. The last thing that he and his new head coach, Matt Flinn, discussed was how excited they both were to start this journey together. In Matt's words —

“He had such a raw passion that shone through every time we spoke about basketball and life—I told him to select his flights and get moving, he was pumped.

Basketball Western Australia's general operations manager, Adam Bowler, described Alier as someone who was not only a talented young basketballer, but also a great character. Alier was a former WA high-performance state team athlete and a valued employee with Basketball WA, working as a games controller.

In March, Alier visited Melbourne to celebrate his twenty-third birthday with his elder brother Kuol, who was 26 years old, and a girlfriend who lived in Melbourne. As he and his brother were leaving a venue, they were attacked by a group of young men. It was a very sad moment because Alier had just turned 23. Alier and his brother were injured, and, sadly, Alier lost his life that same night. Six men were aged between 19 and 22 years have been charged with stabbing and killing Alier. Naturally, the family wants justice. The first court hearing is scheduled for 28 July. A lot of things have been said about African youth violence in Melbourne. Much has been done to improve things; still more needs to be done. We must continue to find ways to heal intergenerational grief and trauma that occurs within culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We must engage youth from CALD backgrounds in positive pursuits in the wider community. Only then will no more lives be so tragically lost, as was Alier's.

As a mother of good, loving boys, and as someone who knew Alier's family quite well, it is hard to understand what makes a group of our young people attack each other, including those who come from their own community. Sometimes I question: Is it bad parenting, drugs or mental illness, or is it a deep personal crisis of identity and belonging? What can be done? We can do plenty; we must not give up on our children. I believe that the community is a powerful healer in this situation. As a proud community that respects life, the South Sudanese community wants to work together with the wider community; for instance, African community leaders here in Western Australia are keen to work together with the government to help at-risk youth. The Organisation of African Communities WA offers mentorship programs like Stop the Violence and Mentor Me ReConnect and works with Edith Cowan University, the Western Australia Police Force, the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Stop the Violence is a training program focused on identifying what violence is, creating awareness on how to stop it both within and outside African communities, especially amongst youth. Mentor Me ReConnect is a culturally appropriate mentoring program designed to address assault and violence, antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug-related crimes and low participation rates in higher education among young people of African background. CALD communities need more police officers like Sergeant Don Emanuel-Smith, who was recognised as WA's top cop in 2011 for his work establishing relationships within African and multicultural communities. Even today he goes into CALD communities to develop trust with Muslim, Burmese, Vietnamese and African leaders and other members.

Mostly, I believe it is how we behave in our families that ensures our children choose a path into adulthood that is life affirming. No doubt, it is hard work. I applaud the work being done in WA to help our youth, and I am sure that there is a lot of work being done in Melbourne, too. We still need more funding to develop and expand mentorship programs. Sports, policing and justice programs are needed to serve CALD communities, particularly African youth. Please do not let Alier Chol Riak's death be in vain.

Rest in peace, gentle soul.

## WITTENOOM CLOSURE BILL 2021

### *Statement*

**HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral)** [6.35 pm]: I rise tonight to speak about Wittenoom. I understand and acknowledge that we have recently dealt with the Wittenoom Closure Bill 2021 in this place. I was away on urgent parliamentary business when the bill was being dealt with. As a single member, I find that I certainly need to choose my battles. However, I am compelled to speak on the issue for two reasons.

Firstly, Wittenoom is in my electorate in the Mining and Pastoral Region; and, secondly, the more I dig into the history of Wittenoom, the more compelling the topic becomes. My initial reaction to the bill was one of, dare I say, scepticism and maybe a little bit of sadness for the destruction of this town. There is a lot of history there and I felt like it was a heavy-handed approach to completely flatten and bulldoze this town—effectively, sweeping over the history of Wittenoom. I also felt like the health advice compelling the destruction of this town was probably a little

bit trumped up, and people who choose to go to Wittenoom do it under their own steam and volition. There is an element of appeal to Wittenoom, and I felt it was a little bit sad to flatten the town completely. I have since changed my position on the flattening of Wittenoom and on the bill.

In the briefing I received, I learnt that there are three landowners left and one sole full-time resident, Lorraine Thomas. Lorraine was running the gem store—I think she still is. I was also told that these three landowners are being adequately compensated, which is good to hear for land that has effectively zero value; Wittenoom is effectively a ghost town. I understand that Lorraine, who was still living there, has chosen to ignore the health advice and is staying there under her own steam, which I respect. I originally tried to track down Lorraine Thomas. I felt it would be a fitting closure to the saga and to this bill to record Lorraine Thomas's remarks regarding Wittenoom in *Hansard* for the public record. Obviously, Lorraine has a lot of history with the town, and she would certainly have something to say about the bill and the topic of Wittenoom itself.

