



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 15 May 2024

# Legislative Council

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

## BILLS

### *Assent*

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following bills —

1. Road Traffic Legislation Amendment (Infringement Management Reform) Bill 2024.
2. Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2024.
3. Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023.
4. Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Safety Levies Amendment Bill 2023.
5. Therapeutic Goods Law Application Bill 2023.
6. Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023.
7. Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Application Bill 2023.

## ENTRANCE POINT REEF — PROTECTION

### *Petition*

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [1.03 pm]: I present a petition containing 516 signatures couched in the following terms —

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

**We the undersigned are calling for the protection of Entrance Point Reef from industrial development. The Reef is of extremely high significance to local, First Nations families and has been for countless generations, as evidenced by the ancient shell midden on adjacent dunes. It is a place of recreation, learning, spiritual and physical sustenance, and deep contemplation, that is highly valued by the whole community. It has high marine biodiversity values as well as archaeological, cultural and palaeontological values that the community wants protected.**

**We therefore ask that the State Government protect Entrance Point Reef in perpetuity from damaging industrial development.**

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See paper 3150.]

## PAPERS TABLED

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

## METRONET — COSTINGS

### *Notice of Motion*

Hon Tjorn Sibma gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

That this house —

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

**HEALTH SYSTEM***Motion*

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [1.06 pm]: I move —

That the Legislative Council —

- (a) expresses its gratitude to frontline healthcare workers, healthcare providers and non-government organisations for their outstanding contribution to the health of all Western Australians through recent periods of great uncertainty; and
- (b) notes the McGowan and now Cook Labor government’s mismanagement of the health system, which has been plunged into crisis after crisis and has resulted in numerous devastating and preventable incidents, record ambulance ramping and all-time low staff morale.

I rise to support the motion so moved. In doing so, I indicate that I have used careful and considered language in the hope that the government, with its new humble approach, might see fit to support and self-reflect on the words in this motion, particularly in light of the state budget being handed down just last week. I say from the outset that Western Australia has the benefit of a world-class healthcare system. It has its challenges, but it is world class. We should not for one minute expect that always to be the case. It is a system under immense pressure, and cracks are, and have been, emerging for some time. On many fronts, it would appear that this government has given up. Our health system is not delivering for many in Western Australia. The health and life expectancy of many in our regions remain driven by their postcode.

The first limb of this motion is about healthcare workers. These selfless individuals are our healthcare system. Too often we focus on the bricks and mortar, and we fail to recognise that hospitals, facilities and health institutions are nothing, they come to nothing, without the dedication and tireless commitment of these healthcare workers. They are, and have been for some time, under immense pressure. I draw members’ attention to the 2023 Your Voice in Health survey. Keep in mind that the government was not interested in the views of healthcare workers in 2022 when it cancelled the survey, but it did the survey in 2023. Have a look at some of the “key questions to focus on” that came out of the 2023 survey. The responses to these questions ranged between 48 per cent and 56 per cent —

- Q48. My organisation supports me and my goals
- Q07. I feel valued and recognised for the work I do
- Q20. I believe my organisation cares about my health and wellbeing
- Q49. My organisation is making the necessary improvements to meet our future challenges
- Q11. I believe that the decisions and behaviours of senior management are consistent with my organisations values
- Q17. My organisation does a good job of keeping me informed about the matters affecting me

Only one in two respondents to the survey agreed with those key questions. I have certainly had, and I am sure other members have had, countless experiences, whether they be from healthcare workers writing to us or approaching us in person when we are at public events and the like. Their stories are strikingly similar. I have had nurses in particular break down in front of me and say they are having to leave the profession that they have given decades of service to, a profession that they love, because they are burnt out. They are undervalued and they are overworked.

It is interesting that, at the same time that we were having almost daily press conferences from the then Minister for Health, Roger Cook, and the then Premier, Mark McGowan—they would start the press conferences by identifying a particular section of the healthcare workforce and singling them out for their praise on that day—we were applying a state wages policy that has played a key role in some of the sentiment that has been expressed by these frontline healthcare workers. At the same time that we were thanking them ad nauseam for going above and beyond during this extraordinary period, we were giving them a backhander via the state wages policy. In an environment in which we had an extraordinarily tight labour market, wage growth north of four per cent, a consumer price index of five per cent last year and four per cent this year, and record budget surpluses, the government was rubbing salt into the wounds by gloating, as it did last week, about their multibillion-dollar budget surpluses. You do not have to be a genius to understand why healthcare workers feel the way they do. You do not need an annual survey to work out some of the things that are driving them to despair. I remind members about the sustainable health review. Does anyone remember that? We have not heard about it for a while. It was a key election commitment of the Labor government. Whatever happened to its 30 recommendations? The last communiqué by the independent oversight committee was in November 2020. Have we given up on the sustainable health review? The government said that it would focus immediately on six of the 30 recommendations. I draw members attention to the executive summary of the *Sustainable health review: Final report to the Western Australian government*. It said —

Courage, collaboration and system thinking are needed to change how health care is delivered in WA for a healthier, more sustainable future.

The Sustainable Health Review (SHR) Panel was tasked by the State Government to guide the direction of the WA health system to deliver patient-first, innovative and financially sustainable care.

Spending on health in WA has more than doubled in the past 10 years yet outcomes in population health and acute care in WA have not improved at the same rate. Without intervention, health spending is projected to approach 38 per cent of the State budget by 2026–27 at the expense of other critical services such as education, housing, policing and transport.

I pause here to remind government members who will respond to this motion—I am sure they have the government talking points in front of them—is it simply getting up and saying this government is spending more on health care than any other government? I want members to remember those words of the sustainable health review. Of course, if this government spends less than any other government, it has actually cut the health budget. The executive summary goes on to say —

Western Australia’s health system is among the best in the world. Despite this, there is no doubting the increasing pressures the WA health system currently faces. Demand for health services has grown substantially over the past 20 years as the population has grown and aged, and the incidence of chronic disease, obesity and mental health conditions has risen.

Not all people in WA have fair access to health care and some experience worse health outcomes because of social, economic and cultural inequality. More Western Australians are part of a ‘sandwich generation’: caring for young children and older relatives. They are required to navigate multiple systems that have become so complex that people often do not receive services when they need them or end up in hospitals when they do not need to be there.

The first recommendation of the sustainable health review is to increase and sustain focus and investment in public health, with prevention rising to at least five per cent of total health expenditure by July 2029. We are halfway towards that target. I hope that if there is one thing the government can leave us with today in responding to this motion, it might be: are we on track to achieve recommendation 1 of the sustainable health review, which is five per cent of the health budget being committed to preventative health? When the sustainable health review was handed down, it was somewhere in the order of 1.6 per cent. Keep in mind that we have a Minister for Health with two parliamentary secretaries—one in either house of the Parliament. I am sure one of the three individuals in charge of the health portfolio would be able to give us an update on that. Where has the independent oversight committee been since November 2020? What has the government done with it?

I move on to another area—the women’s and babies’ hospital. Of course, funding is made clear in the budget papers presented last week. I remind members that this government spent two years and \$10.4 million on a business case that in four weeks was put through the shredder. I do not subscribe to the theory that we should build the women’s and babies’ hospital at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre precinct come hell or high water. That is not my view. The business case development was based on options exclusively on the QEII medical precinct. I have a problem with the fact that after two years of planning and \$10.4 million, in just four weeks, the government has determined an alternative site, and that is the site we will build the new women’s and babies’ hospital on.

I was fortunate to be a guest of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations recently. Surprisingly, a government member raised this issue. That piqued the interest of a lot of other members who were participating on that day, including me. It is unsurprising to know that we have made a decision in the order of \$2 billion—I think it is slightly less—to build a new hospital at a site in Murdoch with no business case, no project definition plan and no risk assessment. We are told that it will be quicker, it will be cheaper and it will be lower risk—based on what? Maybe the government can tell us today. It was not able to tell us when the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations was examining its annual report recently. There are a number of issues to be addressed in building this hospital. These are long-term decisions. This hospital will probably service the next two or three generations of Western Australians. This decision should not be taken lightly. It might be the right decision to not press ahead with the development at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre, but why is it the right decision to press ahead with the Murdoch development? One of the issues is obviously patient access to the Perth Children’s Hospital, but another is the distinct lack of accommodation in the southern corridor. This issue needs to be better understood as part of the relocation. If the government is going to build a new women’s and babies’ hospital at Murdoch, it needs to think about that, particularly for regional patients—the mums, dads and children who will access those services at Murdoch. It is like the relocation of cancer services to Fiona Stanley Hospital when there was a lack of understanding around those impacts, particularly on regional patients.

There is another topic that I hope I can stop talking about in my time remaining in Parliament, but until the government does something, I will have to keep repeating myself—that is, the need for investment to expand the emergency rescue helicopter service in Western Australia. The Chief Health Officer commissioned an independent review of aeromedical services. The review was commissioned on the back of a coronial inquest into three deaths that occurred at Mt Augustus. That report was completed in June 2022. The government sat on it for almost a year before releasing its response. It publicly released the report in May 2023. I remind members that earlier this month

we recognised that the two rescue helicopters servicing Western Australia had flown in excess of 10 000 missions, more than 23 409 hours, and had impacted the lives of 6 783 people. The Chief Health Officer's inquiry found clearly that —

Despite the most demanding demographic and geographical scenario in Australia and perhaps the world, the WA Aeromedical System is significantly under-funded and under-resourced.

Academic research has found that people in Western Australia are twice as likely to die from trauma if they live or travel in a region that does not have access to a rescue helicopter—twice as likely to die. The Deputy State Coroner's decision in [2022] WACOR 29 at paragraph 500 makes the finding —

In my view, it is appropriate and fair that the Western Australians living in the Mid-West of Western Australia and above be provided with air assets to assist with search and rescues, in the same way that those of us living in Perth and the South West are lucky enough to have access to, noting we also have access to a far more comprehensive ambulance service on the ground. It is unclear from the information available how available the additional rescue helicopter will be to people in the Mid-West. If is not readily available, then that is of great concern, particularly given the abovementioned election commitment to ensure that such a service is made available to people in the Mid-West.

We learnt through that coronial inquest that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services has supported three budget submissions for a rescue helicopter to be based in the midwest and Gascoyne, and the government, which gloats about its budget surpluses—\$10 billion in budget surpluses forecast across the budget forward estimates—cannot find a few crumbs from the Metronet cabinet table. The government needs to listen to the coroner and WA health academics, and to take note of the Chief Health Officer's independent inquiry report that it commissioned to make a difference to the health and lives of Western Australians.

The last thing I want to talk about is ambulance ramping. It is a good indicator, among others, of health system performance. In 2017, when Labor took government, ramping was below 10 000 hours; it was 9 819 hours. When Labor was in opposition, it defined exceeding 10 000 hours of ambulance ramping in one calendar year as a “crisis”, a “horror story” and a “massive failure”. That was the definition applied at the time by the shadow Minister for Health, Roger Cook. How would Premier Roger Cook describe a fivefold, sixfold or nearly sevenfold increase to his 10 000-hour threshold? The Premier, the then shadow health minister, was right; our ambulance service is in crisis.

**Hon Shelley Payne** interjected.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** Hon Shelley Payne will get a chance in two minutes; I bet she does not stand.

Our ambulance service is in crisis. It is a crisis resulting from the failures in our health system. Those failures have an impact on ambulance availability. In April 2024, last month, there were more than 3 500 hours of ambulance ramping. Members should keep in mind what the Labor Party did when it first came to government. It changed the formula for ambulance ramping. It said that it would no longer count the first half hour when an ambulance arrives at a hospital. When we compare figures over time, we must remember that the government tinkered with the numbers. It tinkered with the formula to exclude the first 30 minutes from the arrival time of every ambulance at an emergency department. April's figures were 3 500 hours and we have what is predicted to be quite a challenging flu season to come. This is by no means under control—notwithstanding the narrative in the budget papers that throwing more money at the health system will fix these problems. I remind members opposite of the comments made by their own sustainable health review. The government is not addressing the core underlying issues in our health system; it continues to apply bandaid after bandaid to the problem, hoping the problem will eventually subside and people will stop listening. That is not good enough. The government has given up. It has run out of ideas. That is why it is time to change the health minister and it is time to change the government.

**HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [1.27 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the motion on the Western Australian health system and advise that I will give the government's response. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge for moving the first limb of this motion. As the parent of two young children, a child of two not so young parents, and the son-in-law of not so young parents-in-law, we have used the WA health system quite a few times over the past seven to 10 years. I want to add my personal appreciation, and also express appreciation in the strongest terms on behalf of the government, to all healthcare workers and healthcare providers in this state for their professionalism and dedication and the care and warmth they provide to patients. We are in a much better place because of the healthcare professionals we have in Western Australia.

It is worth noting that Hon Martin Aldridge moved a somewhat similar motion in non-government business in November last year. However, I want to add my thanks to the honourable member for moving the first limb of this motion. If members look at the last part of the first limb, it says, “through recent periods of great uncertainty”. Of course, that uncertainty was the COVID-19 pandemic, and our thanks should go to all the healthcare professionals for managing that grave uncertainty, especially at the start of the pandemic, and for them helping us through that period. Western Australia emerged from the pandemic in a much stronger position, as we have seen.

In the second limb, I think the facts speak for themselves, and I will talk about that later in detail in the rest of my contribution, but now I want to talk about what the Minister for Health and this government have contributed. The

Premier, Hon Roger Cook, was the health minister since we took office, but he was also Labor's health spokesperson from 2008, when he was elected to the state Parliament, through the time the Labor Party took office in March 2017, to December 2021. We are fortunate to have a Premier today who understands health, supports the health portfolio and understands our healthcare workers. We also have an amazing health minister in Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, who was instrumental in the passage of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019 in the fortieth Parliament. This government really has the dream team for health, and I want to give it a shout-out.

The honourable member opposite who moved the motion talked about the praises that the former Premier and the former health minister—the current Premier—gave during the daily press conferences during the pandemic. He used words to the effect of: we also gave the healthcare workers a state policy that was detrimental to their morale. I think if we look at the Liberal–National government's track record, the then health minister demonstrated a dictatorial leadership style when managing the ambulance ramping situation. I quote a paragraph in an article in *The West Australian*, dated 4 August 2015 —

Health Minister Kim Hames vowed yesterday to come down “like a ton of bricks” on hospitals that continued to allow ramping and said their chief executives must answer directly to him over the problem.

This kind of dictatorial leadership really did not go well for the Liberal–National government, and I want to highlight that because we really need to be mindful of the hypocrisy in some of the things being said.

Let us talk about the investment that we have seen from the budget, which was released last week. The government is investing an additional \$3.2 billion to boost hospital capacities, support the health workforce and improve patient access to care. That funding includes \$1.2 billion for core WA hospital services. This increase is in recognition of the growing demand for services in our state. Regional WA will get \$405 million for regional workforce initiatives and priority programs such as the patient assisted travel scheme and the Kimberley Ambulance Service. I want to highlight one thing. In the eight and a half years of the Barnett Liberal–National government, it did not increase the patient assisted travel scheme by a single cent. It was this Labor government that increased it from \$60 to \$100 a night in September 2021. We made an election promise during the 2021 election, and we delivered it within six months of taking office.

**Hon Darren West:** What did the coalition deliver, member? No increase?

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** It delivered nothing. No increase and no policy initiative.

Under this government, the annual health budget has also grown from \$8.8 billion in 2016–17 to \$12.8 billion in 2024–25. In the same period we have grown our healthcare workforce by about 30 per cent, and we have seen an increase of more than 4 400 full-time nursing staff, 1 600 full-time new doctors and 1 700 allied health workers. We are delivering permanency for doctors, nurses and midwives-to-patient ratio. We will be only the third state to do so. We are supporting new nursing and midwifery graduates with wraparound support in our hospitals. We are supporting hundreds of new nursing and midwifery graduates with \$1 200 off their higher education contribution scheme fees when they work in their regions. We have reached an agreement with the Australian Nursing Federation, which took out a full-page ad in *The West Australian* promoting our nurse-to-patient ratio. We did not hear any of that when the other side was in government. That shows that we are serious about it.

The health minister held a nursing and medical workforce summit to hear directly from nurses, midwives and doctors about what they want. We are implementing reforms that include more flexible rostering, streamlined recruitment processes and better support for graduates. We are listening, and we are delivering. We have added more than 700 beds, with 550 more in the pipeline. This is on top of the additional beds that have been added as part of the new women's and babies' hospital. Mental health and alcohol and drugs services will also be bolstered with a \$250 million investment. The total spending on mental health and alcohol and other drugs services has increased by 68 per cent since 2017. We are delivering a lot more for this state. The honourable member talked about ramping, and I will come to that in a little while.

At this point I want to talk about the health infrastructure investment in this state. The Cook government is investing a significant \$6.6 billion across more than 100 health projects, despite the challenges of the high-cost environment and skills shortages that we as a nation are experiencing. We have delivered the Newman Health Service, Albany Radiation Oncology Service, upgrades to Dongara Health Centre, Collie Hospital and more, including the new women's and babies' hospital at Murdoch as we have heard about from the honourable member. What is the opposition alliance's proposal? What is its alternative? It feels like the opposition alliance has a pathological tendency for negativity, and it is sick with criticism. Members opposite have no idea and no plan. They just walk into this situation with their eyes closed. It is really sad for Western Australia's democracy to have an opposition alliance in which the Liberal Party does its own thing and the Nationals WA does something quite opposite. I did not want to be really political, but I remember the disagreements between the mover of this motion and the Leader of the Liberal Party some time ago, which were well publicised in the media. In any event, I shall continue. I will come to that. I want to talk about ambulance ramping.

Several members interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I remind the house of the powerful Standing Committee on Public Administration. Hon Colin de Grussa, its deputy chair, and Hon Darren West, Hon Sandra Carr and Hon Wilson Tucker, the other committee members, worked with me to deliver the thirty-seventh report on ambulance service delivery. We gained an insight of the issues that the state is experiencing in the delivery of ambulance services. As we have seen, all the recommendations were supported by the government in its response. The government has been working hard and tirelessly to improve ambulance service delivery. Again, the facts speak for themselves. We have continued to reduce ramping, despite increased demand.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** The member may laugh, but this is the same attitude his colleagues had when they were in power. They did not take the issue seriously and they still do not take it seriously!

**Hon Darren West:** It's not funny.

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** It is not funny—absolutely not.

If we compare the figures from March 2024 with those from March 2023, we find that ramping is down by 10 per cent, and there is a whopping 40 per cent decrease when compared with the March 2022 figures. At the same time, we had an increase of 5.4 per cent in ambulance arrivals compared with the same period last year. Older patient presentations have increased by five per cent, and we have seen a 27 per cent reduction over the six months to March 2024 compared with the same period in the previous year. We have seen the government's actions produce real outcomes. If members want to talk about the alleged mismanagement, they have to look at the track record of the Liberal–National government. That mob has no credibility in this space. Members opposite should be reminded of their contribution during their time in government.

Before I turn to that, we heard the mover talk about a cut to the health system. I do not understand where that is coming from, but I remind members that, back in 2014, the federal Liberal government cut \$300 million from WA Health. Peter Dutton, the then federal health minister, claimed that it was trying to increase funding to the health system at a sustainable rate. That was not sustainable—\$300 million was cut.

The Australian Medical Association criticised the state's health funding in 2015. As reported in an ABC article on 15 May 2015, the AMA president, Michael Gannon, said —

... the 1.3 per cent increase for health services is actually a cut in real terms, as it is below the consumer price index.

“CPI is running at around 3 per cent, medical CPI is a lot higher than that ...

“Technology improves every year but that comes at a cost.

“This will not deal with problems we've already got in the health system, ramping of ambulances —

That sounds familiar, honourable member —

and a mental health system that's just failing.”

Two health ministers in the former Liberal–National government in this state, Hon Dr Kim Hames and Hon John Day, had a very tough time in managing ramping. I have so much material, honourable member, but I have only two and a half minutes left. This is the attitude demonstrated by the former Liberal–National government.

An article dated 10 June 2015 states —

Dr Hames told a budget estimates committee hearing he had “lost his temper” after analysing data which showed no clear correlation between high ramping periods and the number of patients or bed availability.

“You find days of high ramping with less presentations than a day, a year ago. So ramping is worse with less patients and more availability of beds ...

“So I've given up. I've lost my temper on this.”

He gave up, and so did the Liberal–National government. Let us not forget about the mismanagement of Perth Children's Hospital and the issues that plagued that hospital until we took charge and fixed the issues. Let us not forget about the IT problems at Fiona Stanley Hospital and the mismanagement by the Liberal–National government. Let us not forget about that. As I said, the Liberal–National alliance seems to have a pathological tendency towards negativity and criticising for the sake of criticising.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** We never give up, and we never give in to challenges. The Liberal–National government gave up on a range of issues, like MAX light rail, but we do not.

*Amendment to Motion*

**Hon PIERRE YANG:** I disagree with the second limb of the motion and therefore I move without notice —

To delete paragraph (b) and insert —

- (b) notes the record investment and work to boost the healthcare workforce by the Cook government and acknowledges the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on health systems across the country.

*Visitors — Edith Cowan University Study Tour Group*

**The PRESIDENT:** While the amendment is being circulated, let me welcome to the Legislative Council gallery the Edith Cowan University study tour group. You are very welcome and we hope you find the debate interesting and engaging.

Members, the question is that the amendment be agreed to.

*Debate Resumed*

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [1.48 pm]: I thought that some humility might break out in the government today. The Leader of the House made it quite clear in her directive to government members that they need to be a more humble government, with the ability to accept its errors, misjudgements and performance. We just had a performance by one of the two parliamentary secretaries serving the Minister for Health and 95 per cent of the contribution was about the former Liberal–National government and the former federal coalition government. They did not even address the issues of performance. In my remarks in moving the motion, I warned that simply throwing more money at the problem is not going to address the systemic issues that exist in our system. Members opposite have proven over nearly two terms of government that throwing more money at the problem is not fixing the problem. Hon Kyle McGinn should google ambulance ramping! It is out of control. I reminded members in my contribution about the words of the government’s own sustainable health review. It states —

Spending on health in WA has more than doubled in the past 10 years yet outcomes in population health and acute care in WA have not improved at the same rate.

The amendment before us states —

... notes the record investment and work to boost the healthcare workforce by the Cook government and acknowledges the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on health systems across the country.

That completely flies in the face of the executive summary of the government’s own election commitment—the report of the sustainable health review.