As members can expect, it is quite difficult to find Lorraine. I think short of actually flying or driving out to Wittenoom, it is probably next to impossible to contact Lorraine. But in my quest to speak to Lorraine Thomas, I came across another Lorraine who had history with Wittenoom. Lorraine Kember is an advocate for the education of, and public sentiment surrounding, mesothelioma, which is brought about by exposure to asbestos. Lorraine's husband died of mesothelioma when he was 52. He was diagnosed 45 years after his original exposure to asbestos. Her husband Brian was seven years old when he spent seven months in Wittenoom. I think members here are familiar with photos of children playing in asbestos, covered in it head to foot. Brian, Lorraine's husband, was one of those children. Lorraine shared a story with me of Brian playing in this asbestos, building a patty cake and sandcastles. It was everywhere, President. They had piles of it. They used it as windbreaks, and when the wind would come whipping through the town it would kick up the fibres, with people breathing it in every day. Forty-five years later Brian died of mesothelioma. When he was diagnosed he was told that he had three to nine months left to live. Within that time, he had 21 aspirations, and each time they drained 21 litres of fluid from his lungs. It is obviously a really terrible way to go; he was effectively drowning in the fluid generated from his lungs. It is a tragic and terrible disease.

Lorraine describes this incident of Wittenoom and the mesothelioma that is prevalent in our community as the first wave. She talks about a potential second wave in WA. Asbestos was a wonder thing in the 1950s. It was used in a wide range of building materials. I think we are all familiar with the really ugly fencing made with asbestos and cement. It is fire resistant, and has a range of other properties that made it quite popular back in the day. Lorraine was saying that it has a half-life. It is deteriorating, and after about 70 years this material becomes very fibrous and starts breaking down. That is main component whittles away and we are left with asbestos fibres that can be very damaging. It just takes one fibre to be released to get into lungs and then mesothelioma can rear its ugly head later in life.

I asked Lorraine for her thoughts on Wittenoom. Understandably, she was not very sympathetic for the town. She described it as a ghost town. She also spoke about some of the work that she is doing right now and her advocacy for this issue and awareness. We have regulations when we talk about the handling of asbestos, but I do not think it is very well known just how prevalent and widespread it is in the community. It was used very extensively in the 50s, and again it is reaching that half-life and deterioration phase. One fibre can be very deadly. In my quest to find the original Lorraine, Lorraine Thomas, I also had a conversation with the CEO of the Asbestos Diseases Society of Australia, Melita Markey. She is calling for a memorial in honour of Wittenoom to be built in Karijini. The Asbestos Australia website states that this memorial would be to acknowledge that for many people it is the home they loved, and were forced to leave, and is killing their loved ones and friends. With all the above considerations, ADSA respectfully suggests the next step should be to design and build sensitive, accessible and prominent memorials to Australia's worst industrial disaster. These memorials would be a peaceful place where loved ones could visit, reflect and pay their respects; a formal acknowledgement of the Wittenoom workers and their families, unwittingly exposed in their desire to earn a living; a meaningful deterrent for those tempted to visit the region; and, lastly, a reminder to corporations not to ignore the safety of the communities in which they operate. I thought this was a sensible suggestion. There is a Change petition online. I drew to Melita's attention the wonderful new e-petitions that we have in Parliament and indicated I would be very happy to table that petition in the future.

In closing, I have changed my mind on the Wittenoom Closure Bill and the issue of Wittenoom, and I support posthumously the bill that was before Parliament.

## METROPOLITAN CEMETERIES BOARD — HEADSTONES

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [6.44 pm]: Thank you to Hon Ayor Makur Chuot for that very moving statement. I recommend we all pay attention to those words. They refer to the morality of our growing youngsters and the terrible things happening in our communities, not just in the African community, as well. What I want to read out also refers to the morality of what is happening in Perth just now. I was going to speak about Karrakatta and the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board, but *The Geraldton Guardian* reported just a few days ago the

vandalism of headstones in Geraldton cemetery. The senior sergeant there described that as disrespectful behaviour that would not be tolerated. We have common ground here: morality and respect for all. I want to go on and speak about a war hero from the First World War. I spoke about the Karrakatta cemetery and the so-called renewal program before. Bonnie Christian covered a story in *Post Newspapers*, for the sake of *Hansard*, on 19 March 2022. I will read some of this into the record. It is meaningful, because the headline is “War hero’s family denied headstone”. It states —

**The family of a decorated World War I hero is being refused a replacement granite headstone at Karrakatta Cemetery that was removed without their knowledge.**

“I think it’s a shocking thing to do, to steal it, steal the headstone and shave it,” Arthur Haines’ grand-daughter Rosa Waldon said.