This amendment to the motion cannot be supported. It should not be supported. It is clear that this government is still living in denial. It is living in denial of its performance to the most vulnerable people of Western Australia, who do not have equity in access to health care. Their life expectancy and health outcomes are still being driven by their postcode and social status, amongst a range of other factors. But, according to the Cook government, it is not a massive failure. It is not a crisis, as government members described it in the lead-up to 2008. According to the government, it is doing a great job. In fact, the only measure by which it is doing so well is that it is making a record investment. Of course, this is a nonsense. I would like someone to point to a budget in which we see declining expenses in the health portfolio. I would like somebody to do that, because what we see year after year is that governments of all persuasions are spending more money on health. That is exactly the problem that the sustainable health review is warning about. If we simply focus on acute care and hospitals rather than focusing on chronic conditions and illnesses and investing in primary and preventive health care, we are going to continue to spend more and more every year. At some point, the health budget is going to be head-to-head in competition with the Metronet budget. I am not sure what the Saffioti government will do then. Will it choose health or will it choose Metronet? What will the Saffioti government choose? This is the problem we are heading towards, running simple arguments like the parliamentary secretary has —

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** — in his pathetic amendment to this motion. It cannot be supported.

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [1.52 pm]: I understand that a few other members are going to speak, so I will stand up, look back at a week ago and just say “ditto” to this, because that is exactly what has happened again. I make a couple of points. Firstly, motions on notice give a unique opportunity for individual parties to move a motion, not for the government of the day to take ownership of that motion. They allow for individual parties to have their motion and for their motion to be put to the will of the house. That is the way it is done. It has always been done that way, until the Labor Party got complete dominance.

**Hon Stephen Dawson:** Not when Helen Morton was here!



**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Absolute garbage.

**Hon Stephen Dawson** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** As I said last week in the debate on the motion moved by the Greens, if government members want to have a vote on this, they can just vote no. This motion has been moved by the Nationals WA. Do members know how many motions the Nats get every year? They get two. The government gets eight. The government wants not only its own eight motions, but also the National Party's two, as well. Another one is that the government has taken away the Greens' authority. This goes on every single time.

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** You know what, will you be quiet? President, with all due respect.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Order, member. I think if there is a need to call order, I will. Hon Peter Collier.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Thank you. I say to members that this is going to be a different chamber after the next election—it really is. I say to the new members here that this is not how it is done. New members think that this is how the house operates, but it is not. Removing the authority from an individual or a party is not the way it should be done. If a government member wants to vote on a motion, they should not remove the authority of that party and assume control over it, because, yet again, they diminish this chamber. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt will know this full well, because, of course, the Greens have been in this chamber for as long as I have, and we have always worked cooperatively and collaboratively. In the last term of government, we had seven different parties in opposition. As I have said before, trying to work with those parties is like herding goldfish, but we do it to try to get some sort of positive outcome. I say to the Labor Party: if they win again—heaven help us if they do—they are not going to have a majority in the upper house. They can try their funny little games then and see how it goes. They should put their colours to the mast then and continue to destroy the fabric of this place and see how it goes, because they will come in for a hell of a shock, I can tell them. Believe it or not, some people still believe in the conventions of this institution.

I say to the members opposite who have just come in this term that I am really disappointed for them, particularly those members who will have only one term in this place, and there will be several of them. They will leave with a misguided notion about how the Legislative Council operates. They came in here ideally thinking that it was a place where we review legislation, allow for alternative viewpoints and allow for minority parties to have a say, and not be consumed by the dominance of a party that got in under the cover of the COVID pandemic. Yet again, we have a situation in which the Labor Party, with a massive number of motions on notice, not only chooses to have its eight motions, but also says, "We will take that will off every other party; that is what we are going to do." Members should have the courage of their convictions. If they do not like the motion, they can just vote against it, but do not take the motion from the minor party. The Nats can move two motions this year. This is one of them, and members opposite have now removed that authority. The Liberal Party will be joining with our alliance partners to most definitely vote against this amendment.

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [1.57 pm]: I think that any reasonable, diligent member of this chamber who attempts to maintain a modicum of intellectual honesty in the way they comport themselves in this house will see the shameful, duplicitous, cowardly scheme moved by the second Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health, which effectively attempts to gaslight the entire population of Western Australia and deny the reality that the system is in crisis. The system is in crisis upon the government's own measure—upon the measure set by its Premier. Beyond the scope of this obviously disgraceful, cowardly, deceitful, alternate motion, I very much worry that this will be the standard after the winter recess, when the pontifex maximus of the Labor Party will be Hon Pierre Yang—the Labor Party does not want to do its preselections before the winter recess, because I know a number of members opposite will be disgruntled—and not imbibe the kind of herd mentality that is necessary to undergird an appalling abuse —

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, member!

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** It is appalling abuse!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order, member! Order!

**Hon Matthew Swinbourn:** Point of order, President.

**The PRESIDENT:** Please sit down, member. I called order several times before Hon Matthew Swinbourn sought the call. Let me deal with the reason that I called order, which was to encourage the honourable member to bring his comments back to the content of the proposed amendment. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General, I assume with a point of order.

*Point of Order*

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN:** Thank you, President. I think you have raised the issue with the honourable member that I wished to raise with you.

**The PRESIDENT:** Thank you, parliamentary secretary. Again, I remind all members to ensure that their contribution is focused on the amendment before the chamber.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Thank you, President; I will be absolutely guided by your direction.

My outrage is directed at the very substance of this amendment to the motion. It is a disgrace, it cannot stand, it must be resisted, and it shall be.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [2.00 pm]:** Moving this amendment to the motion represents one very cogent reason why the entire population of health service workers hold Parliament in contempt. We, who stand at the frontline, have to deal with the problems mentioned in the first part of the motion on a regular basis. We are the ones who watch our health service being abused, maligned and mistreated. It is praised when it serves Parliament but vilified when it does not serve Parliament. An understanding of our work goes completely unrecognised. This amendment has been brought forward to try to save the present government from shame, but I have to tell members that from the perspective of health workers, both sides of Parliament—in fact, all sides—deserve the same contempt and shame, because we have a failing health service. Anyone who works in that system will tell members that. Modifying the words of the motion will not change anything, not even by one whit.

We have a health service in which the costs are expanding. There has been a 45 per cent increase since 2017, according to government figures. As Hon Martin Aldridge said, year on year, budget on budget, this has resulted in increases, and rightly so, because the costs of health care are increasing. I have been saying since about 1994 that although health service costs are increasing, the wellness benefits to people are decreasing. In fact, what we now know is that the life expectancy of people born now will be less than the life expectancy of people born in the generation before me. By that measure, we are failing.

What we are doing here, in this place, is playing with words. What the health service does not need is words. What the current “sickness service”, as I call it, needs is fundamental action, which I will deal with in the debate on the motion. This amendment to the motion is once again a travesty of democracy. I share the points of view of Hon Tjorn Sibma. It is a shame and a scandal, and probably reflects, to some degree, a measure of the fear of a government that likes to highlight the benefits of the health system but turns a blind eye, in public at least, to the dark side of the health system.

I would have liked, both last week and this week, to have debated an untouched motion put by either major party, the Greens or the Nationals, so that we could freely and openly debate a point of view and not have it skewed into supporting one particular point of view supported by an overwhelming majority on one side. A guaranteed result like that, fundamentally, means nothing, because what we are looking at here is just a blanket, arithmetical trumping of views. That is not democracy. That is not serving our health service.

**Hon Darren West:** We were put here by the people.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** Honourable member, it will go to the people. I am talking about the people in the health service, whom I represent.

**Hon Darren West:** Maybe have some new ideas.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** I am glad the honourable member mentioned that. He is referencing my speech. I will come to that.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Hon Dr Brian Walker has the call.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** Thank you, Acting President. That very point is something that I will reference in my speech on this motion. I reject the concept of amending the motion.

**HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.04 pm]:** I will be brief, because I know that a number of members want to comment on this attempt by the government to again not face up to the criticism that others might want to give it, showing its weakness in facing any of our criticism or arguing against it. It is pretty simple: if members opposite do not agree with the motion, they could vote against it. They could argue why that is the case and what is wrong with the motion. Instead, they are taking the weak and cowardly approach of amending the motion brought forward by other members of Parliament for debate. That is not in the spirit of the Parliament nor is it in the interests of Western Australia or the Western Australian people. If members opposite cannot handle the debate, they should not be here. I will be voting against this amendment.

**HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [2.06 pm]:** It is a shame. I will be voting against the amendment as well. I had an amazing story to tell you guys that would have been really useful to listen to, so that you could know

what somebody is going through in the healthcare system at the moment and the challenges that people from regional Western Australia face in accessing services in Perth. Unfortunately, I am now not allowed to provide that information.

Several members interjected.

**Hon LOUISE KINGSTON:** I am voting against the amendment, as I said. As other members have mentioned, it is really useful to hear other points of view. I really like hearing everybody's point of view so that I can learn and frame my decisions based on what is really happening out there. When an amendment like this is moved, it actually stops that information from being shared. That is really unfortunate. In a world that has so many diverging views on stuff, it is really important that those views are heard and shared with everybody. I will vote against the amendment.

**HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [2.07 pm]:** It is very disappointing indeed to see the behaviour of the government on this. There is a quote about liberty that states that if liberty means anything at all —

Several members interjected.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** Just listen for a change! If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear. We have a government that refuses to hear from others in this place. This chamber is a debating chamber. It was set up to enable the fair representation of the broad views of the community. Who spoke those words? It was George Orwell. By the government's own definition, the DNA of this government and the way in which it operates is Orwellian. Government members just cannot bear the truth.

Several members interjected.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** The distortion of the ambulance ramping figures by the member opposite was breathtaking. I could not believe what I heard. It was just a complete and utter distortion!

**Hon Kyle McGinn:** Turn it down!

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** The Orwellian nature of this government is breathtaking. I cannot believe that this government goes to that level of stuff. What a disgrace!

*Point of Order*

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** The house was almost in silence, but the honourable member kept shouting at us. Perhaps if he made his comments to you, we could get on with the debate.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** There is no point of order. I urge the honourable member to address his remarks through the chair.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** Thank you, Acting President; I will. If I had the respect of government members, I would speak quietly and in a way that would allow them to listen to the facts, but I do not expect to get their respect.

Here are some facts. In February 2017, there were 715 hours of ambulance ramping. In July 2022, there were 6 972 hours of ambulance ramping. I will give the government a bonus for one thing; COVID slowed down the treatment of people in emergency departments. We were on the tail end of ambulance ramping at that point. Members opposite should go to the website to see the latest data. There have been 3 502 hours of ambulance ramping in the last month.

*Point of Order*

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Acting President, the honourable member continues to shout at us in this place. He should make his comments to you. He does not need to shout at us. We are listening in silence now. The only time we are responding is when the honourable member shouts at us. It is difficult to hear ourselves think.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** There is no point of order. Hon Neil Thomson, I can hear you quite plainly in your normal voice.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** Thank you, Acting President.

The fact is that this government does not want to listen to the facts.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Take a seat, please, Hon Neil Thomson. I can hear Hon Neil Thomson in his normal voice when there is no chitchat from the government side of the chamber.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** This government does not want to hear the facts. It would not matter what voice I use because this government does not want to hear the facts. There have been 3 502 hours of ambulance ramping in the last month, compared with 715 hours of ambulance ramping in the last month of the Liberal–National government. This government distorts the facts. The way the budget papers have been written is an embarrassment because

they refer to a reduction in ambulance ramping from that ridiculously high figure of 6 972 hours. This government refuses to listen to the facts. Here we have this Orwellian amendment to change the very nature of the motion. The government will not listen. I will say this one more time. If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear. This government does not want to hear the truth.

*Division*

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken, the Acting President (Hon Steve Martin) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (17)

Hon Klara Andric	Hon Jackie Jarvis	Hon Martin Pritchard	Hon Pierre Yang
Hon Dan Caddy	Hon Ayor Makur Chuot	Hon Rosie Sahanna	Hon Peter Foster ( <i>Teller</i> )
Hon Stephen Dawson	Hon Kyle McGinn	Hon Matthew Swinbourn	
Hon Kate Doust	Hon Shelley Payne	Hon Dr Sally Talbot	
Hon Lorna Harper	Hon Stephen Pratt	Hon Darren West	

Noes (9)

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

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Pairs

Hon Sue Ellery	Hon Dr Steve Thomas
Hon Samantha Rowe	Hon Nick Goiran

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and passed.

*Motion, as Amended*

**HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral)** [2.16 pm]: I think people will understand where I am going to come from with the amended motion—what an outrage.

*Point of Order*

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN:** I have a copy of the standing orders. Standing order 41 refers to reflections on the vote of the Council. We just voted, and I think the member contravened that standing order with the very few words he spoke by reflecting on the vote of the Council.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** There is no point of order. The member had just opened his mouth, but I ask him to reflect on that standing order.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** What an outrage. For a full reflection on that standing order, I am speaking about the motion. It is an outrage. I am talking about the motion, not the vote. What an outrage that the government is congratulating itself on its performance of complete and utter failure in the health system and when ambulance ramping is at record levels. It is patting itself on the back. It is an absolute outrage. It is an outrage that it is congratulating itself given the impact its performance has had on early childhood. In February, my colleague Hon Donna Faragher ably asked questions about the number of children waiting to see a paediatrician; indeed, she has been raising that issue for a long time. Currently, 9 762 children are waiting to see a paediatrician and 4 288 children are waiting to see a speech pathologist. Of those 9 762 children waiting to see a paediatrician, 8 308 are of primary school age. The number of children on the waitlist waiting to see a paediatrician has jumped from 6 120 last year. That is the outrage about this government's performance in the health system. We have seen how the government has linked itself in an outrageous way and talked about gratitude. Of course, everybody in this place has immense gratitude for frontline health workers. I have been the beneficiary of their amazing work. When I was overseas, I got a call in the middle of the night because my daughter was in intensive care after suffering a serious back injury and was at risk of being in a wheelchair for the rest of her life. As much as I could, every day for the next three to four months I was at her hospital bedside. I observed the amazing work of the frontline health workers. We can all share these examples. The government linked itself to hide its terrible performance behind the goodwill and great performance of our health workers. It is an outrage. This government should be so embarrassed. It should give up and call an early election. I know that the people of Western Australia would throw out this government tomorrow. This is a disgrace, joining up the hard work of those health workers to the self-congratulations of this government. This is an outrage. As I said earlier, we have seen the distorted numbers. I do not think Hon Pierre Yang, who responded to the motion, read anything other than speaking points from the WA Labor Party.

If he did, he would have a different perspective. He would question the performance of the Minister for Health, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson. He would raise questions in the party room. He would argue for change and for the Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, to stop focusing on her pet projects.

I am hoping, as Hon Martin Aldridge said, that after the preselection process is over, some members opposite will stop the group thinking that we see constantly. They never have an original thought. We have seen that from the way that little tight group operates, as I said earlier. I quoted George Orwell. It is in the DNA of the Labor Party to slavishly follow the speaking points of all the media advisers who swing around in the ministerial offices, trying to put a spin on the failure of the WA Labor government. It is an outrage.

The hardworking frontline workers in my region have had to stand up and take a risk. The workers in Tom Price have taken a risk and said, “This is not good enough.” Band-aids do not fix a broken health system. Three years ago, this government promised a new hospital in Tom Price. What has it done? It has done nothing. There has been no progress on the ground. I am still waiting to hear what is happening with the upgrades to Meekatharra Hospital. We saw the issues relating to Laverton Hospital. An article in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* of 11 May 2024 stated —

Funding for the much-anticipated Laverton Hospital in this year’s WA Budget has been met with a backlash, with the shire president “sick and tired” of waiting for the project to start.

Plans for a new Laverton Hospital have been in the works for years, with \$28 million dedicated to deliver the project in the 2024-25 State Budget after it was first funded more than eight years ago.

Then minister Hon John Carey got up to spruik the system, and there was more criticism from hardworking shire president Patrick Hill, who represents the region.

If Hon Kyle McGinn —

**Hon Kyle McGinn** interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** Order, members.

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** If Hon Kyle McGinn did half of what he says he does in this place —

*Point of Order*

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** It is now becoming impossible to listen to the member on his feet give his contribution with continual interjections by Hon Kyle McGinn, who just cannot seem to help himself.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Thank you, honourable member. There is no point of order. I give the call to Hon Neil Thomson. Please direct your remarks through the chair.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon NEIL THOMSON:** Patrick Hill, the very capable shire president of Laverton, was reported as saying —

“We just keep getting the promises, promises, promises and there are other ways they should be looking at it to get it done urgently.”

Cr Hill said he heard from locals every day who asked him when the hospital would be built.

“It’s just unfortunate that people have Laverton are just sick and tired of hearing rhetoric and excuses of why it’s not built,” ...

“It’s way overdue for a rebuild ... everything’s antique—the wiring, the plumbing, everything’s outdated.”

Cr Hill said it was “sickening” there had been no progress on the build despite funding dedications from all levels of government throughout the years.

This typifies the Labor government’s outcomes. Yes, more money has been put in the budget. I saw that, and I was going to get to the bottom of it. I believe that \$60 million has been earmarked for funding the Child and Adolescent Health Service, only because of the incredible pressure from Hon Donna Faragher. But the problem is that we do not even know the detail. We will find out more—we will get to the bottom of it—because this government has a pattern of failing to deliver. Members on this side of the house apply pressure and we get a response but the government still fails to deliver and disappoints the people of Western Australia.

This is an outrage. This government is failing on health. At the last minute, just 12 months out from the next election, we saw the government putting some band-aids on this issue, saying that it was doing something and then it tried to silence members of the opposition from speaking about it in this place. It will apply some bandaid measures to paper over the cracks of neglect and disinvestment that this state has seen in health services across Western Australia.

In closing, I want to express my personal thanks to all those wonderful health practitioners who served my family, as I know every single member in this place would do. I want to express my gratitude on behalf of the people of Western Australia to the greatest extent I can because I know that our health workers put so much time, effort and emotion into the job that they take on. They are incredible star performers in our public service, along with those in the private sector who provide support. I want to express that and put on the record that I care for them. I know

that they care for the people of Western Australia. We are very grateful for their service. We are not grateful for the neglect and disinvestment that this Labor government has put into the health system. We are not grateful for the attempts of this government to silence the voices of the many hundreds of health practitioners and the people who receive the services they provide who experience the disappointment of waiting for the most basic of services in this state, the richest state in Australia.

**HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West)** [2.27 pm]: Today I am going to tell members a story about the wonderful staff at Fiona Stanley Hospital, where my husband is currently receiving treatment for prostate cancer. He has had a really wonderful experience and we are very blessed to be able to access those types of services in Western Australia. But it comes at a cost to regional people because they have to come to Perth for treatment and they have to stay in Perth for follow-up treatment because it is not available in regional Western Australia. These are basic services, like the removal of a catheter and physiotherapy. That is an absolute failing. That is why I jumped up earlier to vote against the amendment—because these stories are so important for those opposite to hear so we can improve the healthcare system, the intent of the original motion.

I have friends who have had dialysis treatment whom I have spoken about in this place. They are in exactly the same situation. We introduced a program in 2008 called royalties for regions, which has been absolutely decimated by this government and not delivered into —

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** It's on life support.

**Hon LOUISE KINGSTON:** Absolutely, if we look at the budget.

It was developed to deliver these services and to ensure, as this state grew, the prosperity of this state that was growing through royalties and mining resources, which come from regional Western Australia, was delivered back into regional Western Australia. Since 2017, we have seen that this fund has been decimated and paid into areas of consolidated revenue, which it was never designed to do. That is just not fair.

Today, I will highlight some of the renal dialysis statistics for regional Western Australia. This comes from the *WA Country Health Service kidney disease strategy 2021–26*. The WA Country Health Service dialysis activity in 2019–20 was 15 per cent in the south west, five per cent in the great southern, 40 per cent in the Kimberley, 13 per cent in the midwest, 14 per cent in the Pilbara, and 13 per cent in the goldfields. On average, patients in regional Western Australia have to wait 174 days, or nearly six months, for a dialysis chair. The cost of dialysis is significant. If people go to hospital, it costs \$80 000 per person annually. If it is done by a satellite dialysis unit, it costs \$65 000, but if it is done at home, it costs only \$49 000. If we look at the cost to the healthcare system of not delivering that service regionally or locally, we can see why the healthcare system is in so much trouble. Hearing these stories, it makes perfect sense to be able to change the way things are delivered in regional Western Australia. The age-standardised rates of hospitalisations are significant as well, as is the average number of country patients waiting to return home for dialysis in regional hospitals. Only 104 patients receive home dialysis. How much better would it be if there were more investment in that area so people could access the service locally?

I will move on to the situation in two of our country hospitals at the moment. As recently as yesterday, we saw that WA will lose another maternity facility in Bunbury due to staff shortages. This is repeated across all sectors of the community and is compounded by a chronic lack of housing, rising living costs and a government asleep at the wheel when the state has the biggest surplus it has ever seen and royalties for regions have been decimated, as I said already. An ABC report states —

St John of God Hospital in Bunbury will stop offering maternity services from next month thanks to a shortage of specialist medical staff ...

In a statement, St John of God Health Care said the service has experienced a chronic shortage of midwives and there were not enough obstetricians, GP-obstetricians and paediatricians available locally.

Speaking with ABC Radio ... chief executive officer Jeffrey Williams said staff shortages had proved to be the service's biggest challenge.

“Despite our best efforts and intention to bring people to ... Australia from overseas, we've just been really struggling to attract people,” he said.

... the private hospital had been working closely with its public counterpart about transitioning women to Bunbury Regional Hospital.

He said 96 pregnant women currently scheduled to have their babies at St John's would have to move to the public hospital or give birth in Perth.

That further highlights the situation in the healthcare system. When a hospital cannot even attract staff and be able to get staff from overseas, it tells us that a major issue needs to be addressed and a solution needs to be found.

Another situation is the Albany Health Campus redevelopment. A decade after Albany Health Campus opened under the Liberal–National government, a business case for an expansion that will cost in the order of \$320 million is waiting for funding, despite an inability to meet demand. There is nothing in the budget forecast to help the

Albany Health Campus, and it is in a dire situation. It has similar problems in attracting staff. It has a significant number of vacancies at the moment. With such an enormous surplus, it defies logic. I go to what Hon Dr Brian Walker said about the declining healthcare situation in Australia, one of the richest countries in the world. If we cannot get it right and do not focus on —

**Hon Darren West:** It is not a money issue. The money is there.

**Hon LOUISE KINGSTON:** It does not matter. We need to focus on finding solutions. That is why I raise these issues—so the government can think about what is said and say, “Here we go. Let’s come up with a solution”. Bagging each other from each side of the chamber does nothing to find solutions.