“To think they would be so sneaky and to use the granite for another person, that’s just rude, it’s insulting.”

Arthur’s official AIF headstone was found by chance in Midland last year by Claremont resident Gavin Wilkinson. It had been removed from his gravesite as part of the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (MSB) “renewal” program.

After a protracted fight to have it reinstated the MCB this month agreed it could be returned to his gravesite. But the headstone would have to be provided by the Office of Australian War Graves, which has said the granite originally used was no longer available.

It has advised the family and the POST a plaque or plinth commemoration can be provided instead.

Mr Wilkinson said the OAWG had refused to tell him and the Claremont RSL, which is acting on behalf of families of soldiers whose headstones were removed, where their granite headstones were being kept.

After he located 18 of them, he found the headstones’ inscriptions were shaved for reuse.

...

Arthur is commemorated with a brass wall plaque, but his final resting place is unmarked and grassed over. “There’s nothing to say where Arthur is, it’s devastating,” Ms Waldon said. ... “We want a like-for-like replacement.”

Ms Waldon said 10 years ago she took her mum to visit the site and they wandered “around and around” but could not find it. It was not until Mr Wilkinson called her that she found out what had happened.

Think about this for moment; we are talking about morality. In 1922 they were promised that this would be forever and eternal for the memory of those who gave their lives in a terrible war, not knowing of course that World War II would come along as well. But they gave their all. The Metropolitan Cemeteries Board is committed to retain this, and it then engaged in a protracted fight with the grieving family before conceding, and then returning a gravestone that could not be used, with no replacement for it, no place to see where he has been buried. It is shocking disrespect. We talk about respect in the community and disrespect being shown to the elders of our community. I want to read in what the *Post Newspapers* wrote as a way of memorialising at least one of our heroes. It continues —

Arthur was a farmer when in 1916 he responded to the call to serve with the AIF 11th Battalion, leaving Fremantle for the Western Front.

I interject here; I visited the National Anzac Centre in Albany, which is a wonderful place. If anyone has not yet visited, do please. It is a place where we can actually really learn about what happened to those who went before and what they went through. It is amazing. The article continues —

Serving in France with the 4th Machine Gun Company, he was awarded the Military Medal in 1917 for bravery in the field while under enemy fire at Bullecourt. “He was a gutsy, honourable man,” Ms Waldon said.

He married Augusta Matilda Pyne in Wales after the war, returned to Australia but suffered from the effects of war, including being gassed.

He died at Peppermint Grove at what is now the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, then a hostel for severely disabled World War I soldiers. Arthur was awarded an official war grave, but in 1999 his grave was “renewed” by the MCB. That is despite the board in 1922 giving an undertaking to the Australian Government to maintain these war graves for all time.

“I just feel it’s very insulting,” Ms Waldon said. “He went to the war, and he gave up a lot to do that and he ended up dying from war causes. “I can’t speak lowly enough about what’s happened.”

Neither can I, members. If that was one of your family, what would you think? Is this how we, from the very top to the very bottom of society, treat each other? Have we a lesson that we could learn here as members of Parliament? Should we be working to change the way people feel and the respect we show for each other? It is a moral question and a very difficult question. We cannot legislate for that, but we can lead.

The Military Medal was one of the highest medals awarded to non-commissioned personnel during the two world wars for acts of gallantry and duty under fire. That they treated his grave so shabbily is just dishonourable. I bring this issue to members' attention and hope that we can lead the way and be a light to our community that such morals not be tolerated. Earlier, I spoke about the mental health issues that affected the passing of my son and the wide variety of mental health disease in our community. Part of that, surely, is the respect with which we treat people who are not faring as well. This goes all through our society and we ought to take this seriously in every aspect in which we face it.

#### **WITTENOOM CLOSURE BILL 2021**

##### *Statement*

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [6.50 pm]: I was not going to make a private member's statement but I want to thank Hon Wilson Tucker for highlighting the fact that people in this chamber can change their mind occasionally. I assure him that the work of Melita Markey and her parents and the devastating situation of Wittenoom are probably well known to everybody in the chamber. I remember once going to that town and the most horrific thing I saw was that the children's playground had been matted out with blue asbestos. The whole town is completely covered with it. It is a tragedy that grown men and women worked in the mine, but it is a bigger tragedy that they unknowingly exposed their children to asbestos. I, for one, am very pleased that the town will be closed. If a memorial is required, I hope that it is not in Wittenoom because everything needs to be done to make sure that nobody goes to that place to see a memorial or the old buildings. It needs to be scraped from the earth and, as I said, if a memorial is required, it needs to be well away from that site.

*House adjourned at 6.52 pm*

---