**Hon Darren West:** With respect, member, you have got no solutions. What’s the solution?

**Hon LOUISE KINGSTON:** How about —

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** Members, order! Please direct your remarks through the chair.

**Hon LOUISE KINGSTON:** My apologies. As we come up to an election, clearly we will develop and deliver our policies. There would be absolutely no point in developing and providing them now. That is how an election works. It is pretty novel, but the Labor Party does exactly the same thing when it is in opposition. We have our ideas. We will definitely focus on how to fix the problems that have been created by the decimation of royalties for regions. That will be our major focus to deliver services to regional Western Australia.

**HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan) [2.35 pm]:** I rise today to not support the motion moved by Hon Martin Aldridge.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** You will not support your government’s amendment?

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** No; I am going to support it. I support the amended motion by my colleague —

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** Hold on! Hold on! I am getting there. I support the amended motion moved by my parliamentary colleague Hon Pierre Yang, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health.

As for the honourable members of the other side criticising our government, I wonder whether a coalition government could have managed such a healthcare system, especially during the last few years and considering the challenges that the opposition faced during its time. I do not think that the honourable member has ever been in government. I am just talking about it. It is essential to the question of the capability of the state government that you guys could not maintain what we have done.

We can all admit that there have been certain issues and challenges around the world with the healthcare system. We know that our healthcare professionals have faced massive challenges; we can admit that. It is the case in many industries that people have presented with post-COVID burnout; we can admit that. Actually, I rise to emphasise the remarkable achievements of our government and the investment that the Cook Labor government has made in the healthcare sector. I also want to recognise and commend the Minister for Health, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson, for her exceptional leadership in guiding our public health system. I also want to thank the healthcare workers because we would not be here without them. They do incredible work, and we appreciate them. We can all agree—on this side and on the other side—that they do a fantastic job, and we have to commend them for their fantastic work.

Coming back to supporting my colleague, I say that our commitment to ensuring good quality, affordable and accessible health care for all Western Australians has been our priority as a government. I am proud to also mention some of our key accomplishments and investments in our healthcare system. As my colleague Hon Pierre Yang mentioned earlier, one accomplishment is recruitment.

Actually, before I go there, I want to give an answer to my colleague Hon Neil Thomson about Tom Price Hospital. The Cook Labor government remains committed to the redevelopment of Tom Price Hospital. Changes in building market conditions have resulted in significant cost pressures that continue to have an impact on a number of infrastructure projects across the state.

**Hon Martin Aldridge** interjected.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** Honourable member, I am on my feet. I normally do not interrupt you.

The WA Country Health Service and its dedicated and capable staff continue to deliver safe, quality clinical services at Tom Price Hospital under a model of care that is similar to hospitals with a similar size and location. I will give members opposite an answer, before I move to some of the things we have achieved. The recruitment of over 4 400 new nurses has occurred during this government’s time in office; 1 800 FTE new doctors have been recruited since 2017. I am thankful for the skilled migration program. However, one member in this Parliament does not appreciate the opportunity that skilled migration could provide Australia. Without skilled migrants, we would not have the opportunity to have 1 800 new doctors in our state. Despite a booming population in Western Australia, the government has still been able to manage the healthcare system. As we know in my community, the growth comes

with challenges. As our Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, mentioned the other day, 94 000 people arriving in our state is another challenge compared with the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we are still trying our very best as a government.

I am a privileged person in comparison with where I come from and I always like to be grateful. I am grateful to live in Western Australia. The healthcare system here is amazing compared with the system where I come from. I do not know about other honourable members, but I am very grateful to live somewhere with a good healthcare system. I will share a personal story about one of my nephews. He was sick with malaria back home and went to a local medical centre. Cases like that arise every day; we do not have a lot of those cases here. Three weeks ago I lost my nephew in South Sudan due to medical negligence. When I stand and speak about the health system, I mean everything I say. My grandmother in South Sudan did not sleep in a bed like the beds our hospital patients are in. That is my own personal story. I am proud to say that I am part of this government that listens and tries to make a difference for all people in Western Australia.

Incredibly, the government has also reduced elective surgery waiting times by 31 per cent from the figure at the height of the pandemic. An additional 709 new beds have been opened in public hospitals over the past three years, which is something the crossbench has advocated for. The government listens to people in the community and we have been doing our job, leading to a 27 per cent decrease in ambulance ramping in the past three years. There has been a substantial increase in spending on healthcare services, surpassing the national average spend by 14 per cent, resulting in over \$10 billion in additional healthcare expenditure over the past three years.

Another incredible thing the government has done is allocate \$1.2 billion for public hospitals in the current budget alone. An amount of \$405 million has been allocated to health funding for Western Australia's regions, including additional funds for regional workforce development in healthcare and priority programs. I could go on and on because members opposite do not acknowledge what our government has done. I understand it is difficult not being in government, but sometimes it is good to acknowledge the work the government is doing. Constituents of the members opposite may not see some of the achievements the government is delivering, particularly in the current budget, if the members do not pass on the right messages. The opposition can criticise us, but I would appreciate it if honourable members opposite would pass on the information to their communities.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Pass me your notes and I will circulate them.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** The honourable member has the budget right in front of him and he can circulate the notes. I come from a minority background. One of my jobs every day is to make sure that my people are informed. That might mean that I have to sit down and help some of the vulnerable community members who cannot access student fees; I have done that many times. Sometimes even when I am at home, I try to do some of that work in my own time to make sure I am supporting vulnerable members of the community. Instead of being negative, the honourable member should do the work and pass the information to his constituents. It is really important.

The government has allocated \$61 million to the youth mental health taskforce, which is my favourite allocation. I am proud to see this massive investment from our government to address the challenges faced by our young people, especially after COVID, and of the mental health services that have been allocated to them, the future leaders of our community.

An allocation of \$260 million has been made to drug, alcohol and mental health services, along with an additional \$39 million expenditure to support child development, the most vulnerable members of our community; that is amazing. I am sure other members will support this fantastic initiative.

An amount of \$839 million has been allocated to new healthcare infrastructure spending, bringing the cumulative total to \$3.3 billion, creating new jobs in our community, of which we should all be proud. It will support the local workforce and economic security in Western Australia. A record \$3.2 billion investment has been made to boost the health system capacity. A further 550 hospital beds are set to be delivered, not including those in the new women's and babies' hospital in Murdoch—another fantastic initiative. The government has been criticised for moving that hospital to Murdoch, but when talking about the challenges we face in healthcare, this is the best thing we could do to deliver quickly to people at the most needed time. We have a growing population and we need this hospital to be built so that we can cater for people in Western Australia. The government has committed \$155 million to improve emergency access and reduce ambulance ramping; \$173 million to the redevelopment of Bunbury Hospital; \$15 million to deliver an MRI unit at Hedland Health Campus; and close to \$9 million to expand child development services in regional Western Australia.

These investments and commitments underscore the government's dedication to improving healthcare outcomes for all Western Australians. The impact of these initiatives is evident in our communities and demonstrates a genuine and holistic commitment from our government to the wellbeing of our citizens in the state.

In conclusion—I will give others a chance to speak on the amendment to the motion—the Cook Labor government's dedicated and strategic vision has driven Western Australia to lead the nation in health care, delivering meaningful and positive change for the people of Western Australia. I thank Hon Pierre Yang for moving to amend the motion



because we agree with the first part of the motion that acknowledges the healthcare industry; however, the second part of the motion that criticises the government for not doing the work is not right. I again ask the opposition to share to their constituents the information from the budget so they can benefit —

Several members interjected.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** Yes, but opposition members ran for an election.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Not for the Labor Party.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** Let me finish my statement. Opposition members ran for an election to represent —  
Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Steve Martin):** Order! Members, Hon Makur—I am sorry.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** It is Hon Ayor Makur Chuot.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Exactly. Please direct your remarks through the chair.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** On that point, I would really appreciate it if members of this Parliament could have a coffee with me so they can practise saying my name. My name is spelt Hon Ayor Makur Chuot. Members can call me Ayor when we are outside, but, respectfully, if we are sitting in this chamber, please call me Hon Ayor Makur Chuot. Hon Louise Kingston could not acknowledge me with my title or my full name. I know that I have passed from the other topic, but I make this statement because it is really important.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** You actually made the same mistake.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** I will not make a member's statement, but I am doing this because the Acting President could not pronounce my name.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** You called the minister honourable Amber-Jade.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** I know what she said.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** I am talking about what you said!

**The ACTING PRESIDENT:** Members, please.

**Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT:** Anyway, again, I go back to my closing remark. The reason I said it earlier is because it is important to tell the message. The opposition ran in an election to come to this chamber to represent the people of Western Australia, and they need to benefit from our budget as well. Even though members opposite are not in government, their constituents will benefit from our budget, and that is the truth.

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [2.50 pm]:** I want to continue my remarks considering the amended motion. I thank Hon Pierre Yang for doing this and also Hon Ayor Makur Chuot because they have actually put into words my first point. Our healthcare system is a failing healthcare system. We see, budget on budget, increasing amounts of money being devoted to it. Both sides of the house cannot not do it because if the government stops spending and stops increasing the health budget, people will die. There is no alternative for the government except to increase spending. Hon Ayor Makur Chuot had a very nice list of how the government is spending that money. That is great. It does not actually change the fact that, at the ground level, we are not getting any better.

I remember listening to the inaugural speeches about how much money was being spent on mental health services. My feeling then was that we do not actually know that not one single cent of that money is being experienced at the ground level in enhanced patient care. We cannot not fund the health service. It is a failing system. That is what has basically been stated here today. I can actually agree with the amended motion; it is true. The government is spending more money. Everybody is spending more money, and it is not doing any good. The government is spending on infrastructure and staff. It is an uphill battle. I do not need to mention moving King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women to a new hospital. I agree that the whole thing was very suspect, but the bottom line is that a hospital has to be built.

Just yesterday, I had calls from patients about services in Bunbury. Apparently, maternal care will cease at St John of God Bunbury Hospital. I think there are six or eight weeks to actually change the whole thing over. It is because they cannot recruit any staff. This conflicts with this wonderful feel-good story. I can point to hospitals I have worked at. At Newman Hospital, for example, services were stopped a long time ago. I worked at Merredin Hospital, in the wheatbelt. It had no maternity services. They had been deliberately scaled back. I could go on for hours about why that has happened, but the bottom line is that service does not happen there.

**Hon Darren West:** It's not deliberate.

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** Merredin Hospital is not a good example. I quite agree with the member. But that is the fact of my experience there.

There are underlying problems for both parties that are not being addressed. With all the money chucked at the health service, there is no improvement. I ask all of us here to learn how to offer solutions. I have heard members on the other side ask—it is a very right call—what are your solutions? There are a number of things that we ought to be doing. The first is to recognise the truth of what I have said. Recognise the truth that we can spend as much as we want, but we will not actually enhance our quality of life. For example, we could look at mental health problems and neurodiversity of the troubled youth at Banksia Hill. Why look at that? We look at that because there is a whole host of causes and none of which are addressed until it is too late. It is not until they are in prison, or just before they get there, that we try to fix that. I got a call from a colleague of mine just on Monday about a similar thing. How do we fix this problem? We are a generation too late. We have to do some real solid work.

There are a couple of reasons why costs are going up. The first one we have really got to look at is waste. If members look at any healthcare system in Australia—I commend Hon Ayor Makur Chuot—it is true that the service here is as good as I have come across in the world. It is true. I would rather be here than the US. Does that mean there is nothing to be done? On the contrary, we have a huge problem. The amount of wastage in our health service is enormous and is not being addressed. Let us look at this properly. Let us take the health bureaucrats out of the system because they are the problem. A lot of our wastage occurs because of the bureaucrats—the multiplying bureaucrats. They actually tend to make the whole system more difficult. If only we looked very closely at where every single dollar is being spent and stopped the waste.

The next question is: how can we spend more efficiently? How can we do things without wasting money? These are things that need to be addressed, again, not at that health bureaucratic level but at the level of healthcare practitioners and listening to them. If members had all the budget in the world and had to keep it as tight as possible, what would they do to improve the system? Listen to the people who provide that service. Listen to them, not the health bureaucrats, because they do not know how to do that. There is not one single health bureaucratic I know of—there may be others—who has ever had to manage a private company or be careful with the income, the revenue, that it generated. They are all managing a budget. They all care about how they manage the budget and how to prevent getting sued. Those are the only two things that healthcare bureaucrats are concerned about. I can point to any health system in our state in which that is true.

Thirdly, and probably most importantly, we need to look at the ultimate underlying causes of illness. We are allowing people to get sick and then treating them after they get sick and wondering why it is costing so much money. Do members know the biggest single cause of lack of wellness in our society? I will tell you. It is the food processing industry. The food processing industry causes most of our chronic health disease problems. Has anyone at a political level seriously considered this? What we are seeing is a green tick of health for heart healthy foods. I can tell members now that these foods are toxic. Do not touch them! We allow that to happen. We are a sugar-dependent society. We have guts that have been poisoned. If you were to open up the gut into its maximum area, it would occupy the size of a tennis court. Every single part of the gut is intensely active, immunologically and biochemically. But most people regard it as a deeply unsexy place where poo is made. The foundations of our physical wellness are being attacked by a food processing industry answerable to its shareholders and operating for profit.

From an agricultural side, our land is being poisoned. We are using toxins. We are ripping the soil. We are not caring for the sustainable environment. If members were to compare an analysis of the vegetables we are getting now with an analysis of the vegetables grown in 1930, they would see a decline in minerals and vitamins. Members will see a decline in the actual quality of the food. The reason for this is modern agriculture. I have to say that our farmers in Western Australia are some of the best and most scientific in the world. The last analysis showed that they are using tools, however, that is resulting in a reduction in the quality of food and an increase in toxins in food. Yesterday a woman came to me with an analysis, and there was mercury and antimony in her system. She asked where it came from. We have no single place in our bodies that needs mercury—not one single place—yet we have a normal level, and within these levels you are okay. We are not. This is true for a wide range of chemicals. We allow that to happen. As a result, people get sick.

Let us talk about mental health. If members look at the costs to our community in terms of money, social fabric and financial status, they will find a multibillion-dollar loss. If members look at what psychiatrists have been able to do in managing mental health over the last 50 years, they will scarcely see an improvement. Members will see a massive prescribing of drugs, which results in, let me tell you, metabolic syndrome—obesity, diabetes—with resulting blood pressure problems, renal failure and early death. If one is going to kill mental health patients, at least do it quickly and humanely, rather than letting them lead an existence! I am being sarcastic, of course. But maybe we need some sarcastic humour to point out the fact that we are poisoning people; we are not making people well.

This morning I was speaking with some veterans who were asking whether they could get some help for managing post-traumatic stress disorder. There are eight or nine suicides every day in this country of ours, and a lot of that is due to PTSD. The psychiatric treatment for that is abysmal, yet we still refuse to consider the alternatives such as cannabis and psychedelics, which has an 85 per cent cure rate, for goodness sake. It has an 85 per cent cure rate and we have decided not to do that. Why is that? I have yet to find a good scientific reason for that. I see prejudice;

I do not see good pharmacological reasons why we are abandoning these very useful treatments and why we let people—eight or nine a day—in our society die because we have failed to make use of possible resources. This is just one symptom of a health service that needs more attention.

Yes, we need money, but we do not need to waste the money. We need to spend it better, and, most importantly, we need to get to the underlying causes of disease and illness and manage that. But I have not heard one word of this approach from any government since at least 2008. I have not. Why is that? I have heard bickering across the chamber. I have heard people mentioning how much money they are spending, but actually giving out a real, credible solution, I do not see that. All I see when I am working with my colleagues in a hospital, an emergency department or a general practice is disillusionment from the healthcare workers that members have just applauded. It was like during COVID time when we were applauding healthcare workers—that is great! But all we wanted to do was get some sleep. All we wanted to do was to go to work with the reassurance that we would come back home alive. There were times when I would go to work not knowing whether I would see my family again, and still I went to work, like every other healthcare worker. Does anyone here actually care? Members might give a bit of applause now and then, but do they actually, really, in their visceral ground nature care? Think on that.

Although I regret the amended motion, I will acknowledge that it points to the truth. The underlying truth that we need to deal with here is that the health system needs qualified attention. It needs non-political management. It needs non-bureaucratic management. The healthcare workers who know the system and know the issues and can deal with them are hampered by the system.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot):** Honourable member, I am sorry to interrupt you, but the mover has the right of reply for the final five minutes of the debate, so I will interrupt you and give the call to Hon Martin Aldridge.

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [3.02 pm]** — in reply: Thank you, Acting President. I would like to thank all the members who spoke, including the last speaker, Hon Dr Brian Walker. I can assure him, at least from my perspective, that I do care about healthcare workers, and that is the reason I brought this motion in part today. I would like to thank the members of the government who used this opportunity to provide their budget reply speeches. I remind them that it is not my job to sell their government's budget; that is actually their job. Good luck on that!

It was remiss of me, in moving this motion, not to mention that today is the Royal Flying Doctor Service's Flying Doctor Day. We certainly could not run our health system without the amazing healthcare workers who operate our Royal Flying Doctor Service in a state such as Western Australia. I remind members, particularly given that the second Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health liked to delve into history today, that it was health minister Jim McGinty who considered the Royal Flying Doctor Service a community interest group. I do not know whether members remember back that far, but since we are having history lessons today, on Flying Doctor Day, it was the view of the then Labor government that the Royal Flying Doctor Service was nothing more than a community interest group. I now certainly have greater respect for them than Minister McGinty did at the time.

The other interesting thing that we heard from the government members today was criticism about the former government's investment in building hospitals. It is a cheap shot when their government has not actually built one yet. We are in the seventh year of the McGowan government and we have just heard all the talking points from the government members giving their budget replies and they are yet to actually build a hospital. They enjoyed cutting a lot of ribbons to health infrastructure that the former Liberal–National government had built, but they are yet to build one.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot):** Members! Would you mind just taking a seat—I am sorry—for a moment. Hansard is indicating that they are actually having trouble hearing the speaker. That is not fair. Please respect the processes of the chamber.

**Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE:** Tom Price, Laverton, Meekatharra, Geraldton, Mullewa—I would be interested to know when these hospitals will open. I joke but people might be better off asking for a rail line than a hospital, because the Saffioti government is committed to building a growing Metronet infrastructure project at the cost of hospitals, amongst other government priorities.

It is interesting that beyond Metronet the second priority of the Saffioti government is Collie. It is also interesting to note the government's announced \$37 million hospital blitz, which it cut by \$14.62 million and cancelled half the projects—so much for the blitz. I do not know what one would call it—blitz by half? One of the projects cut was \$1 million to health worker accommodation at Collie Hospital. One would think that anything Collie wants Collie gets under this government, but it cut a project to accommodate healthcare workers. The government's spin was that this was not a bad thing because it was now putting those 18 staff up in local motels and hotels during a housing crisis. That is not what I heard in the budget reply speeches today from the Labor members. They did not talk about Wyndham, which had its hospital shut down to a daylight service. They did not talk about how we have 100 kilometres between Geraldton and Karratha where one cannot give birth to a baby. They do not talk about

that. All the government members did was self-congratulation or talk about the extra \$3.2 billion in the health budget to address issues in the health system. They did not talk about any of the issues. They just read their talking points. I am not even going to have time to talk about the patient assisted travel scheme because some of the statements that the government made about PATS and ancient history are wrong.

Question 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-ninth Report — Consideration of the 2021–22 Annual Reports — Motion*

Resumed from 8 May on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier —

That the report be noted.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** I have a very short time remaining in my contribution on this important report today. There is not much left to add other than to reiterate the high importance of the committee system and the high importance of the scrutiny of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and the good work that it does. It is well chaired. It is a good, balanced committee. It makes good judgements. I was particularly heartened to read in this report the sound financial management of the then McGowan Labor government through the COVID period. It was a difficult time for all Western Australians. I think if we asked most Western Australians how they felt the state was managed through that time, they would say that it was managed well through the pandemic, people were kept safe, especially the vulnerable, and we were able to close the borders and do what we had to do to keep our economy strong. That is reflected in the finances. That is reflected in this report and I thank everybody on the committee for their good work.

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

### *Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations — Eighty-eighth Report — Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia*

Resumed from 22 June 2023.

### *Motion*

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I move —

That the report be noted.

I will make a few comments to start with, as I chaired this inquiry. It emanated through the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, obviously, and I will talk about that in a moment. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt requested that the government do a separate inquiry into homelessness. At the time, the government was reluctant, and so the estimates and financial operations committee decided to undertake its own inquiry. As a direct result, there were a couple of changes on the committee. Hon Steve Martin substituted for Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Dan Caddy substituted for deputy chair Hon Samantha Rowe. At that stage, Hon Jackie Jarvis was on the committee. When she was elevated into cabinet a fair way through the inquiry—she went through a lot—she left the committee and unfortunately, as a process issue, she could not be replaced. Regardless, as always, the committee was extraordinarily harmonious and effective.

I went into the inquiry with eyes wide open, very cognisant of the issue of homelessness throughout Western Australia. My electorate office is in Warwick. We are inundated relentlessly with issues with regard to homelessness—and I mean relentlessly. I was very keen to find out whether there was any way we could assist the government in trying to overcome the endemic issues that exist with homelessness, a lack of housing across the state and the impact it is having on Western Australians, and nationally, but particularly on marginalised members of our community. It was figuratively eye-opening, as the committee found out. In 2021–22, 25 000 people accessed government-funded homelessness services in WA. We were using those figures at the time. Approximately 9 000 were homeless and 13 000 were at risk of homelessness. In a very succinct fashion, we held multiple hearings and made multiple visits; it was a very holistic approach to homelessness. We went right through various areas of the state and the metropolitan area and held a number of hearings.

I will try to be as succinct as I possibly can. Across the board, and as members will notice from the report, it looked at a lack of integrity amongst the specific details surrounding the homeless; a demand for a statewide extension of the By Name List; and comprehensive mapping of homelessness services, funded and unfunded, as they provide a valuable vehicle for resources and support. Increased resources and attention are required for vulnerable groups, particularly those experiencing domestic violence, youth, Aboriginal people and women, particularly older women, and for those who are suffering from mental illness. Early intervention strategies are required for those groups.

We also found that there is a significant shortfall in housing, particularly long-term housing. More transparency and support are required for those on the social housing waitlist. There needs to be a significant increase in funding and availability for Aboriginal community housing and crisis accommodation and an urgent increase of funding for more crisis and transitional accommodation—that is, more 24-hour centres. In terms of short-term contracts for providers, there is difficulty in providing certainty for service providers. Many have been in place since 2012 and do not align with the state strategy. As I said, a lot more could be said as a result of this report, but it essentially provides an avenue for the themes that we encountered.

As a result of all those hearings and deliberations, the committee came up with 29 findings and 57 recommendations. The government in its response supported 18 recommendations and supported in principle 30; so, 48 of the 57 recommendations are either supported or supported in principle by the government. Six were noted and it did not support three. I will briefly comment on one, because I would like to hear from other members on this report—that is the whole point of committee reports. The one recommendation that the government noted and did not support was recommendation 38 —

The Western Australian government fund more 24/7 crisis services offering engagement and referral.

Its response states —

The State Government notes it is not practical to deliver additional 24-hour homelessness engagement and referral services as many homelessness services do not operate 24-hours a day. Furthermore, intake processes are carefully managed by specialist homelessness services to ensure the safety of all clients and staff.

However, EntryPoint, delivered by Centrecare Inc is a free assessment and referral service available to assist people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to access a range of accommodation and support options, including individuals and families escaping domestic violence. The service operates state-wide, providing homelessness assistance in regional areas.

It goes on to highlight a couple of other areas. I point that one out because it was quite compelling to find out that a lot more people are in crisis care now than ever before. We went to a centre in Kalgoorlie that is very, very limited in its capacity. There is a desperate need. I think if there were ever an area or a recommendation that definitely needed the support of the government, it would be that one. It is not a criticism; it is an observation. That is what we found everywhere. It is not the normal circumstance with regard to homelessness; it is not the normal circumstance with regard to the lack of housing in Western Australia. These are very unusual circumstances. This conjuncture of circumstances in a whole raft of areas, most notably coming out of COVID-19 with regard to short housing supplies, has made it even more problematic for any government of any political persuasion. It is something that governments of all political colours need to align themselves to. I know that we hear a lot from the government. I would like to see more in crisis care. I would like to see more commitment with regard to crisis care in a whole raft of areas. As I said, that was only one recommendation. There are 57 recommendations and I could go through each one, but I would like other members to have the opportunity to speak. My point in raising that issue, as I said, is that was the one that stuck with me through that entire process. We really feel helpless in our situation.

To conclude, I would like to thank the committee most sincerely. It was an enormous body of work by the committee. The committee worked very arduously, effectively and studiously. It was quite challenging at times, and it put an onerous responsibility on us. We wanted to come out with a report that was not just a dust collector and would ideally be a good avenue for people to reflect upon when we look at issues to overcome the challenges of homelessness in years ahead.

Hon Dan Caddy released a minority report. I do not have any issues with the minority report. I will leave it to him to give an explanation for his minority report.

I thank most sincerely Kimberley Ould, who was our principal adviser on the committee. She did an extraordinary job. She was ably supported by Tracey Sharpe, who also did a very, very good job. I also thank Andrew Hawkes and Amanda Gillingham, who assisted Kimberley and Tracey. We all worked very well together. There were very few occasions on which we disagreed on issues, as members will find within the recommendations. There were less than a handful of majority recommendations; most of the recommendations were unanimous because we saw the situation for what it was. It is a parlous situation for a lot of people out there. The information that we garnered from all those avenues was extraordinarily powerful.

On behalf of the committee, we hope that we have done a good job in assisting the government. It shows yet again the value of the committee system. Once again, I thank the committee and the staff for what I regard as a job very well done.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** I rise as well to speak on this eighty-eighth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, *Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia*. It is a significant report. We could probably talk about this report for hours; in fact, in my time in this place thus far, this inquiry has probably taken more of my time than any other individual element of my parliamentary life. At over 350 pages, I think it is possibly the biggest report of the forty-first Parliament.

I know that Hon Nick Goiran sometimes has an issue with this, but I want to quickly thank the other members of the inquiry. Hon Peter Collier chaired the committee. As one would expect from a senior member of this chamber, Hon Peter Collier is an exceptional chair. The committee was very harmonious most of the time; a lot of that is down to how a committee is chaired. My good friend Hon Jackie Jarvis was there, as we heard, for some of the time before her life took a different, higher level path; also Hon Steve Martin; and, of course, Hon Dr Brad Pettitt; and certainly, too, the staff.

I will reflect on the terms of reference of this report. Firstly, the name of the report is *Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia*. If we look at the report as a whole, there is a chapter on exactly that—the funding of homelessness services. That chapter is only 15 pages of this significant report. I do not say that by way of criticism—quite the opposite. The fourth limb of the terms of reference is “any other related matter.” We took that fourth limb extremely seriously, and that is why this report is so comprehensive. We sought to gain a thorough overview of homelessness in Western Australia, which made up one chapter of the report.

As a committee, we sought to gain a detailed and in-depth understanding of the causes, drivers and risk factors that lead to homelessness. This is obviously critically important, as well. It is one thing to look purely at the financial ties; it is quite another thing to go into the detail and depth that we did to try to understand the entire issue. We looked at social housing and the commissioning of homelessness services. A significant amount of work is being done on the commissioning process by many hardworking people in different departments. There were a number of other things, as well. As a committee, we examined the 10-year state strategy, *All paths lead to a home*. That came up a lot in the submissions and also in the hearings. We directed many questions on the state strategy to people in the hearings.

As well as that, we had some 48 submissions; I think I counted 27 public hearings; and, most significantly, 18 site visits. The site visits are super important. As well as metropolitan sites, we visited Bunbury, Kalgoorlie and other regional centres. We visited different types of accommodation, services and service providers. We visited some of the bigger services such as Ruah, Anglicare, Uniting WA, Shelter WA—the list goes on—and some of the smaller ones, as well. We spoke to not only people in the hearings, but also the end users of those services that are provided by these many great organisations. Especially on some days, this was a somewhat immersive process. It is eye-opening to sit and speak with people who use these services who will recount every detail of their life to you, how it is that they came to be using these services and how they benefit from them. The stories that we heard from the people who use those services, and also from many of the people who work for those services, are predominantly stories of hope and success. The work that is done especially by the not-for-profit sector in this area is absolutely incredible.

I will get to the report in a minute. I am talking about the process. I will talk to some of the specifics of the report, what the government is doing and other aspects of what is going on in homelessness, and, if I get time, I will address the minority report. But for me, that is not a substantial element of this report. It was a minority report borne out of the fact that I was just uncomfortable with three out of the 57 recommendations. As Hon Peter Collier said, that was really it. For the bulk—95 per cent—of the time, this committee was absolutely of one mind and on the same page.

I will just look at some specific elements. One thing I point out early is that we as a committee were cognisant of other reports that have been done in other jurisdictions, not only in Australia, but also overseas. This was really important. It is critical to recognise why we did that, because it puts context around what we are dealing with. One main theme that came out from most people we spoke to was that the issue of homelessness is not unique to Western Australia or Australia but is, indeed, a global issue. That allowed us to explore not only the reasons for homelessness in other jurisdictions, but also what other jurisdictions are doing to combat it, which is incredibly educating. We were able to look at what other jurisdictions do and where the successes are in other places around the world.

I will not quote at length from this report, but I will quote some words right at the start of chapter 2, because these words help to define homelessness at a really basic level. It is a complex thing to define. The start of the chapter summary states —

- 2.1 At its core, homelessness is the experience of not having an adequate home. It can be a temporary, short-term experience or it can last for many years.
- 2.2 Homelessness refers to housing arrangements that are insecure, unstable, temporary or severely overcrowded, and includes rough sleeping as well as more ‘hidden’ forms, such as couch surfing.
- 2.3 But homelessness ‘is more than a housing problem’. Addressing homelessness requires a range of support services in addition to safe, secure, and stable accommodation.

I think that if we had to make a short summary of everything contained in this report, for me, that is a perfect summary or definition of homelessness.

I am moving through the report. There is always the question of more money. This is what the report came down to. Essentially, we are an estimates committee; we look at the funding and whether enough is being spent. We have now moved on from the situation at the time this report was done, and I will speak about that shortly. In the 2019–20 budget we had funding of just over \$100 million.

By 2022–23 and 2023–24, we were up to two and a half times that. They were the figures then. Obviously, as I will get to, the government has spent, or invested, a significant amount of money in solving homelessness or mitigating it when it cannot be solved.

From there, we move on to the policies behind it. It is really important to point out that good public policy at a state level does not just happen; it comes as a result of good and strong leadership and from having highly professional and dedicated departmental staff. I have often spoken about the incredible individuals in the not-for-profit sector who work in this space.

**Hon STEVE MARTIN:** I would also like to make a contribution to this report by the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, *Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia*. I will also start by giving my enormous thanks to Kimberley Ould, Tracey Sharpe and the other staff who gave us enormous assistance. If members have read the report, which I hope they have, they will know that it is a substantial piece of work. Without the assistance of those excellent staff members, we would not have been able to get the task done. I will also mention my colleagues—the chair, Hon Peter Collier; Hon Jackie Jarvis, who was on the committee for almost two-thirds of the time before she got the promotion; Hon Dan Caddy and Hon Dr Brad Pettitt.

As we have heard from Hon Dan Caddy, it was a very collaborative process; we were there to do a job. I had been in the Parliament for about five or six months when the committee was formed and my knowledge of homelessness was very limited. I had seen the stereotype, which we have all seen, of the CBD rough sleepers. This document clearly shows that that is just a small part of the homelessness story in this state. Some of the information in the report was available and some of it was collated. It is now in one place and provides a great baseline of homelessness and the funding of services in Western Australia.

As we have heard, the inquiry was conducted over 19 months, received 48 submissions, included 18 site visits, involved 27 public hearings and took months and months of our time, but we have had a wonderful outcome. I want to make special mention of the people with lived experience who gave submissions or invited us into their lives, effectively, on those site visits. It was particularly useful for us and the people who were putting this report together to get that lived experience from people who have either experienced homelessness or are experiencing it. The Department of Communities also gave us enormous support through this process.

One thing that I learnt—it should have been obvious but it was certainly reinforced to me—was that as big a problem as homelessness is in Western Australia, it would be so much worse if it were not for the not-for-profit and community sectors, which do so much outstanding work in this area. We saw that over and over. I know I will miss a heap of them, but I will reference some of them—Mission Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Salvation Army, Uniting WA, Anglicare WA, St Patrick’s Community Support Centre and St Bart’s. That is just a small selection of the wonderful organisations that are doing outstanding work in this sector. The common theme for all organisations, sadly, is that the workload is growing relentlessly, the demand is increasing and it is costing more to provide services. The level of care has changed because of the lack of crisis accommodation. For example, the Beacon, which is just over the bridge in Aberdeen Street and is somewhere that I have been a couple of times—I think we had a site visit there—used to be a three-month accommodation facility for people desperate for housing, but it now provides that service for nine to 12 months. If people are lucky, there is a path out of Beacon after 12 months. The demand on those services has grown. That 102-bed facility does a wonderful job, but people are not flowing through there like they used to. Everywhere is groaning at the seams during this housing crisis.

Some extra funding for homelessness services was announced in the recent state budget. I want to talk about that and recommendation 33 around the Housing First Homelessness Initiative. The point made over and over is that we definitely need an uptick in funding for those groups, but if we just fund business as usual, we will not get to Housing First; we will just continue to fund the model that we have, which is not making much of a dent. Recommendation 33 states —

The Western Australian government provide funding for homelessness services that adequately reflects the cost of transitioning from existing service delivery models to a full implementation of Housing First.

I will explain what that means as there is a bit of jargon in there. We heard from a couple of Housing First providers that had been funded to provide Housing First support. They had a Housing First model but with no housing. They could provide the wraparound services, but they simply did not have anywhere to house anyone. Hon Dan Caddy is correct: homelessness is not simply about putting someone in a home. That is obviously not the solution, but it is a key part of the solution. At the moment, we do not have enough homes or crisis accommodation. Even if we could provide the wraparound services for everyone, we simply do not have the homes.

As a regional member of Parliament, I would like to mention some of the regional stories that we heard, because it is true that a fair bit of the emphasis in the discussions on homelessness is on the Perth CBD and the metropolitan area. I will read a couple of the stories that we heard from providers that operate in the regions. A dot point in the report quotes the Salvation Army as stating —

- In Karratha, our staff are reporting a five-year wait for housing.

That is not the people the Salvation Army is dealing with; that is its staff. It continues —

The Salvation Army's family and domestic violence service in Karratha is a short-term crisis service, but because of the housing crisis women who should only be staying for 6–8 weeks are now staying for 6–12 months and are sometimes living in hotel-sized rooms with 2–4 children.

Not only is it difficult to find homes for Salvation Army staff at that shelter, but also the women who are accessing that service are now staying much longer, which obviously prevents beds from becoming empty for people who need the service. This comment is also from the Salvation Army —

- Our family and domestic violence service in Karratha has reported having to turn away individuals on 600 occasions in the last 12 months.

They are some of the stories from the regions. As Hon Peter Collier said, we went to Kalgoorlie, where, because of changes to the accommodation used at mine sites and an increase in the fly in, fly out model, it is very difficult to find accommodation, and every single provider in Kalgoorlie is overflowing.

I just want to touch on the management of the waitlist. Recommendation 19 states —

The Department of Communities expedite the replacement of the current process of priority assistance for public housing with a 'needs assessment' process, so that the process more accurately identifies priority need for housing assistance.

We heard over and over again, particularly from people who had lived experience of being on the waitlist, about the lack of transparency and clarity about whether they were number three, 4 000 or 5 000 on the waitlist and whether they would have to move from where they wanted to be to get somewhere to live. The response from the Department of Communities was that it is working towards that. This report has been around for some time; I do not know whether there has been any movement by the Department of Communities on that process. There is a crying need for people on the waitlist to have transparency. I understand that the department is dealing with thousands and thousands of people, but particularly those on the priority waitlist would certainly benefit from greater clarity about their prospects. We know that the waitlists have grown and that the time spent on the waitlists has grown, but we would like providing that information to be a part of the process.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** I was starting to talk about public policy during my previous 10-minute contribution. I pointed out that I have spoken about the individuals who work in the not-for-profit space in Uniting WA, Ruah Community Services and Perth Inner City Youth Services, to name a few, but we do not often get an opportunity to recognise the incredible staff that work hard within government departments—I briefly mentioned the staff who are dealing with commissioning—the public servants who are working on solving and mitigating homelessness. They have been tasked with a decent task and they will do an exceptional job. It is a multilayered issue because it requires input and leadership from all three levels of government. During the course of the inquiry, we had hearings with several local government leaders and submissions from even more. We heard from the City of Mandurah, the City of Fremantle and the City of Perth and received submissions, as I said, from others. Most of these local governments want to work with the state government to address homelessness across their communities. I want to read in a couple of short quotes. One was from the team leader of community development at the City of Fremantle, who said —

There is a role for local government because we manage the public space, and homelessness does have an impact. Whether that be to businesses or to community or even the way in which we need to clean the streets, it impacts every aspect of our business, and that is why we need to have a role in homelessness.

Mayor Williams from Mandurah said —

We are really clear as a local government that this is not one of those issues where you just say, "Oh, well, it's somebody else's responsibility. Stick your head in the sand." We have got a role to play in it, and the strategy outlining that role we think is very, very clear and spot on.

I spoke earlier, as did two other members of the committee, about how well this committee worked together. The biggest disappointment during the committee process and in this place was the actions of the City of Perth in this space. I do not think that we can talk about homelessness in this chamber without addressing that and what happened with the Safe Night Space. I will remind the chamber of the history of Ruah and Safe Night Space because it was incredibly disappointing that the Lord Mayor and the City of Perth decided to defund and close Safe Night Space despite our government putting \$3.1 million on the table to continue the service.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** That is what happened, member.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Hon Neil Thomson will get his chance in a minute; I do not have time to take interjections from the member.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.



**Hon DAN CADDY:** They knew the money was coming.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** No. Let me tell the member. If he listens, he might learn something.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Order! Hon Dan Caddy.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Thank you for the shield, deputy chair.

Because of the Lord Mayor's decision, the service, which supported numerous women experiencing domestic violence, closed, notably in the middle of the 16 Days in WA—Stop Violence Against Women campaign, the irony of which was lost on the presumptive next leader of Hon Neil Thomson's party. To ensure that we continued to support vulnerable women, including those who had experienced family and domestic violence and were accessing this service, the Cook government provided a couple hundred thousand dollars in brokerage funding. The City of Perth eventually approved Ruah's development application to run Safe Night Space from its James Street facility. The Lord Mayor and the City of Perth delayed the Safe Night Space at every single opportunity. The Lord Mayor is now trying to rewrite history, and Hon Neil Thomson is aiding and abetting him with that. This could have been dealt with much more expeditiously. Hon Neil Thomson understands how planning works; this could have been done under delegated authority by the administration, and Hon Neil Thomson well knows that. Instead, we witnessed a targeted campaign and demonisation of the credible, reputable, extremely well-known and long-running service provider Ruah by the Lord Mayor. It was an appalling decision. We talked about the initial decision because it happened at some point during the inquiry when we had one of the not-for-profit organisations in. I asked the CEO of that organisation whether they wanted to comment on it. Her words, not the government's words, were as follows —

Decisions like that are appalling. Local government has a responsibility to members of the community, and people who experience homelessness are members of that community. I think local government has a real capacity to have a leadership role, so if local businesses and communities are concerned about people experiencing homelessness, there is an opportunity to work with our sector to myth-bust and to provide education et cetera.

That is what she said. She has worked for decades in this space and absolutely, without doubt, knows what she is talking about. This was also at the time when a City of Perth councillor ran a paid social media campaign against Ruah. I am talking about paid advertisements on social media openly encouraging people to complain about Ruah. That, my friend, is absolutely appalling. But we do not have to go back far—I will get off this topic in a minute—to see where this stems from. We know the view of the Lord Mayor, which is important because it has been said by either Hon Peter Collier or Hon Steve Martin that we are coming too slowly to what we are doing. I refer to an article in *The West Australian* of 22 November 2019 in which the Lord Mayor stated —

“I make no apologies for this, the homeless need to be moved out of the Hay and Murray Street malls and the surrounding areas ...

“Forcibly, if that's what it takes. I'm sick of being told by people who don't live and work in the city like I do that it's not that bad—actually, it's worse.

... A blight on our city.

He also said that homelessness is the single biggest impediment to progress and rejuvenation. These comments demonstrate —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR:** Order, members! Hon Dan Caddy has the call.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** Those are the Lord Mayor's comments.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**Hon DAN CADDY:** I will not take interjections from the member. He plainly does not know what he is talking about. These comments demonstrate that Basil Zempilas does not care about the most vulnerable in our society. Unlike our government, he is not interested in supporting those who need it most, especially vulnerable women and women escaping family and domestic violence. That is true. It is most disappointing because I sat on that committee with opposition members, and they do care. I did not agree with them about everything, but they absolutely care about what is going on. Do members know what the most embarrassing thing was for Basil? After saying he would make no apologies for his view, he was forced to apologise.

I want to get back to the report and look at some of the comments about the *All paths lead to a home: Western Australia's 10-year strategy on homelessness 2020–2030* because it is a critical component of the report. Chapter 5 of the report refers to this, but it also came through in submissions and some of the hearings. I want to quote a couple of

comments. The first is from the Salvation Army, which said that it commends the Western Australian government for prioritising a Housing First approach, and that the Housing First model has made a real impact and resulted in significantly better outcomes for clients.

The St Vincent de Paul Society said —

We are extremely supportive of the All Paths Lead to a Home strategy document and related action plan and as previously mentioned, acknowledge the significant investment that has been made in this regard.

These comments are from submissions we received before the hearings. During a hearing, the CEO of Shelter WA, Michelle McKenzie, said —

One of the great things about the 10-year strategy is that it is centred in Housing First. ... We absolutely support Housing First driving the WA homelessness strategy—absolutely.

The one quote that really got me, and it is short, was from Michael Chester, one of the co-CEOs of Uniting WA, whom many people would know. He said —

There is a balance there, but I do think it is important to know because homelessness is not a Department of Communities' issue; it is a community issue.

I have run out of time, so I will get back up in a minute.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I also wish to start by thanking my fellow committee members for what I think—I am happy to be corrected—is one of the most substantive reports of this Parliament, *Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations: Funding of homelessness services in Western Australia*. I also want to thank the staff of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, Kimberley Ould and Tracey Sharpe. They had a mountain of work to do in order to produce a very substantive report of many hundreds of pages.

The committee took a really good tripartisan and collaborative approach to this inquiry. I want to thank the chair, Hon Peter Collier; and also Hon Dan Caddy, Hon Steve Martin and Hon Jackie Jarvis for their collaborations when trying to come up with solutions to what is a very serious issue. We had the rare opportunity to acknowledge that it is a growing problem and to start to think about some of the solutions. When talking about a 310-page report, I obviously cannot cover it all in 10 minutes, but I want to talk about a few of the key issues.

The most visible part of homelessness is the rough sleeping element. This state has a really important goal of ending rough sleeping by 2025, which is only a year away. It would be fair to say that all signs currently point to rough sleeping being worse in a year than when the goal was set in 2020. Nevertheless, we have really important lessons to learn, and that has to be our goal—ending functional homelessness, which is very much at the heart of this report.

The 2021 census reported that around 2 500 people are sleeping rough in Western Australia on any given night and close to 10 000 people are considered homeless. We know that this number is growing; in fact, it is getting worse. Many of the Homewest services, drop-in centres and the like that we spoke to reported that the demand for services was nothing like they had seen before. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be fair to say that homelessness has reached unprecedented levels. In fact, new analysis done by Shelter WA this year since this report was produced revealed that homelessness services assist more than 5 100 people every day. That is an average increase of 1 100 people every day, or 27.5 per cent more than five years ago.

On the back of this report, we have seen some good actions. In many ways, we did not want this report to indulge in pointsoring but to get good actions. We have seen some of this. For example, finding 18 states —

The use of ongoing contract extensions for the provision of homelessness services negatively affects service providers' ability to provide those services.

The recommendation that came about as a result of that finding is recommendation 33, which states —

The Western Australian government provide funding for homelessness services that adequately reflects the cost of transitioning from existing service delivery models to a full implementation of Housing First.

Undoubtedly, the use of contract extensions has caused significant uncertainty in a sector that is already under high stress and in high demand. On the back of this report, it was good to see \$92 million worth of funding for homelessness services in the recent state budget. That is a positive amount in this space. I will make my speech on the budget in a minute. It is fair to say that funding was one of the very few positives in the budget. To give credit where it is due, a really important announcement was the 27 per cent increase to baseline funding, which is desperately needed. That is one of the key recommendations from the report that saw its way into the budget. I hope there are many others. I struggled to find others. Although the government supported most of the recommendations in the inquiry's report, I am yet to see many flow through to new budget commitments and the like. That is what we ultimately need if we are going to solve this issue.

Without a broader commitment to match the scale or urgency of what we are seeing in the housing and rental crisis that has led to the homelessness and rough sleeping crisis in our community, we will not solve it. Funding is at the heart of this issue. One of the things that this report shows is that WA is doing less than the rest of the country in this regard. The annual per capita expenditure on homelessness in WA is \$39.88 compared with an Australian average

of \$53.15 per person. We are still doing less per capita than other states. If we are serious about getting on top of homelessness and ending rough sleeping, that has to end. One of the key parts of this inquiry was to put these facts on the table and say that we have really good strategies around Housing First and we are doing some good things, but we need to acknowledge—we largely did this in a tripartisan way—that we need to make serious, substantive and structural changes to the way homelessness services are delivered if we are going to end functional homelessness.

Unfortunately, as I said, other recommendations have not been acted upon sufficiently. I will give an example. One of the key recommendations in the report related to the desperate need for more refuges and crisis accommodation, especially for women and children escaping family and domestic violence. Recommendation 37 states —

As a matter of urgency, the Western Australian government fund more crisis and transitional accommodation state-wide.

The government supported this recommendation in its response but—I am happy to be corrected on this—I could not find a single set of extra funds for refuge crisis accommodation in last week’s budget. It is no good the government supporting a recommendation that calls for more funding if it does not fund these things. This is despite the Centre for Women’s Safety and Wellbeing calling for \$80 million in increased funding for more refuges and despite the national focus on violence against women in the last few months. I do not want to make this partisan—I did not see the Liberal Party come out and say anything about this either—but we need both major parties to come out and support committing to a number of new women’s refuges and crisis accommodation centres while we build more housing. That is one of the key recommendations of this report. That has to fill the gap whilst we get on and build more houses.

At the heart of this report is a recognition of the really key recommendation relating to Housing First. I turn members’ minds to finding 4, which states —

There is strong support within the homelessness services sector for a Housing First model but the implementation of Housing First as a philosophy, integrated system and program, has not been realised.

In many ways, one of the great opportunities we have now is to acknowledge that Housing First is fundamentally where we need to end up. It is not about housing by itself; it is about putting people into housing and then giving them really good wraparound services so that they keep that housing in perpetuity. That has to be where we go with this. It is really important that we do not lose sight of that.

The other key finding in the report is that solving homelessness saves us money. It is good from a human rights perspective. It is one of the key things we should do because compassion and empathy for all the right reasons is not leaving people vulnerable on our streets or in insecure accommodation. Equally, as this report highlights, there are really good financial reasons—remembering that it is the estimates and financial operations committee—to get people into housing and get them wraparound services because, ultimately, that saves the state money and gets us to where we need to go as a community. I was really proud to be a part of this, and I really want to thank the committee members I worked with on it. This should be a blueprint for where we go, but it has to be a blueprint that is fully funded and fully realised; otherwise, there is a real danger that we will tread water, which is probably where we are at the moment—kind of just keeping where we are. This report clearly recommends a fundamental step change in how we fund homelessness if we are to solve homelessness and end rough sleeping.

**Hon KLARA ANDRIC:** I thought I would use this opportunity to make a contribution on the very important eighty-eighth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. I also take the opportunity to thank Hon Dan Caddy for the great work that not only he, but also other members of this committee did. I am looking across the room to Hon Peter Collier and other members of this committee. In particular, Hon Dan Caddy made two very good contributions this afternoon on this report.

As we all know, homelessness is a challenging and very complex issue that faces some of the most vulnerable Western Australians in our state. As I mentioned, I commend the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations for the extensive work it did over the course of this very important inquiry into homelessness and homelessness services across Western Australia. As stated on page 2 of the government response to the committee report, the eighty-eighth report recognises the complex nature of addressing homelessness in all forms. The government response states —

The State Government remains strongly committed to assisting our state’s most vulnerable and is investing record amounts to assist West Australians in line with this commitment.

In November 2021, the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations launched this inquiry into the financial administration of services addressing homelessness in Western Australia, and the committee considered four areas, as listed on page 1, paragraph 1.1 of the eighty-eighth report —

- (1) the current funding and delivery of services
- (2) ‘All Paths Lead to a Home’, Western Australia’s 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030
- (3) existing data systems and how data informs service delivery
- (4) any other related matter.

From what I understand, the inquiry was conducted over the course of 19 months. In that time, the committee received 48 submissions and conducted 18 site visits, which is quite an incredible number. I now understand what Hon Dan Caddy said about just how much of his time as a parliamentarian was consumed by this report. That is also confirmed by the number of public hearings that were held. According to the report, 27 public hearings were held with the Department of Communities, service providers, local governments and people with lived experience of homelessness. That last—the people who have experienced, lived through or are experiencing homelessness—is probably one of the most, if not the most, important components. In the report, the committee made a total of 29 findings and 57 recommendations, which is why this report is one of the larger reports of those that I have spoken on. There is a lot of detail and substance in this report.

I turn to page 53, paragraph 3.57 of the eighty-eighth report, which concerns the funding of homelessness services. The committee considers the role of “collective impact projects”. As defined on page 53, a collective impact project is “a collaborative approach to addressing complex social issues”. It consists of five conditions, which include a common agenda, continuous communication, mutually reinforcing activities, backbone support and shared measurement. There are several examples of collective impact projects, such as the 50 Lives 50 Homes program, which was a project to sustainably house and support the most vulnerable rough sleepers in our state. It is worth noting that the project ran from 2015 to 2020 and involved well over 30 organisations that delivered more than 50 services. It was, in fact, widely successful, and in 2019 a similar program was launched on its foundation under the name of the 20 Lives 20 Homes project. As I am sure Hon Dr Brad Pettitt would know, the 20 Lives 20 Homes project was a collaboration between the City of Fremantle, the Cook Labor government and several community services, including Ruah Community Services and St Patrick’s Community Support Centre.

On that note, I go to recommendation 4 of the report, which is also on page 8 of the government’s response. It states —

The Department of Communities’ commissioning process allow for more services to be delivered under a collective impact model.

I move to the government response. This recommendation is supported by the government and falls within the government’s Housing First Homelessness Initiative. The government response to the eighty-eighth report states on page 8 —

**Supported**

...

The Housing First Homelessness Initiative which evolved from the successful 50 Lives 50 Homes Program, is delivering housing support services, case management and coordination support. The Housing First Homelessness Initiative is delivered in partnership with Communities and a consortium of service providers providing coordinated responses to support vulnerable rough sleepers into long-term accommodation with wraparound supports.

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

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

**ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE**

*Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from 14 May on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 3131A–E (2024–25 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 9 May 2024.

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [4.09 pm]: I am honoured to rise to speak on the state budget. It is a budget that on one level is extraordinary, particularly the idea that we have our sixth consecutive budget surplus. I understand that it is \$3.2 billion this year and the seventh surplus is predicted to be \$2.6 billion next financial year. I understand that surpluses over the past six years total about \$23 billion, which is pretty extraordinary on one level. The contrast to that, which is at the heart of my speech, and the question before us, given that largesse and the government’s total control of both houses of Parliament, really is: does the budget live up to the promise in many ways of what could be achieved? The point I will make as I go through the budget in some detail is that too much of this budget is remarkable because it is very much business as usual. That is remarkable because these are extraordinary times in which we have a series of major challenges. Some of those are full-blown crises that people in this state are facing. The question really is: is this budget adequately responding to those?

I will start my speech with climate change because the Minister for Climate Action, Minister Whitby, has said —

Climate change is the greatest challenge of our lifetime. We need to take decisive action this decade.

It is appropriate that we start this budget reply looking at how this budget responds to the greatest challenge of our lifetime. Quite extraordinarily, the *Budget overview* does not mention climate change or emissions. The document that is meant to highlight the government’s key announcements—the things it wants to showcase—does not go there at all. The very last section in the *Budget overview*, right at the back, is about the environment, but it does not

quite manage to fill the full page, as other areas do. It had to be bulked out with references to pre-existing budget commitments and other measures that have already been announced and a bunch of references. One cannot help but feel as though the environment, and especially climate change, are sitting at the back because that is where they sit in the key priorities of this budget. On one level I am not surprised that climate action fails to garner much of a mention. One of my frustrations—I spoke about this in this place before—is that I do not think this government is doing enough in this area. When I delve into the budget papers, I find other budget items but, frankly, these are pretty piecemeal and insignificant. Interestingly, there is a strong focus on adaptation rather than mitigation to reduce emissions.

Climate action research in Collie will receive \$100 000 this year and \$100 000 next year. There is additional funding of \$850 000 for stage 3 of the climate science initiative to develop a mid-range climate change projection for WA. Another \$6.1 million over four years will go towards climate science guidelines for the water sector and making climate projection data accessible. There is a lot of focus around climate projections and adaptation—not a lot of money but there is certainly a bit of talk around that—but very little clear funding commitment around mitigation.

I could not help but think that Western Australia reminds me of a packet-a-day smoker who seeks medical advice from the doctor and wants the doctor to tell them how quickly smoking is killing them, but refuses to quit smoking, or even reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke in the decade ahead. They just tell the doctor that they plan to get to net zero cigarettes sometime in a few decades. This is the kind of approach that we are taking on climate action. It is extremely frustrating for anyone who really cares about that. We learnt from *The Guardian* recently that modelling shows that 2024 will see the highest ever emissions in WA; emissions are continuing to rise in the critical decade to bring down emissions. We know the government has said that is because of gas exports, but if we delve down, we can see that, pretty much, emissions are not going down in any sector. They are going down slowly in the electricity sector, but for every other sector, whether they are related to gas and exports or not, we are not seeing emissions going down. The sectoral emission reduction strategies in the previous budget are barely mentioned in this budget and we will not see those go down at all. Although key agencies such as the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development say that these are significant issues for their agencies, there is no clear funding to get those emissions down in a way that matches up with the climate science. We should be concerned about that.

Going forward, I was equally concerned when I looked at the budget and saw the underspends on the things announced in the budget and compared them to last year's budget. I will give a couple of examples. On page 689 of the budget papers, the carbon innovation grants program was budgeted at \$2.9 million, but the actual estimated expenditure for this year is \$131 000. That is a pretty large gap for a grants program that is meant to fund carbon innovation.

One would think the Clean Energy Future Fund was another important program. It had a budget for this financial year of \$5.5 million; its estimated actual expenditure is \$1.3 million. Even when the government puts this stuff in the budget, it does not get close to spending it on those key initiatives in the climate space. I have no idea what is happening in the line item "Establishing and Maintaining Vegetation Offsets Account". An amount of \$3.6 million was meant to be spent this financial year, but it looks as though we will spend \$367 000.

What is going on when this budget not only has nothing substantial to bring down emissions going forward, but also demonstrates that the things that were announced last year have not even been spent as planned over the last 12 months? It would be fair to say that this is perhaps one of the most disappointing parts of this budget. We need to get serious about this. We have to stop pretending that we are some kind of exception. As I have said before, Western Australia is letting down the country as the only state with rising carbon emissions. We will potentially stop Australia meeting its own international commitments for reducing emissions if ours continue to go up or, at the very least, the richest state in the country will ask other states to do more so that ours can continue to go up. Let us be clear: this is not just because of gas. Gas is a big problem. This is because every part of our economy is not decarbonising at the rate that it needs to because of the lack of ambition in every part of every sector. I will go through this and demonstrate a whole bunch of examples as we go through sector by sector and budget line by budget line. There is an absolute lack of ambition. That is why we are failing to get our emissions down. Our emissions will go up this year because we have not invested in what needs to be invested in.

Let us turn from climate and broaden it out a bit to the environment. I do not want this to be a negative beat-up on government as I go through the budget. I want to highlight some things that I think are good looking, and one of those is the south coast marine park. This is a really good initiative. I acknowledge that there are good elements like this scattered throughout the budget documents. It would be fair to say that my office received quite a lot of correspondence congratulating the government on what it is doing with the south coast marine park and, in fact, asking that the government expand it. I put on the record that it is good and quite important. But then there is stuff in the budget at the other end of the spectrum.

One of the items that is setting off alarm bells, not just for me but in the environment sector more broadly, is the removal of "green tape" to speed up approvals processes, with \$36.4 billion in funding to implement the recommendations of the Vogel-McFerran review. Some parts of that are rational, around increasing staff, training and data availability to the Environmental Protection Authority. I think everyone thinks that is a good idea and, fundamentally, what is slowing down approvals is an understaffed EPA. Improving coordination with government in that regard is important and should

be supported. But the remaining recommendations are deeply problematic. In fact, they have been roundly criticised by environmental organisations and us. These items that we see under the \$36.4 billion budget include: removing public appeal rights in the Office of the Appeals Convenor; allowing the Minister for Environment to designate projects that carry state significance, thereby undermining the independence of the EPA; and removing consideration of projects subject to commonwealth greenhouse gas targets. I have strong concerns that this budget line is about weakening WA's Environmental Protection Authority and the environment protection system more broadly, instead of what we actually need, which is clearer planning and protections in this space that will ensure that we can defend and protect for future generations the amazing places that this state has and that we love.

There are other parts in the environment portfolio that are good but underfunded—underwhelming would be a better description—such as the Perth and Peel urban greening strategy. I am a big supporter of urban greening. I have been banging on about this a lot. But when \$2.9 million is to be spread across more than 30 local governments, are we serious about actually taking on the city that has the lowest canopy cover of any of the capital cities? It is sitting at only 22 per cent of our suburbs, with necessary canopy cover recognised as around 30 per cent. In fact, that is the lowest of any of our cities. What is worse is that canopy cover is declining. Our overall canopy cover sits at about 16 per cent to 17 per cent and is continuing to decline as we lose trees on private land, because we are the only state without any protections on private land. This is the only state in which someone can cut down a tree without planning approval.

We are also not even planting them in public spaces. We are designing suburbs where there is no room to put a tree on a verge. The minister is going through a process around a new urban canopy strategy. I can tell members where that needs to get to without going through a long process: the Western Australian Planning Commission needs to make road reserves wide enough to put a footpath, a tree and services. It is not very complicated. We need to make sure that every house gets a tree out the front of it. It is the very least we can do if we are going to design them out of our housing and not protect them on private property. But \$2.9 million for the planting of trees and greening the metropolitan area when our cities are warming is not going to cut it. There is a six-degree difference between a place in the shade and a place in the sun. In fact, the surface level can be more like a 30-degree difference. We need more trees to provide shade, but \$2.9 million is not going to cut it.

It is similar with the Plan for Our Parks. We all support the \$73 million for more funding for national parks and conservation estates. Certainly, it is a good thing. Again, I acknowledge that that is something we would like to see more of. Coming back to where I started with climate, putting aside small amounts of money for more conservation estates and national parks is in danger of being meaningless unless we can start to deal with climate change and the myriad impacts from heat, drought, fires and species loss and, as we are increasingly seeing, forest collapse.

This comes to one of the things that are missing from this budget. In fact, it has been missing from every budget from both the McGowan and Cook governments and the Barnett government before that. We have to go back all the way to the Carpenter government to find the last government that had this in its budget—a state of the environment report. The last time WA had a state of the environment report was 2007. Every other state has them and does them regularly, on a five-year or 10-year basis. We used to do them regularly too. We have had three. We had one in 1990, one in 1997 and one in 2007. But since 2007, no work has been done on that. This is really important. By not having a state of the environment report, we do not know how we are tracking. We do not know where we are at with species loss. We do not know what really needs to be done. There is a real danger that without a plan, we will ultimately be flying blind. This is one of the key things that is missing. We need a state of the environment report, and we need to have it regularly and consistently repeated every three to five years. This is one of the key things and, ideally, this is something that we would like to see in this budget as well.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2242.]

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### POLICE — GOVERNMENT REGIONAL OFFICERS' HOUSING

#### 484. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to Government Regional Officers' Housing program and homes provided to officers of the Western Australia Police Force.

- (1) How many officers are currently provided with GROH in regional locations?
- (2) Are officers required to share GROH with other officers?
- (3) What is the average weekly rent charged to officers who are provided with GROH?
- (4) What is the alternative accommodation for an officer when GROH is not available?

#### Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. I have been advised the following by the Western Australia Police Force.

- (1) There are 1 415.

- (2) No.
- (3) It is \$286 a week for all locations where rent is charged.
- (4) All police officers in regional Western Australia at locations where the Government Regional Officers' Housing program is offered are provided with GROH accordingly. In limited circumstances in which GROH is not immediately available, police officers are supplied alternative accommodation.

PREMIER — TOURISM WA — MEETINGS

**485. Hon PETER COLLIER to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:**

- (1) Did the Premier in his former capacity as Deputy Premier; Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Hydrogen Energy; Tourism and Science meet with the chair of Tourism Western Australia between 1 January and 8 June 2023?
- (2) If yes, on what date or dates did this meeting or meetings take place and where?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. I provide this answer on behalf of the Leader of the House, who is away on urgent parliamentary business.

- (1)–(2) The Premier, in his former capacity as Deputy Premier; Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade; Hydrogen Energy; Tourism and Science, met with the chair of Tourism Western Australia as well as other representatives from Tourism WA on 23 February 2023, 23 March 2023, 3 April 2023, 4 May 2023 and 22 May 2023.

AQUATIC RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACT — IMPLEMENTATION

**486. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries:**

I refer to the implementation of the Aquatic Resources Management Act.

- (1) Has a workshop with sector bodies been convened as requested by the minister?
- (2) If yes to (1), what date was the workshop held and which sector bodies participated?
- (3) Has a revised implementation timeframe been finalised; and, if so, can the minister provide details of the revised timeframe?

**Hon KYLE McGINN replied:**

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Workshop 1 was held on 24 August 2023. Workshop 2 was held on 20 October 2023. The sector bodies that participated were the Western Australian Fishing Industry Council Inc, Recfishwest, the Aquaculture Council of Western Australia and the Western Rock Lobster Council. Pearling industry representatives also attended.
- (3) No.

ELECTORAL REFORM — ONLINE DISCLOSURE SYSTEM — CONSULTATION

**487. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs:**

I refer to consultation between the Western Australian Electoral Commission and registered political parties on the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Other Matters) Act 2023.

- (1) Is it true that the office bearers of four registered political parties signed correspondence to the commissioner on 10 May that outlined their shared experience of the consultation process?
- (2) If yes to (1), can the minister please table that correspondence?
- (3) Has the commissioner replied to these concerns?
- (4) How can the minister be confident of the readiness of the online disclosure system in light of the concerns expressed in the 10 May correspondence?

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The Minister for Electoral Affairs has provided me with the following response.

- (1) Yes. The WA Electoral Commission received joint correspondence from the state secretary of WA Labor, state director of the Liberal Party of Western Australia, state director of the Nationals WA and the director of the Greens WA.
- (2) See attached tabled paper.

[See paper [3151](#).]

- (3) In response, the Deputy Electoral Commissioner and other staff met with representatives of political parties on 14 May 2024. The commission has acknowledged the concerns expressed by those registered political parties and is working with them to provide the information they seek.
- (4) The Minister for Electoral Affairs has requested the commission to work with the parties to ensure their concerns are addressed so that all parties will be able to comply with the law.

KIDS HELPLINE

**488. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer to the Kids Helpline counselling service for young people aged between five and 25 years and the Department of Communities.

What is the total amount of funding that will be provided by the department to deliver this service in the 2024–25 financial year?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Community Services.

The Department of Communities has notified the service provider, yourtown, of the intention to extend the Kids Helpline service agreement for the financial year 2024–25. The terms-of-service agreement extension is not yet finalised.

WATER SECURITY GRANTS — HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY — SOUTHERN FOREST

**489. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Regional Development:**

I refer to the Cook government's water security for southern forests horticulture industry grants of up to \$100 000 to eligible horticulture producers in the Warren–Donnelly region.

- (1) With south west farmers enduring one of the driest summers in living memory, why have the grants been restricted to the Warren–Donnelly catchments?
- (2) On what meteorological and rainfall data or criteria was the Warren–Donnelly region determined to be the only area eligible for the grants?
- (3) What support is available to farmers in other catchments who have equally struggled with low rainfall and are struggling?
- (4) Will the minister urgently undertake to rectify the geographical boundary eligibility to allow other areas to apply for water security grants; and, if not, why not?

**Hon KYLE MCGINN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer was provided by the Minister for Regional Development.

- (1)–(2) The southern forests infrastructure support scheme is in line with the current government's commitment to assisting horticulture in the Manjimup–Pemberton region and utilises funds previously allocated to this specific region.
- (3) There is a range of state and federal government support initiatives available to farmers administered via relevant portfolios.
- (4) The funds were allocated to the Warren–Donnelly catchment.

ENVIRONMENT — VOGEL–McFERRAN REVIEW

**490. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to recommendation 12 of the Vogel–McFerran review, which states —

- (a) The Government consider amending the EP Act to introduce a requirement for the EPA to have a 'Statement of Intent' with the Minister for Environment to ensure the EPA recognises the government's priorities and policy objectives.
  - (b) The Stakeholder Engagement Plan would be a key component of a statutorily mandated 'Statement of Intent' the EPA would have with the Minister for Environment.
- (1) For (a), when will the Parliament of Western Australia consider the proposed amendments?
  - (2) Has the government finalised the stakeholder engagement plan?
  - (3) Has the government prepared a draft statement of intent?
  - (4) If yes to (2) and (3), can these documents be tabled?



**Hon DARREN WEST replied:**

I acknowledge the visitors in the public gallery today. Welcome to question time.

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

(1)–(4) The state government is working to implement recommendation 12 of the Vogel–McFerran review.

**PROPOSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR****491. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the minister representing the Minister for Local Government:**

I refer to the announcement of the establishment of a new local government inspector.

- (1) How many specialist monitors is the government anticipating requiring?  
 (2) How will the monitors be divided across the state?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer was provided by the Minister for Local Government.

- (1)–(2) It is proposed that the appointment of monitors will be on a case-by-case basis, responding to needs at any particular time. The intended purpose of a monitor is to assist a local government to resolve potential issues at an early stage. It is also proposed that local governments will be able to request the appointment of a monitor.

**YOUTH DETENTION — BANKSIA HILL DETENTION CENTRE AND CASUARINA PRISON****492. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Corrective Services:**

I refer to youth justice.

- (1) Will the minister please provide the following information on Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18 respectively for April 2024 —
- (a) the number of suicide and self-harm attempts;  
 (b) the monthly average out-of-cell hours;  
 (c) the number of occasions a young person spent 20 or more hours in their cell; and  
 (d) the number of occasions a young person spent four or more hours out of their cell?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

The Department of Justice advise:

- (1) (a) Answer (1)(a)

Table 1. Banksia Hill Attempted Suicide and Self-Harm Instances between 1 and 30 April 2024

	<b>April 2024</b>
<b>Attempted Suicide</b>	1
<b>Self-Harm - Serious</b>	0
<b>Self-Harm - Minor</b>	41

Table 2. Unit 18 Attempted Suicide and Self-Harm Instances between 1 and 30 April 2024

	<b>April 2024</b>
<b>Attempted Suicide</b>	0
<b>Self-Harm - Serious</b>	0
<b>Self-Harm - Minor</b>	22

- (b) Answer (1)(b)

Table 3. Banksia Hill and Unit 18 Average Out of Cell Hours between 1 and 30 April 2024

	<b>Banksia Hill</b>	<b>Unit 18</b>
<b>April 2024</b>	8 hrs 13 mins	4 hrs 55 mins

- (c) Answer (1)(c)

Table 4. Occasions at Banksia Hill and Unit 18 on which a young person spent 20 or more hours in Cell between 1 and 30 April 2024

	<b>Banksia Hill</b>	<b>Unit 18</b>
<b>April 2024</b>	453	187

(d) Answer (1)(d)

Table 4. Occasions at Banksia Hill and Unit 18 on which a young person spent 4 or more hours out of Cell between 1 and 30 April 2024

	Banksia Hill	Unit 18
April 2024	2,015	229

#### FIREARMS — LICENSING

**493. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the Western Australia Police Force firearms licensing and registration system.

- (1) For each year from 2012–13 to 2022–23, what was the average turnaround time for each firearm licence category, including original issue, renewal and additional firearm applications?
- (2) To date, what has been the total allocation of funds for the development, implementation and maintenance of the licensing and registration system?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force advises the following.

- (1) The WA Police Force firearm licensing and registration system has limited reporting capabilities and there is no avenue at the user end to provide statistics on turnaround times.

A response to (2) cannot be provided within the required timeframe. It is requested that the honourable member place the question on notice.

#### VAPES — MEDICINAL USE

**494. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer the minister to calls by advocates in the eastern states for exemptions that would allow those who have been prescribed medicinal vapes, particularly those with epilepsy or other swift-onset conditions, to vape in what would otherwise be non-smoking areas.

- (1) Does the minister stand by the response she gave to my question 564 in June 2022, in which she reassured me that there would be no anticipated impact on medicinal vapes under the government's new regulatory scheme?
- (2) Will the government consider an exemption here in Western Australia to allow properly prescribed, legal vapes to be used in public spaces as needed?
- (3) If no to (1), are the new laws not already having a clear and detrimental impact upon vulnerable patients in our community, and what does the minister propose to do to counter that?

**Hon PIERRE YANG replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following has been provided by the Minister for Health.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) No.
- (3) Western Australian law does not currently prohibit the use of any therapeutic device to treat a medical condition in a public place.

#### BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT (SEX OR GENDER CHANGES) BILL 2024

**495. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:**

I refer to the WA government media statement of 23 February 2024 and the glossary from the Living Proud website, which provides a very different definition of gender than the definition provided for sex, the first being based more around lifestyle and the latter more around biology at birth, meaning that sex and gender are two completely different things.

- (1) Can the Attorney General advise how much of the \$900 000 funding referred to in the media statement was received by Living Proud?
- (2) Noting that the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024 provides the option of having only one's sex changed on one's birth certificate, can the Attorney General confirm that under the new regime, a person wishing to change their gender will be forced to change their sex on their birth certificate, as there is only one field on the birth certificate that they will be allowed to change?

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) The Attorney General did not release a media statement on this topic on 23 February 2024.
- (2) The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024, if passed, will allow a person to apply to the registrar to change their sex or gender on their birth certificate, bringing WA into line with all other states and territories.

## PROPOSED EMERGENCY HELICOPTER — GERALDTON

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

I refer to Legislative Council question without notice 477, answered on 14 May 2024—yesterday—and I will ask one simple question.

Can the minister please table any correspondence between himself and the member for Geraldton in relation to establishing an emergency rescue helicopter service in the midwest region?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I will provide one response.

The member for Geraldton, Lara Dalton, MLA, has been in contact with me, my chief of staff and my principal policy adviser on many occasions to strongly advocate for an emergency rescue helicopter service in the midwest region.

## ROAD SAFETY — SOUTH WESTERN HIGHWAY

**497. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:**

I thank the minister for the answer to question without notice 372 regarding South Western Highway, which was identified on the RAC's list of risky roads. I now refer to the section from the intersection of Vasse Highway and South Western Highway to Walpole.

- (1) Since August 2022, what improvements have been made to this section of the road?
- (2) Are any significant upgrades currently planned for this road; and, if so, can the minister please provide details?
- (3) Since January 2019, how many crashes have been reported on this road, and, of these, how many resulted in —
  - (a) a serious injury; and
  - (b) a fatality?

**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 Transport.

- (1)–(3) A number of upgrades have been made to the 103-kilometre section of South Western Highway between the Vasse Highway turn-off and North Walpole Road since 2017. This includes widening of a five-kilometre section between Centre Road and Mandalay Beach Road, a 5.5-kilometre section between Railway Road and Deep River, a five-kilometre section between Deeside Coast Road and Middleton Road, a 5.1-kilometre section between Wallace Road and Deeside Coast Road, a five-kilometre section between the Vasse Highway turn-off and Styles Road and a 15-kilometre section between Kessell Road and Middleton Road; replacement of the Weld River Bridge; and earthworks and the extension of drainage in preparation for pavement widening between Emerald Road and Telephone Road. Widening of the highway between Emerald Road and Telephone Road is set to begin next financial year.

## STATE CORONER — CASE BACKLOG

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

I refer to the parliamentary secretary's statement to the house on 8 August 2023 in which he advised that there were 28 cases of post-abortion neonatal deaths with the Coroner's Court, and the answer to question without notice 932, asked on 29 August 2023, which reaffirmed that there were 28 such cases before the State Coroner.

- (1) Is the Attorney General aware that 26 of those cases were first reported to the State Coroner more than five years ago?
- (2) What is the total number of such cases presently before the State Coroner?

**Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(2) Following the amendment to the Coroners Act 1996 on 27 March 2024 with the insertion of section 3B, the State Coroner provided instructions on 9 April 2024 for these matters to be closed because the coroner no longer has any jurisdiction in relation to the deaths.

## FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION — SAWLOGS

**499. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Forestry:**

I refer to the Forest Products Commission request for proposals for high-value sawlog.

- (1) What is the timeline for the completion of these processes?
- (2) When will applicants or proponents be offered a contract?
- (3) When does the minister expect the first supply of sawlog to be delivered to the successful applicants or proponents?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. As I wade through a large number of questions from the honourable member, can I just confirm, member, is this question 456?

**Hon Steve Martin:** 456.

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS:** Thank you.

- (1)–(3) The request for proposals process for high-value recovery logs is still under evaluation. Successful applicants will be notified, and deliveries commenced as soon as practical after the process is finalised.

Honourable member, I note that that answer was correct as of 8 May.

## COMMUNITY PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) ACT — REFORM

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

I refer the minister to his response to question without notice 119 asked on Wednesday, 13 March 2024.

- (1) Will the proposed amendments to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004 provide the opportunity for teenagers and young adults on the register to apply to have their reporting obligations and names removed from the sex register?
- (2) If not, why not?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(2) The state government is progressing the drafting of amendments to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004, which will allow reportable offenders who were a child when they committed their offences to apply to a court for an order that they cease to be a reportable offender.

## MARMION MARINE PARK

**501. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the minister's recent statement that the planning process for the proposed Marmion Marine Park will be paused until the south coast marine park process has concluded.

- (1) Within what timeframe will the planning process for the south coast marine park be concluded?
- (2) Is it the minister's intent to have the planning process for the Marmion Marine Park extension concluded during the forty-first Parliament?

**Hon DARREN WEST replied:**

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

- (1)–(2) The state government is committed to delivering well-balanced marine parks for the south coast and Marmion. Conclusion of the planning process will be based on achieving this commitment.

## FIREARMS ACT — POLICE COMMISSIONER'S POWERS

**502. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the Firearms Act 1973.

On how many occasions since 2017 have Western Australian Commissioners of Police exercised powers available under section 29A of the act?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force advises that it is 49 occasions.

## FORMER SWAN DISTRICT HOSPITAL SITE

**503. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Lands:**

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 425 asked on 9 May 2024 regarding the former Swan District Hospital site, which states that the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is responsible for the management of that site.

- (1) Can the minister advise what work has been undertaken by the department to prevent further vandalism and damage to the site?
- (2) Does the department have any plans to demolish the vacant buildings on the site; and, if yes, what is the timeframe?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Lands.

- (1) The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has constant onsite security at the former Swan District Hospital and, where needed, the services of the Western Australia Police Force are utilised. The department also conducts vegetation clearing and fence repairs as required.
- (2) No.

## GRIFFIN COAL — KPMG

**504. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade:**

I refer to my question without notice 19 of 27 February 2024 revealing the remarkable four-fold increase to the initial KPMG contract of \$240 000 to a new rolling contract value of \$990 000 for the provision of advice to government on the insolvent and foreign-owned Griffin Coal.

- (1) What specifically are the varieties of forms in which KPMG provides advice in relation to the insolvent and foreign-owned Griffin Coal?
- (2) What is the specific frequency of the reporting mechanisms previously generalised as “on a regular basis”?
- (3) What specific modifications, changes or enhancements were made to the Griffin Coal process agreement of 14 August 2023, which allowed for the four-fold increase in value to the KPMG contract?

**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 State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade.

- (1)–(2) KPMG provides written and verbal advice to government on a range of matters relating to the administration of the process agreement, including providing monthly reports.
- (3) The process agreement is between the state and the receivers and managers of Griffin Coal. KPMG is not a party to this agreement. The value of the KPMG contract is reflective of the required work in assisting with the administration of the process agreement.

## ENVIRONMENT — VOGEL–McFERRAN REVIEW

**505. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the Vogel–McFerran review, which examined red tape in environmental approvals.

- (1) Has recommendation 36, which states that the government consider moving appeal rights under part V of the Environmental Protection Act to the State Administrative Tribunal, been considered?
- (2) If yes to (1), in considering this matter, is the government now committed to moving appeal rights under part V of the EP act to SAT?
- (3) Has the government consulted with SAT on this matter?
- (4) If no to (2), why not?

**Hon DARREN WEST replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. Can I just confirm, member, because there are two very similar questions, this is C525?

**Hon Neil Thomson:** Yes.

**Hon DARREN WEST:** Thank you, member. On behalf of the Minister for Environment, I provide the following answer.

- (1)–(4) Consideration of how to address recommendation 36 is underway.

**Hon Neil Thomson** interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

BUNBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL — MIDWIVES

**506. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the closure of the maternity ward at St John of God Bunbury Regional Hospital and the claim that a chronic shortage of employed midwives led to the decision.

- (1) How is Bunbury Regional Hospital preparing for the influx of transferring patients?
- (2) How is the government working to attract and maintain midwives across Western Australia?

**Hon PIERRE YANG replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following has been provided by the Minister for Health.

- (1)–(2) St John of God is a private health provider that made a business decision to close maternity services at its Bunbury hospital. The WA Country Health Service is working to ensure Bunbury Regional Hospital is ready for the transition of service, including working to secure additional bed capacity and increasing staffing capacity. Additionally, as part of the Bunbury Regional Hospital redevelopment, the state government will deliver 20 new maternity beds. WA Health has a range of strategies to attract and maintain midwives across Western Australia, including providing \$12 000 in HECS support to graduate nurses to live and work in our regions, the student midwifery model pilot and the country nursing and midwifery incentive program.

PUBLIC HOUSING — WAITLIST

**507. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to the wait turn and priority public housing waitlist.

How many applicants and individuals were on each list at the end of April 2024?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Housing.

As of 30 April 2024, there were 20 203 applications on the public housing waitlist statewide. This includes 5 431 priority applications.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

**508. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the nurse practitioner and team-based care pilot program, announced on 20 February 2023.

- (1) Of the 20 positions originally promised, how many have been filled to date?
- (2) What is the location or region of each position filled?
- (3) How many nurse practitioners are currently endorsed in Western Australia?

**Hon PIERRE YANG replied:**

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

- (1) To date, 10 nurse practitioner placements have commenced, with additional placements still being assessed.
- (2) Placements have been made in primary care services across the Perth metropolitan area as well as the Peel, wheatbelt and great southern regions.
- (3) As of 31 December 2023, 331 nurse practitioners were endorsed in Western Australia. This does not include endorsements that occurred after this date.

CANNABIS — DRIVER IMPAIRMENT

**509. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:**

I thank the minister for her response to my question of yesterday regarding the ministerial working group looking into driving and THC. Although I am disappointed that little or no progress has made in establishing the group in the last six months, I am heartened to learn that it will eventually include people with lived experience.

- (1) Is the minister able to explain how those individuals with lived experience will be selected?
- (2) Will the government advertise or does it have another means of identifying suitable candidates?
- (3) If the intention is to advertise, when are those adverts scheduled to go public?

**Hon PIERRE YANG replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) The Chief Health Officer is sending letters seeking the nomination of a person with relevant lived experience to a health consumer organisation.

## TORNADO — BUNBURY

**510. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the Minister for Emergency Services:**

I refer to Western Australians whose homes are not habitable due to the tornado in Bunbury.

- (1) How many Western Australians are currently not able to live in their homes as a result of the tornado in Bunbury?
- (2) Will the minister consider increasing relief payments for tornado victims considering the current WA Labor housing disaster in the state, which has made any accommodation hard to find and very expensive?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services —

**Hon Darren West** interjected.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Darren, I am answering the question, if you do not mind listening.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advises the following.

- (1) As of 15 May 2024, the Department of Communities was accommodating 29 impacted people from 16 family groups in commercial accommodation.
- (2)–(3) The state government is working with the City of Bunbury to understand the recovery needs of impacted people and to identify the best ways to support them.

## SWAN RIVER CROSSING PROJECT

**511. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to Legislative Council question without notice 113 answered on 12 March 2024.

- (1) What is the expected cost of the Perth CBD transport plan—Swan River bridge, including supplementary works and upgrades to water infrastructure?
- (2) What is the expected cost of the bridge construction?
- (3) What allocation in the 2024–25 budget has been made for the project?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:**

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

- (1)–(3) The requested details can be found in the 2024–25 state budget paper No 2.

## FIREARMS ACT — CONSULTATION

**512. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the Western Australia Police Force's firearms consultation paper and call for submissions, which closed on 14 November 2023.

- (1) How many submissions were received through this process?
- (2) How were the submissions assessed?
- (3) Did WA Police make any recommendations to amend the draft bill as a result of submissions?
- (4) If yes to (3), please list.

**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.

The Western Australia Police Force advise the following.

- (1) It was 6 681.
- (2) The submissions were reviewed by the Western Australia Police Force firearms act reform project team and categorised into different topics.
- (3) Yes.

(4) The information is in tabular form so I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

- 
- (4) One of the objectives of the consultation process was to gather constructive submissions that could be used to enhance the Draft of the Firearms Bill. Of the submissions made, 45 reflected components already included within the draft and an additional 19 were used to enhance or introduce provisions within the Draft. The following points are indicative of the inclusions or enhancements made to the Draft:
- Referencing different categories of firearms under the licence/s.
  - Enhanced storage provisions based on licence type and firearm numbers.
  - Manufacture or re-loading of ammunition by individuals or other licence holders for their use under their licence.
  - Disqualification periods for Mandatory Disqualifying Offences to commence at completion of incarceration.
  - Increased penalties for firearm offences.
- 

#### CHILDREN IN CARE — WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN

**513. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Child Protection:**

I refer to the answer to my question without notice 448 on 9 May 2024.

- (1) Has the child recorded as “missing” been found?
- (2) For how many days was the whereabouts of the child unknown?
- (3) How many days after the child was first unaccounted for did the department report the child to WA police as a missing person?
- (4) How many children who are in the care of the CEO have their whereabouts currently recorded as —
  - (a) unaccounted for—in contact;
  - (b) unaccounted for—not in contact; and
  - (c) missing?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Child Protection.

The Department of Communities advises the following as of 14 May 2024.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) For 15 days.
- (3) One day.
- (4)
  - (a) Three.
  - (b) One.
  - (c) Nil.

#### GOVERNMENT REGIONAL OFFICERS’ HOUSING — CARNARVON

**514. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to Government Regional Officers’ Housing in Carnarvon.

- (1) How many GROH properties are there in Carnarvon?
- (2) How many in (1) are currently vacant?
- (3) How many in (2) are awaiting repairs?
- (4) Will the minister please table a list of how many GROH properties are allocated to each client agency in Carnarvon?
- (5) How many GROH properties in Carnarvon are unallocated?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Housing.

- (1) As of 30 April 2024, there were 119 GROH properties.
- (2) Nineteen properties are currently vacant, of which 10 are currently allocated to client agencies and may be held vacant for a range of legitimate operational reasons, such as rotating staff on fixed-tenure arrangements or staff leave, including maternity leave for regional teachers.



- (3) Ten properties are currently undergoing maintenance.
- (4) As of 30 April 2024, 12 client agencies have been allocated a total of 109 GROH properties. There is a table with the list of agencies. I seek leave to have that incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Client Agency
Central Regional TAFE
Department of Communities
Department of Education
Department of Justice
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Gascoyne Development Commission
Legal Aid Commission
PathWest
WA Country Health Service
WA Police Force
Water Corporation

- (5) As at 30 April 2024, there were 10 unallocated properties in Carnarvon. Not all unallocated properties are vacant. Of the 10 unallocated properties, four are leased to non-government organisations due to no client agency demand for the property, and six are currently being considered for future uses.

FREDERIK SUHREN — MEETING

**515. Hon PETER COLLIER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Sport and Recreation:**

- (1) Has the CEO or members of the executive of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries met with Mr Frederik Suhren since 1 January 2024?
- (2) If yes to (1), when was the meeting or meetings, and what was the purpose of the meeting or meetings?

**Hon KYLE McGINN replied:**

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer, which I provide on behalf of the parliamentary secretary, has been provided by the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.

BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS — STAFF — ALBANY AND ESPERANCE

**516. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the staffing of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions offices located in Albany and Esperance.

- (1) Will the minister please provide a list of all substantive and temporary positions located at each office as at 31 December 2023?
- (2) Will the minister please provide a list of all newly created and abolished positions at each of the respective offices from 1 January 2024?

**Hon DARREN WEST replied:**

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

- (1) I table the requested information providing details of substantive and temporary positions as at 31 December 2023.
- (2) I table the requested information providing the details of positions created since 1 January 2024 at the Albany and Esperance offices. No positions have been abolished in these regions since 1 January 2024.

[See paper [3152](#).]

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM — FUNDING

**517. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:**

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 92 asked on 12 March 2024 regarding the empowering communities program, which stated, in part —

Once service agreements have been signed and accepted by service providers, funding allocation for the 2024–25 financial year can be advised.

- (1) Have service providers included in the empowering communities program signed new service agreements?
- (2) If yes to (1) —
  - (a) how much funding has been allocated to each community centre for the 2024–25 financial year; and
  - (b) when will their new service agreements expire?
- (3) If no to (1), when are service agreements expected to be finalised?

**Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:**

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Community Services.

The Department of Communities advises the following.

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Service agreement extensions are expected to be finalised prior to 30 June 2024.

**SCHOOLS — STAFF — ASSAULTS  
COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY CAPITAL WORKS FUNDS**

*Questions without Notice 412 and 451 — Answers*

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [5.04 pm]: On behalf of the Leader of the House, I would like to provide answers to Hon Dr Brian Walker's question without notice 412 asked last week on 8 May and to Hon Tjorn Sibma's question without notice 451 asked on 9 May. I seek leave to have both answers incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

**Question without notice 412 —**

- (1) Yes.
- (2) In 2023, there were 2,760 reported incidents of assaults or physical threatening behaviour against public school staff. Of these, 106 incidents were committed by adults and 2,681 by minors.  
In 2022, there were 2,275 reported incidents, of which 86 incidents were committed by adults and 2,215 by minors.  
Notes:
  - The totals involving adults and minors will not equal the number of incidents as a single incident can involve both an adult and a minor as the offender.
  - A minor is defined as being a person under the age of 18 years old.
 Source: Department of Education Online Incident Notification System (OINS)
- (3) As public servants, teachers are already covered by the existing assault on a public officer provisions within the Criminal Code.

**Question without notice 451 —****(1) Community Grants Program**

2020–21	of the 88 applications received, two were deemed ineligible, one was withdrawn, 53 were funded and 32 were not funded.
2021–22	of the 80 applications received, two were deemed ineligible, 69 were funded and 9 were not funded.
2022–23	of the 108 applications received, one was deemed ineligible, 63 were funded and 44 were not funded.
2023–24	(as at 9 May 2024), of the 75 applications received, two were deemed ineligible, 56 were funded and 17 were not funded.

**Community Capital Works Fund**

2020–21	of the 40 applications received, two were withdrawn and four were deemed ineligible, 28 were funded and six were not funded.
2023–24	of the 44 applications received, seven were deemed ineligible, 35 were funded and two were not funded because the projects did not meet the required

(2) **Community Grants Program**

2020–21	all applications were funded to the requested amount.
2021–22	three applications were funded to a lesser amount than requested
2022–23	one application was funded to a lesser amount than requested.
2023–24	(as at 9 May 2024), three were funded to a lesser amount than requested.

**Community Capital Works Fund**

2020–21	25 applications were funded to a lesser amount than requested.
2023–24	11 applications were funded to a lesser amount than requested.

(3) Yes, the Community Support Funding 2023–2025 is a competitive grants program which provides triennial funding to community peak-bodies to deliver coordination, advocacy and support services to their member associations and community members. The six CSF 2023–2025 recipients will jointly receive \$849 000 over the three-year contract period.

(4) Organisations in receipt of Community Support Fund for 2023–2025 are:

- Indian Society of WA – \$150 000
- Chung Wah Association Inc – \$120 000
- Vietnamese Community in Australia – WA Chapter Inc – \$150 000
- Midwest Multicultural Association Inc – \$120 000
- Organisation of African Communities in WA Inc – \$189 000
- Bunbury Multicultural Group Inc – \$120 000.

**POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE****POLICE — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE****POLICE — STAFF****POLICE — ROAD TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS UNIT — STAFF**

*Questions without Notice 452, 453, 467 and 481 — Answers*

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide answers to Hon Peter Collier's questions without notice 452, 453, 467 and 481, all asked yesterday. I seek leave to have the answers incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

**Question without notice 452 —****Answer**

The Western Australia Police Force are unable to link arrests recorded in Incident Management System (IMS) to the attended Family Violence, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) tasks as these are different systems/databases. Not every CAD attendance relates to circumstances, in which an arrest is an appropriate potential outcome, and not every arrest outcome arises as a result of a CAD attendance.

**Question without notice 453 —****Answer**

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

(1)–(2) 88.35 FTE as at 14 May 2024.

**Question without notice 467 —****Answer**

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

- (1) 7,024
- (2) (a) Male 5,267  
(b) Female 1,733  
(c) Other 24

**Question without notice 481 —****Answer**

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

- (1) 295.50  
(2) 241 as at 30 April 2024

**POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER PRESUMPTION — FIRST RESPONDERS***Question without Notice 297 — Supplementary Information*

**HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services)** [5.05 pm]: I would like to table a letter and my response to Hon Martin Aldridge's question without notice 297, asked on 16 April.

[See paper [3153](#).]

**STIRLING TOWERS — REFURBISHMENT***Question without Notice 474 — Correction of Answer*

**HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food)** [5.05 pm]: On behalf of the Minister for Housing, I provide a correction to an answer provided to Hon Dr Brad Pettitt's question without notice 474 asked yesterday, 14 May 2024. The answer that was provided contained an error. The answer to part (1) should read "one", not "nil". The correct answer, to be noted on record, is below. The question was —

- (1) How many proposals to refurbish Stirling Towers were received as part of the housing diversity pipeline's expression of interest and request for detailed proposal processes?

The correct answer is —

- (1) One; however, the proposal was out of scope for the tender given engineering review of the building deemed refurbishment unviable. This is due to significant structural issues, including the presence of concrete cancer, significant asbestos and noncompliant balconies.

I apologise to the house for the error.

**ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE***Consideration of Tabled Papers*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan)** [5.07 pm]: Before the break for question time, I was reflecting on the first part of my response on the environment and climate change. As a way of wrapping that up, I think it is worth reflecting on some of the feedback we have received from the broader environment and climate movement in Western Australia in response to the 2024–25 state budget. It would be fair to summarise the most recent state budget as representing, for most of them, a very dark day for climate and nature interests in Western Australia, especially given the federal government's 2030 gas strategy announced on the same day. The budget reflects the government's priorities. What we have seen today is that despite earlier promises, both the state and federal governments are going in precisely the wrong direction on climate change and nature. The Cook government has failed to outline any meaningful plans to act on climate change or protect our precious and diminishing natural environment, while Anthony Albanese has betrayed the community and future generations by doubling down on fossil fuels. The community should be rightly disappointed in both Labor governments today. That is certainly the resounding message that we have heard from the sector over the last week.

I will move on to waste, which certainly sits within the environment area as well. Waste is a really interesting topic. I have asked a lot of questions in this place about food organics, garden organics and how we are going with the three bins and FOGO kerbside collections here in WA. I think this is interesting. Again, there were no announcements in the budget on waste, to the best of my knowledge. Given that there is nothing new or fundamentally shifting on the waste strategy, I assume that we are on track to meet the targets the government has set. A couple of targets are worth noting. One is the 2025 target to increase material recovery to 70 per cent. Another target is that all metropolitan local governments will introduce FOGO by 2025. Given that there is nothing new in the budget, I assume that would mean we are on track to meet both those targets but, no, we are going backwards. In fact, we ultimately saw some pretty astounding numbers when we tracked the amount of waste diverted from landfill. I will give members one example. The percentage of commercial and industrial waste that has been diverted from landfill through recycling through the statewide waste strategy is 77 per cent, which is a good target, as I said. How are we tracking? It is 45 per cent. We are not even close. We would think that a government with a huge surplus and the ability to get anything done would shift gears to make sure that we get back on track, but I cannot see anything in this budget that will enable us to do that.

Similarly, the other key government announcement is that all Western Australian metropolitan local governments will have introduced the food organics and garden organics bins by next year. I asked a question in this place about this not that long ago. I asked what percentage of households are participating in FOGO. A lot of announcements have been made on this. An extraordinarily low 16.4 per cent of households in the Perth metro region currently have access to a FOGO service. We are not on track; we are not even close to being on track. About half of the local governments are providing FOGO, including many of the big ones. I am happy that they are. I am a big supporter of FOGO. When I was the Mayor of Fremantle, the City of Fremantle was one of the first to adopt it. It has clearly been rolled out at a rate that is so slow, we hear about a range of local governments that will not provide FOGO,

for which there seems to be no consequences. We have a waste system that still sends about two-thirds of our waste to landfill. This needs fixing. We can do this through the budget process, government policy and the right kind of incentives. It is deeply disappointing. In fact, the proportion of household waste being diverted from landfill through recycling has gone backwards. It was 56 per cent last financial year. It is estimated to be 35 per cent this financial year. Again, the target for this year is 65 per cent. We are nowhere near it. I honestly do not understand that.

The problem is that if the government does not back in its own strategies and targets and it does not fund them, people stop taking them seriously; they do not think they are real. I guess that is what has happened here; local governments do not think they are real and that is why we are not seeing them take this rollout seriously. It is really important because FOGO done well with good recycling up-front, diversion through FOGO and then only the last bit that goes in the little red bin that cannot be recycled or composted and ultimately goes into a waste energy plant is a good system. That is where we need to go. It requires government leadership to get everybody doing that, especially because a bunch of local governments have signed up to waste-to-energy contracts, so they cannot provide FOGO as a result. The only way to get around that is for the state government to coordinate local governments to make sure that those waste energy plants have the tonnage they need without sucking up a FOGO resource. It can be done but it requires leadership and a budget to achieve those things.

While I am on the waste issue, I will say that I was looking through the budget and thinking that it contained nothing new. How have previous budgets tracked in this regard? I want to give a couple of examples from the budget papers. For example, the government budgeted \$15 million for waste paper and cardboard processing under “Clean Western Australia”. Somehow we only managed to spend \$2.269 million. Again, there were huge underspends on otherwise good initiatives. We budgeted \$8.6 million for the “e-waste to landfill ban” but spent only \$4.4 million. Again, it is really important that we keep our e-waste out of landfill, but we are not backing this in. Looking at these things, it raises some serious concerns around where we are going and what we are achieving.

I turn to energy. If we are talking about sustainability, we are talking about decarbonisation. As I said, there was nothing explicitly in the budget on climate and emissions reduction but we would hope that at least in the energy space, we would see a lot around decarbonisation and the energy transition. In fact, pleasingly, page 12 of the overview in the state budget refers to this. Under the heading “Economic diversification and energy transition”, it states —

This Budget delivers \$1.8 billion to diversify and decarbonise our economy ...

Looking through the list, I see nothing new. Importantly, I also do not see any grid-connected large-scale generation. Perhaps the highlight is seen under the subheading “Energy transition”, which states —

- \$324 million to undertake extensive planning and procure **long-lead transmission infrastructure** for the State’s main electricity grid to unlock industry growth and connect more renewable energy.

That is really important. I have been banging on in this place for a long time about the need to get our grid ready so we can get the wind we need to the north, the east and, to some extent, the south on to our grid to complement the large amount of rooftop solar that we have. It is a little frustrating to read in this budget that the amount of \$324 million is for extensive planning. It is pretty clear what needs to happen. We already have plenty of documents in this space around getting out and building the transmission infrastructure we need, especially to the north.

I could not help but notice, because it was on the same page, that we are spending more money over the next year boosting tourism than we are on fixing our main grid and getting it ready for renewable energy. There are two consequences to this: either state-owned coal cannot close, as the government is committed to doing, or if it does close—part of the reason it would close is because it is so inefficient and out of date, it needs to close—it will necessarily be replaced by gas rather than renewable energy, as it should be. Of course, the climate benefits of that will be greatly diminished, if at all, frankly, if coal is ultimately replaced by open turbine gas, as we have seen recently with Kemerton seeking to quadruple its output. If that were the case, we would have a serious problem.

There are real issues here. We would expect to see a whole bunch of funding in the energy space for new renewable projects. When I last raised this issue in the chamber, Hon Darren West pointed out that there is a project coming—King Rocks wind farm, from memory, finishing in late 2026. That is the only one that we can see on the horizon. Ultimately, we should be rolling out a huge pipeline of projects, including wind, large-scale solar, providing diversity across our state, connected to our grid. That is not what we are seeing. We have one project and beyond that, nothing, despite being about 10 per cent of the population and more than that in terms of the state’s economy. The Clean Energy Council figures show that only about three per cent of renewable energy projects have taken place in this state. We are not doing our fair share in this space.

The other key issue relating to energy that is worth highlighting in the budget comes under the interesting heading “Payments to charitable and other public bodies”, with a very charitable payment of \$50 million made to Griffin Coal last year on top of a charitable payment of \$23 million the previous year. I could not help but smirk to myself. Perhaps Griffin Coal is the biggest charity recipient in the state, but it is not really a laughing matter. By not having renewables coming onto our grid at the speed required, we are forced to fund and keep using coal for longer. It is pretty simple. We need to get more wind and solar energy systems in place and the right transmission system.

I will give credit where credit is due. This government is doing good stuff in the battery and storage space in terms of large-scale storage but not in the generation space. The faster we set that up, the sooner we can turn off coal and the less likely we will need to replace it with gas, which would be the biggest travesty of all. If we have to build a new gas-fired turbine, it will be here for not just a few years, but a few decades, and that would be an absolute travesty. I would hate to see that happen.

The other big thing in the budget in the energy space is the electricity credit. In many ways, it is perhaps the most high-profile part of this budget and will provide \$400 to every household and small business. I know that everyone will appreciate that, but I want to reflect on whether this is a smart way to use a very large chunk of money. In this coming year alone, \$492 million is a very large chunk of money to throw around. I think it was Mark Gleeson who I heard on ABC radio this morning calling this lazy policy. I think there is some truth in that. We have a cost-of-living crisis and we are throwing a huge amount of money out there that is not particularly well targeted at those who need it most. We really have to wonder whether that is the best way of providing cost-of-living relief.

I want to give some examples of what the government could and should do instead. I have talked about one example a fair bit in this place. This has to be where we go. We are seeing some really good movement at a federal level in this space as we electrify households, and there are good reasons to do it. If we electrify households, we save money for not just one year, but many years going forward. Rewiring Australia is a very impressive group. Many members would know Saul Griffith who, along with Dan Cass and others, is doing some very good modelling around this. They put out something in the last couple of weeks that I have worked through and started to apply to WA. If we were to fully electrify all homes across Western Australia and run them on solar energy, it would cost on average \$20 000 a house. Heat pumps would be used instead of a gas hot water service, induction stoves would be used instead gas cooktops, and air conditioners would be used instead of gas heating. The cost of a scheme to electrify every home in the state, assuming it was a loan scheme that would be run across the whole of Australia, as is proposed, would be around \$1 500 per home.

**Hon Darren West:** Would you take an interjection, member?

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I will take an interjection.

**Hon Darren West:** We have already done this in Esperance, with significant cost savings to householders. It has been a remarkable success. I will get you the information, and I totally agree with what you are saying.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Thank you, for that interjection. Esperance is a really good example that it does work. The member is right; there are cost savings. I guess the question that arises is: why do we not do this for everybody? Esperance had to pull the gas out for other reasons, and households had to electrify. They have seen some useful savings.

I will break down the benefits of doing this. Rewiring Australia estimated that it would lock in savings of \$2 000 per household per year in perpetuity. In contrast, the electricity credit is a one-off saving of \$400. For less than the cost of the electric credit, we could lock in those savings in perpetuity. That is the role of good government. It is good investment. This is the kind of thing we should be seeing in the budget. It would not only save households money; it would make households healthier—14 per cent of childhood asthma is associated with gas stoves—and help us to meet our climate targets by bringing down emissions, which is really important.

This next number is pretty incredible. Rewiring Australia has estimated that the accumulative savings from electrifying the state by 2050 would be in the order of \$170 billion for WA alone—\$170 billion! This is the kind of investment we need to be making. In fact, the estimated savings across the whole nation would come to \$1.7 trillion. There are good reasons to go this way. Esperance has benefited, but it would be great to see the whole of Western Australia benefit from this kind of thing.

The other thing missing from this budget in the household energy space, which we really would have liked to see in there, is a rebate for household batteries. WA has done some great stuff. In fact, we are a world leader when it comes to rooftop solar. We were an early adopter around offering rebates and feed-in tariffs. I think it was the Carpenter government that was the first to promise that and set that ball rolling back in 2007–08 —

**Hon Peter Collier:** No.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** It was matched by the Barnett opposition. The member is right. Hon Peter Collier has just interjected and I remember this very well. It would be fair to say it was actually a bipartisan position. The Carpenter government announced the feed-in tariff and the Barnett opposition instantly matched it. The member is right. The Barnett government was the one that brought it in on the back of a rollout of solar in this state, which was unprecedented globally. We have been a global leader. I think that is the opportunity for batteries. We have had great success with solar, but at the moment it is a great headache for our electricity system because we have a huge amount of solar coming on at times when we do not particularly need it. By rolling out household batteries, we would be able to shift that power to when we need it in the evenings and help our grid and our energy system.

States and territories have done that. Queensland recently rolled out a \$3 000 rebate for households. Interestingly, the Northern Territory has been a real leader, which surprised me. The Northern Territory has emerged as the national

leader in solar battery adoption, with more than 30 per cent of homes and businesses with rooftop solar now having a battery. The Northern Territory has an even more generous battery scheme system than Queensland, with a maximum grant of \$5 000 compared with Queensland's rebates of \$3 000 or \$4 000. That grant helped people to install a battery and ultimately households saved a huge amount of money, and it helped with the rollout. Ultimately, it will save government money on transmission and big batteries. Households are willing to pay, albeit with a grant of \$3 000, \$4 000 or \$5 000, which is two-thirds of the total cost of a system. The government only needs to pay one-third of the cost. This is a really good, smart way for government to roll out this kind of infrastructure quickly, just as we need to. I hope that this is something that the government will roll out in future budgets because it has worked around the country.

Coming back to the electricity credit, I have talked about the rewiring idea. It could have been spent as part of a loan scheme across all households. Let us just look at this year's one-off \$492 million credit. Some work that has been done shows that the same amount of money could have delivered energy-efficient retrofits and solar power to three-quarters of all social houses across WA and provided an ongoing annual saving, as well as significant emissions reductions, for the tens of thousands of households with the lowest incomes. According to an Australian Council of Social Service report, if all 45 000 social homes in WA were retrofitted with energy-efficient appliances and solar panels, each of those households would save up to \$2 500 a year. That is really important, because the lowest income households have received about \$1 800 in electricity credits from this government over the last four years. Something that provides ongoing relief of \$2 500 a year in perpetuity is a really good investment. That is why I am saying that there is a really good reason to go beyond what I think is sometimes easy to do—that is, to throw money out there. It is important for government to help the community invest in things that save money in the long term, rather than just bringing down electricity prices in the short term.

That leads me to a broader issue that I want to look at—that is, the housing and homelessness element in this budget. It would be fair to say that in the time that I have been in this place, the cost-of-living crisis has got worse. People would rightfully ask the questions: How does this happen in the wealthiest state in the country that is running multibillion-dollar surpluses? Why do we have this cost-of-living crisis? Why are families being forced out of houses because of rent increases? I assume that everybody gets emails like I do, but I received several today from families who are not being evicted but are having their rent put up to such an extent that they have to leave, and there is nowhere to go. It is devastating. I have been advocating on their behalf with the landlords this week. These people literally have nowhere to go. We have seen rent increases of 73 per cent over the last four years. It is not a small number; 700 000 Western Australians rent, and they are doing it extremely tough at the moment. Responding to this huge crisis should have been at the heart of the budget.

As I said recently during debate on a motion I moved in this place, I am greatly concerned that the response to the housing crisis has been too performative. Small amounts of cash are outlined in a media statement, but this is not investing in ways that will help the huge number of households that are under stress. As I said previously in committee, I give credit where credit is due for the \$92 million worth of extra baseline funding for homelessness services. That is really important and it comes at a time when it is desperately needed. Ultimately, this homelessness crisis is a symptom of a broader housing crisis. We need to acknowledge that we need a much more robust response to the housing crisis; otherwise, we will just have to keep throwing money at homelessness services. We need much bolder action in this regard.

Let me look at a few bits as I delve into housing. The budget refers to the 4 900 new social homes built in this term of government. It actually does not say "built", because they have not been built. I think we all know that the truth is that about 1 000 homes have been purchased and about 1 100 homes have been built, which means that 2 100 have been delivered, and another 1 100 homes will be delivered in some form in this financial year, so we will end up with about 3 300 homes. I expect that the rest of those will be under contract to be delivered in future years. Again, I acknowledge that Minister Carey is giving this a good crack; in fact, today I asked about the number on the social housing waitlist. Interestingly, the government has stopped telling us the number of individuals; it is now just telling us the number of applications. There are about 20 000 applications, which represents about 35 000 or 36 000 people who need housing now.

As I have said in this place before, the idea that we can build our way out of a housing crisis in the short term is not going to happen, and we need to acknowledge that. We need to acknowledge that we cannot just build it; we need to do more than that. We should at least have a goal that matches the severity of the crisis. We know that we need 20 000 homes; that is the number of people on the list. Let us have a policy that aims to deliver on that, whether it be through building them or getting them out of the vacant market or the Airbnb market. They are absolutely the things that need to happen. The idea that we can just build them is clearly not happening. I have talked before in this place about the short-term rental incentive for up to 270 people to get \$10 000 each to get their homes into the long-term market. So far, 154 have taken up the incentive under the scheme. Since the incentive scheme was introduced, 500 people have joined the Airbnb scene. It is not going to be effective by itself.

If I were doing this budget, I would do something much more ambitious. In addition to an incentive scheme, I would also put in place a levy. I note what we did in Fremantle when I was mayor. We were one of the first to put in place quite a small levy that was designed to just cover costs. Even that small levy of a few hundred dollars a year

to have a house on a register saw a couple of hundred of them come off the short-term market and go back onto the long-term market because people did not want to pay it. I suspect that having a more robust levy, such as those in other places that are about \$1 000 or more a year, would see many more places come off the short-term market and go back onto the long-term market. That is important. There are more than 10 000 of those homes in WA, with 5 000 of those in Perth. In the middle of a housing crisis, we should be getting those out of the holiday market and back onto the long-term market for people who need a home. Or we could go further. We could specifically put in place a 90-day cap. In fact, some modelling that was done by the Victorian Greens shows that a 90-day cap would see 50 per cent of Airbnbs return to the long-term market. That would see 2 500 places return immediately to the long-term rental market in Perth, which would more than double the number of rentals that are available right now. There are fewer than 2 000 rentals available. These are the things that we need to be doing if we are going to turn around this housing crisis.

Similarly, there was another budget announcement of \$5 million to return 1 000 vacant homes to the private rental market by giving investors a \$5 000 incentive. With a \$3.2 billion budget surplus, I would argue that \$5 million is underwhelmingly small. If we are serious about returning vacant houses to the long-term market, we need to be serious about that. One thousand vacant houses is good, but nowhere near enough. We should be throwing a huge amount of money at this. Actually, I would prefer that, in addition, we penalised those who keep their houses empty in the middle of a housing crisis. As I talked about recently, Victoria is already doing that. If a person's house is empty, three per cent of the value of the house will be taxed each year. The scheme was passed by Victorian Labor with the help of Victorian Greens. Vancouver has a similar scheme of a three per cent tax on vacant houses. It has been doing it since 2017, and the number of vacant homes has fallen by 26 per cent. In Western Australia that would likely see 26 000 homes back in the long-term market, and it would go a very long way to solving our housing crisis.

The government needs to be looking at these things, and I must say these are quite modest proposals because we are seeing other countries do things that are far more radical. I will give members some examples of them. Some countries have mandatory rental incentives, and I will give members the example from Amsterdam. If a person's property is vacant for more than six months, the government has the power to make them rent it out, and if the property remains vacant for more than 12 months, the government will put in a tenant. In Denmark, that happens after six weeks. If a person's property in Denmark is vacant after six weeks, they have to report it to the local authority. They then have to rent it out, and if they do not rent it out, the Danish government will put someone in their house for them.

A member interjected.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** Yes. Literally. On census night, Western Australia had 118 000 empty homes. If we are serious about this issue, there are solutions. We need to go beyond just throwing around small amounts of money and pretending that will change a very severe situation when there are real solutions, ones that really could fix it, out there.

I will pivot to stamp duty, which is a slightly different housing issue. A fair bit was made of this during the budget speech. There will be an increase in the stamp duty exemption threshold for first home buyers from \$430 000 to \$450 000, and an increase of the stamp duty discount threshold from \$530 000 to \$600 000, with the claim that around 5 000 homebuyers will benefit from this policy every year. That was in the *Budget statements*; the budget reality is certainly a fair bit different. I set my staff the task of finding out how many homes are for sale in Perth for \$450 000 or less. There are fewer than 100, and the ones they came back with were, frankly, barely habitable. These places were in bad states of disrepair. Most of the houses that can get the full exemption will require a substantial amount of work for them even to be lived in. It would be fair to say that the increase in the stamp duty exemption threshold from \$430 000 to \$450 000 does not even keep up with the 9.7 per cent increase in the median house price of last financial year. I think that if we are serious about that, that should shift.

An even bigger contractual concern around this is that the first home buyer scheme ultimately pushes people to buy on the urban fringe. There are fewer than 100 established houses available within the existing urban fabric, but we can find a whole stack of houses in places such as Yanchep on the northern fringe, Dawesville on the southern fringe and Haynes—I think it is; I have not actually been—out past Armadale, that people can buy for less than \$450 000. But the real danger is that, ultimately, we are using stamp duty exemptions merely to fund sprawl. From a budget perspective, that is lacking in wisdom on so many levels because an Infrastructure WA report showed that every house on the fringe costs two to four times more in infrastructure than a house in the existing urban fabric. Therefore, all we are doing is giving a stamp duty exemption for houses on the fringe that will, ultimately, cost the government more to provide infrastructure to. Report after report has shown that this is not a financially sustainable way of doing things, but that is what we are doing. Over 70 per cent of our houses are still out on that fringe, which is absolutely crazy, and this does not create the kind of fabric that we need.

What should happen in the stamp duty space? More radically, I would say that stamp duty needs to provide incentives to people to go to where we want them to build—housing and apartments that are around train stations in the existing urban fabric, not housing on the fringe. Even more radically, we need to phase out stamp duty and replace it with a broad-based land tax. It is a radical idea, but if we are serious about enabling people to move much more



quickly and easily between houses that suit them at different points in their lives, it is something that we could and should do. That is the kind of stuff that I would like to have seen in this budget. I think that would properly deal with the housing crisis that we are facing.

I have one last point on housing and it is around rent relief. There is a \$24.4 million rent relief program in this budget. The government states —

The WA Government will provide one-off rent relief payment to help eligible tenants who are at a risk of eviction because their rent is in arrears to negotiate with their landlords to extend their tenancy.

By the end of March 2024, according to *The West Australian*, this program had helped 255 households, and the total expenditure at that point was just over \$1 million. Therefore, frankly, this program has so far underspent at a time when rent relief is needed more than ever. I add that the National Rent Affordability Scheme is winding down. We hope and expect that every single one of those people coming off NRAS—there are 4 000 in WA—should ideally be going onto some other kind of rent relief scheme because there is a real danger that many of those people will end up living in cars on our streets.

The fact that we have had a 73 per cent rent increase in our city can only lead us to think that at some point this cannot keep going. We were talking about another 20 per cent rent increase this year. I am really concerned that we are going to see working people forced out of their houses in addition to those who are already in extreme housing stress. At some point, if this keeps going, there needs to be a conversation around putting in place a temporary rent freeze to make sure that we do not see people during this housing crisis forced out of their house. As I have proposed before in this place, we could at least limit rent increases to the consumer price index. I have often talked about the ACT fixing rent to CPI plus 10 per cent. Again, that has been really successful, and, over the last few years, the ACT has seen its rental vacancy rate go up, not down, which is what we want. We can see that these more ambitious ideas really work.

I will move on to transport, which is another key part of this budget that I want to go into. Transport defines our city and how we respond to it. The budget includes \$13.8 billion for port, road and rail and transport infrastructure. I was trying to work out what percentage of this was active transport, and by that I mean transport for walking and cycling. I found \$20 million for principal shared paths and \$5 million for cycling grants. I added it up and put in things like the Causeway Bridge and a few other things. It is a good infrastructure project.

**Hon Kate Doust:** I'm looking forward to taking my bike across the bridge.

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** I am, too. We are all looking forward to that project. Even when we add in the Causeway Bridge and the PSPs and cycling grants, active cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, it still makes up less than two per cent of the transport budget. The United Nations is pretty clear about what cities need to do as they decarbonise and people become healthier—20 per cent of the budget should go towards active transport. We are at one-tenth of that, despite big ticket items like the Causeway Bridge—one-tenth. It is not surprising that as a result, our active transport load share is about two per cent. What we invest in is what we get. We are going to be stuck at the very low rates if this continues to happen. In fact, there is more in this budget for a further allocation to the Bunbury Outer Ring Road—a further \$200 million—than there is for active transport.

The Bunbury Outer Ring Road is now at \$1.46 billion. We are at a ridiculous point now at which merely a cost blowout of one of these giant ring-roads, which we should not be spending this extraordinary amount of money on, is more than we are spending on the entire cycling and walking budgets of our cities. It is a concern. We have the balance wrong. I have said that in this place before and unfortunately, despite a couple of good high-profile projects, we do not have an adequately connected network. If we keep going at the rate we are with cycling investment, we are not going to complete that network until well into the 2100s. It is ridiculous. We are a state running multibillion-dollar surpluses. This is when we have to get basic infrastructure right. This is what good cities do. It saves cities money. Everyone is a winner, but we have to invest up-front in more than roads.

In public transport, Metronet is a very important investment—\$4.8 billion over the forward estimates. It is supported by \$2.9 billion in funding from the commonwealth. It is a big amount of money. I think Metronet is a good project, but it is let down by not investing in transit in the central subregion. If we only invest in transit on the fringe, which is what we are doing—we are investing in transit up to Yanchep, out to Ellenbrook, down to Byford—that is ultimately where we will encourage our city's growth. If we are serious about density and serious about infill—apparently we are, with a target of 47 per cent, which we have never reached; we are currently sitting at about 30 per cent—we have to plan for mid-tier transit in the central core. This government promised a plan for light rail in 2017 but we still have not seen it. We have seen local governments like the City of Stirling take the lead on things like trackless trams. In fact, 15 local governments came together with a mid-tier transport plan for the central subregion. It was really good collaborative work. Unfortunately, the missing party in that collaboration was the state government, which has not been willing to sit down and ask how we can work together to, at the very least, plan for this, even if we do not want to start building it until Metronet is complete. There has been an unfortunate silence around this. Ultimately, it will let down the state. It fundamentally stops the good density, the good infill, that we need in the right places.

One theory, and I think it is a pretty credible theory, is that this government is not interested in mid-tier transit. It is only interested in buses. We have had an inkling of that again and again. I think a key reason that buses cannot do this job well is that they cannot develop a certainty and get the density and the uplift so we get the higher density developments in the right places. Let us look at what we are doing in the bus space because I think there are concerns here. I asked a question without notice recently about how many electric buses versus diesel buses the government has bought in the last year. To remind people in this place, the answer to that question was 92 diesel buses and zero electric buses. That is an important problem. The government has been running a very successful trial of four electric CAT buses around Joondalup. It is not surprising that it was successful because electric buses are not different here than anywhere else in the world where they are also running very successfully. In fact—I will throw in a bit of trivia for the day—over the last year, the world has bought more electric buses than fossil fuel buses. Globally, we are already over 50 per cent. What does the WA budget say that we are going to do? It says that we will spend almost twice as much—\$628 million—on diesel buses than we will on electric buses, at \$332 million. Why? We have trialled them and shown they work. Why are we still buying more than twice as many diesel buses as electric buses? It is a weird inertia. These buses cost more to run; they are worse for the environment. This conservatism around embracing an electric future is extremely frustrating.

On page 27 of the “Asset Investment Program”, under “Public Transport Authority of Western Australia”, it shows that \$332.5 million will be spent on electric buses over the next few years. Interestingly, in the outyears, we apparently just stop buying them. The bus replacement program keeps pumping along at its usual rate, but we stop buying electric buses by 2027. It is very hard to understand. Perhaps the government has not completed the budget properly. If we are serious about transition and we are serious about investing in the right things, can we please flip this so that we will buy a majority of electric buses and get our emissions down to make our cities cleaner, safer, quieter and more efficient?

While I am talking about electric transport, I note—it is a good thing—there is a top-up of funds for electric vehicles of \$5 million or so. Well done! I think that is an acknowledgement that we are seeing this speed up. This coming financial year will be the last year that there will be a \$3 500 subsidy for electric vehicles. They are becoming mainstream and reaching price parity very quickly. I think topping that up for this last year is a good thing to do and I am pleased to see that. One thing that is missing that we need to look at is other forms of electric mobility and how we can support them. The leading cities around the world, whether they are in Sweden, Germany, the UK or France—even Tasmania—support e-bikes and e-cargo bikes via subsidies similar to what we have done with electric cars. Like electric cars, the up-front costs are one of the main barriers to the uptake of e-bikes. We should see how we can provide a subsidy to do that.

The best practice recommended globally is about a 25 per cent subsidy, which is probably only \$1 000. The subsidy is much less than the subsidy needed for an EV, which is \$3 500. A \$1 000 subsidy is 25 per cent of a \$4 000 bike. Places that have provided that subsidy have seen, globally, a huge uptick. There are good reasons to do this. E-bikes are far more likely to replace cars. They reduce congestion and carbon emissions. The evidence suggests that they are used twice as much as conventional bikes for trips twice as long. They use one-fortieth of the energy of electric vehicles and cost only 15¢ to charge, using an electric power point. It would be fair to say that we are now a one-car, two e-bike family, and it is great. They are literally your second car, and I think this is a real opportunity in WA. Because we are so spread out, riding is hard. With the right cycling network, I really think we could make Western Australia a great place to ride. It would have been really great to have seen more of that kind of thing in the budget as well.

The last thing I want to talk about in respect of transport is freight. I put it on the record with regard to the \$116 million for Westport that I remain greatly sceptical about that project—its timing, its cost and its environmental impact on Cockburn Sound. There are some serious concerns there. Looking at some of the other freight investments, there is \$240 million for key freight routes, including the Brooking Channel Bridge, the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, the Albany ring-road and the Great Northern Highway in the Kimberley and Pilbara. There is \$240 million for roads, but in comparison only \$22 million for existing grain freight rail programs between 2022 and 2026. We should be seeing much greater investment in rail for freight movement; that would have been really good to see in this budget, and it is certainly being called for by many of the regional communities we work with.

I turn now to Fremantle Traffic Bridge. Hon Martin Aldridge asked a question about this earlier and interestingly, in answer to that question, \$430 million is the new number. According to the state development assessment unit it was \$280 million when it approved it last week, but apparently between last week and this week it has gone up to \$430 million.

**Hon Martin Aldridge:** Which is this?

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** The Fremantle Traffic Bridge. It has gone from \$280 million to \$430 million.

**Hon Darren West:** They might be running in Fremantle!

**Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT:** The Fremantle Traffic Bridge is very interesting, and I will highlight a couple of points about it. The government spent more than \$80 million on this project before it started. It takes a special skill to not work with the local community to design something like that. It is because there have been so many iterations

of this project, and it should be a wake-up call for the government. It spent \$80 million because Main Roads came up with something but then, quite rightly, hit a brick wall of community and council opposition, because they are often pretty stupid ideas that do not work. It then went back to the drawing board, did it again, and then did it again. Here we are now, with \$80 million spent before any bridgework has started. When this project started, it was \$200 million; it is now \$430 million, and I put this out there: it is still unworkable. To do this project now, the government will have to close the old Fremantle Traffic Bridge for a year, and it has not done any traffic modelling.

I asked a question about the Western Australian Planning Commission's SDAU last week: "Well, your traffic modelling hides some inadequacies." The reply was, "Oh, well, we'll work that out later." I was, like, "Seriously?" Ultimately, it will only work if only one-third of the number of cars currently coming into Fremantle come into Fremantle. It will only work if two-thirds of the number people who usually come into Fremantle stay away. What will that mean for Fremantle businesses? I want to put this out there in respect of the Fremantle Traffic Bridge: where will the pocket of money come from to support Fremantle businesses through that period? A whole bunch of them are going to go under because Main Roads came up with another plan for which it did not consult with the community. It told the council and the community that it could not be built in the same location and that it would not do that because of the traffic impacts, but now it is doing it. We need to hold it to account on that. Those businesses should not have to bear the brunt of the way in which Main Roads designed this project.

I have a positive point on the transport front: I like the \$2 million plan to expand the ferry service; I think that is a great idea. I would say that the government should probably try to do that before the Fremantle Traffic Bridge closes, so the ferries can be used, but I suspect that will not happen.

I turn now to planning. In respect of residential infill, I have talked about Beaconsfield, Bentley, Joondalup and Cannington—some of the key major infill sites that were meant to have 5 000 people going into them, but instead there has been zero new houses built. If we are serious about infill, where is the money for those projects? I acknowledge that there is some new money for planning around Bentley, but that is it. My reading of this budget is that the people of Beaconsfield are currently sitting next to boarded-up houses in a sea of demolished houses. How many more years do they have to wait? Where is the money for this? Just get on and do it. It is not that hard; you have a budget surplus, we need housing, get on and do it.

I do not understand that about the planning space. It is like the government has vacated the infill space. I do not know who it is leaving it to, but it has left it there. What about some money for transit-oriented developments around train stations? It is not me calling for this, it is the Property Council. I am not talking about Metronet stations, where no-one is seriously going to build in density for another decade yet; I am talking about proper inner-city transit-oriented developments on some of the key train lines, where density can and will work. Where is the money for planning for those? It is the role of government to get on and build new housing where it needs to be. In the absence of that, developers on the urban fringe will keep doing what they are doing. That is what will keep happening in the absence of government getting in the driver's seat and making infill happen in the right places. It is extremely frustrating to see that.

I will try to finish before the end of the day, so let me speed through this a little more.

Planning kind of flows into education. When I looked at the education budget, I could not help but think that, ultimately, we need proper planning to get in front of the issue of putting schools in the right places. The fact is that we are spending \$77 million on transportable classrooms, which is the equivalent of three new metro primary schools. We need to plan to get in front of this. We need to put our primary schools in places where we want to see development happening. This goes to the heart of what is missing: having a proper plan for growth. In the absence of the school assistance program, the \$7 million and all that work that was thrown away, and in the absence of a series of proper plans for our metro area, this is ultimately what we need so that we can have development in the right places, where it needs to happen.

There are some really key issues around greyhounds. It feels like the government is doubling down on greyhound racing in this budget, with a \$24.6 million in the racing and wagering system. It is apparently meant to be necessary for innovation and to remain relevant in a competitive market. I think we do need a plan for this, but a plan for transitioning out, not up.

The 2024–25 budget delivers almost \$300 million for Closing the Gap and projects around that. There are some good initiatives in that, including the \$16 million youth justice program for therapeutic approaches in the Children's Court of WA. These kinds of things are good. I would just say that we need more of these diversionary programs in all the communities where they are needed, and this budget does not do that. Let us not forget that this government's long-awaited on-country diversion facility was announced in 2022 and expected to commence in 2023. The Cook government signed a funding agreement only two months ago. As the *National Indigenous Times* stated —

... significant delays raised community concerns about more young people going to the state's troubled youth detention facilities —

In the meantime, we need urgency around youth detention and diversion because otherwise we will end up spending a whole bunch more on things like Operation Regional Shield, which will have \$23 million spent on it, which is more than the \$16 million to be spent on youth justice programs.

I have talked about Roebourne Regional Prison before. It is good to see there is now funding for air conditioning. That is certainly something I have been asking for since I first came into this place. I just urge that it be done before this summer rather than kicking it down the road into the second half of the financial year ahead of us.

I want to talk about youth detention and Banksia Hill Detention Centre. The Western Australian Council of Social Services summarises funding initiatives in this year's budget for justice by saying they have been —

... characterised by a lack of big picture thinking and little to address the urgent crisis in youth detention.

We saw the tragic passing of Cleveland Dodd in unit 18 last year. It was a year in which the government admitted that it wanted to close unit 18 and was committed to building a new therapeutic high-security detention centre next to Banksia Hill. It is mentioned in the "Significant issues affecting the agency" section of the budget papers that detailed planning and assessment is underway, but no budget has been allocated to it. Surely, with the death of a 16-year-old—the first death of a minor in this state's prisons—we would think that with the calls from magistrates, children's advocates and Indigenous groups that there would be money in this budget to deliver this kind of facility. There just seems to be a complete lack of urgency.

Money to develop a business case for a new building was approved in the midyear review, but even this has not been completed. There is no sense of any urgency around this. It is now two years since unit 18 was established as a temporary short-term fix. I am concerned that in two years' time, it will still be running. We have to ask: how many more young people have to suffer in unit 18 before a proper alternative facility is built? Frankly, unit 18 should be closed as soon as possible. We should have a much stronger focus on early intervention programs and a range of other things. This government needs to get serious about shifting the dial on youth justice. It is broken in this state. Again, as I said at the start of my response to the budget speech, there is too much business as usual on this issue as there is with too many others. There needs to be some fundamental changes in this regard.

The other thing that is missing in this budget is big. It is the lack of stolen generation compensation. Some have called this a \$600 million "black hole". It is nearly 27 years since the *Bringing them home: National inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families* report, which recommended that compensation be paid to stolen generation survivors. Unfortunately, successive WA governments continue to ignore the issue, despite this recommendation. There is an extraordinary film called *Genocide in the Wildflower State*, which will be shown at lunchtime tomorrow. Hon Rosie Sahanna has invited members, and I highly recommend watching it. It makes the most powerful case why this is unfinished business. I would really like to see this in this budget.

My last point is around health. There is a huge bit of budget there and others have gone into a lot of detail about this. The Labor government claims to be making record investment in this, and there are lots of good initiatives in this budget, but some bits are clearly lacking. I want to highlight one, which is the cuts to community dental services, which I understand will be cut by over 100 full-time equivalents. This is a really important service for some of the most vulnerable people in the state. The idea that we will cut dental services to schoolchildren, financially, socially and geographically disadvantaged people and First Nations peoples will, ultimately, cost all of us more in the long run. It is one of the things that really should not be done. I appreciate that is hard to recruit people into these roles, but that should just make us try all the harder because these are really important services going forward.

Another point that I wanted to talk about in relation to health is a report that came down last week, on the same day as budget day, interestingly enough. That report, which was quietly dropped, is called *Projecting heat-related health impacts under climate change in Perth*. It is a really interesting report which did not get much of a look in. But I will give members a couple of headlines —

Heat-related deaths projected to increase by 61.4% in 2050s from 2010s.

Heat-related healthcare costs projected to increase by \$30.6 million.

Up to 5x increase in summers with extreme heat-related mortality.

My reading of this report is that more people will die from heat in Perth than will die on all of WA's roads, and we have heard nothing about this. This takes me back to the start of my budget reply speech in which I talked about climate action. These things are linked. Ultimately, if we do not invest in the right things now, if we do not move away from business as usual in this time of multiple crises, and if we offer bandaids instead of real solutions, we will not actually deal with the long-term structural issues we need to be dealing with or the things that this community fundamentally needs. This budget should have been an opportunity not just to tweak business as usual and to soften it with some cash handouts. It should have been an opportunity to fundamentally shift the dial on some of these key challenges that this state faces. It did not do that, and I think that is a really lost opportunity because we will not keep having budget surpluses like we have had and we are not going to have Parliament like we do. I feel like this has been a lost opportunity to deliver on some of the bold and ambitious things that this state desperately needs.

I thank members for their patience in listening to my budget reply speech. I hope it gives members an insight into the kind of budget that I would like to have seen in this place.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Foster**.

## AUSTRALASIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES CONFERENCE

*Statement*

**HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan — Leader of the Opposition)** [6.18 pm]: I would like to inform the house about the recent Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees: 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on 22 and 23 April, hosted by this Parliament through the Public Accounts Committee and the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. Fifty-four delegates from 11 jurisdictions attended the conference, including the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands. The conference took place in the members' dining room and began with an excellent keynote speech by the Western Australian Auditor General, Caroline Spencer. There were also 10 sessions on various topics, including the role of public accounts committees in sustainability reporting, gender-responsive budgeting, managing occasions of non-provision of information, experiences with qualified audit opinions, government spending on Aboriginal programs and services and parliamentary budget offices. These sessions were facilitated by members of the two committees. We were very fortunate to benefit from the experience and knowledge of the speakers on these and other topics, which enhanced the knowledge and understanding of all attending.

I also acknowledge the hard work of parliamentary staff on the organisation of the conference, which, I understand, was 18 months in the making. In particular, I thank most sincerely Michelle Chiasson and Marie Martin for their invaluable organisation of the conference, and Anne Turner, Andrew Hawkes, Alex Hickman, Laura Ives-Hicks and numerous other staff for assisting them. The smooth running of the conference is testament to their hard work, as was the excellent quality of food and drink and the optional tours of Kings Park and art at Parliament House. The welcome drinks at the Art Gallery of Western Australia on 21 April and the conference dinner at C Restaurant in the Sky on 22 April were wonderful opportunities for delegates to get to know one another in a relaxed social environment.

I again thank the President and Speaker for agreeing to allow Parliament to host the conference and my committee colleagues for their time and contributions. The next conference host will be Tasmania in 2026, followed by New South Wales in 2028.

## ST JOHN WA — WA VIRTUAL ED

*Statement*

**HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan)** [6.20 pm]: Sorry, I should not smile.

An opposition member interjected.

**Hon LORNA HARPER:** I cannot help it; women rule the world!

Members may be aware that in my previous life before coming to Parliament, I was the health team leader at United Workers Union, formerly United Voice. Today, I was quite excited to contribute to the motion moved by Hon Martin Aldridge about healthcare workers. It coincides with my visit this week to St John Ambulance in Belmont. Before I get to that, when we talk about frontline healthcare workers, we should be clearer about what we mean. When we refer to frontline healthcare workers, people automatically think nurses, doctors et cetera. Most people forget that the health system cannot run without all the support workers—the cleaners and caterers and the people who work in logistics and sterilisation. They are all essential to running our hospitals and healthcare system and they are just as important as doctors and nurses. Doctors and nurses cannot act unless they have nice clean hospitals and all those services behind them. That is a shout-out to all my old delegates in WA public health and hospitals.

On Monday, I visited St John's operation centre in Belmont. It was weird being there because the last time I was there was early 2017 when I was the health team lead of what was then United Voice. I sat at the negotiating table across from St John when we discussed the Western Australian ambulance officers and paramedics agreement. It was very interesting sitting there, because if members have met paramedics, they will understand that they are a highly educated and an extremely experienced and knowledgeable group. On Monday, I noticed what a different place it is and the difference in culture compared with when I was there in 2017. It got me to thinking: why is it so different? Members may ask: what happened in 2017? In 2017, the McGowan Labor government was elected to government in Western Australia and, because of that, there have been major changes at St John. I have stood here and been a bit critical of St John in the past, but that was my previous experience. The change of CEO and board membership at St John, coupled with the release of the report *Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: critical condition* by my colleague Hon Pierre Yang and the Standing Committee on Public Administration, have come together and we can see how St John has changed. Overall, the biggest change in attitude at St John is that it is now working with the Cook Labor government for a better outcome for WA. It is doing what is right for WA.

The work culture at St John has been improving for some time and has helped those on the road cope by working smarter, not harder. The state government virtual emergency department is known as WAVED. St John uses a lot of acronyms, so I had to stop its staff when they were talking to ask what they mean. I recommend that members get in touch with St John to arrange a visit because what is going on there is amazing. WAVED is embedded with

St John. We have talked about the budget. For my colleagues who have not seen it yet, I refer to budget paper No 3, page 117, where they will see that the Cook Labor government has committed \$28 million from 2024–25 to 2027–28 for the operational costs of WA virtual ED. It provides patients with the option of being seen virtually in the comfort of their own home when it is safe and appropriate to do so, rather than waiting in an ED. St John has greater scope for more immediate in situ medical problems that do not require a hospital visit but need a low acuity ambulance to provide a virtual consultation over an iPad and then transport if needed.

As a state, we are moving away from the need to take everybody to hospital. This will save on average more than 740 000 ambulance hours and reduce clogging the system with people who have minor injuries and illnesses and those who need medication prescriptions. Even when general practitioner services are overwhelmed and ringing 000 seems to be the only choice, there will be an alternative. For those of a vulnerable age or sadly facing end of life, extended care paramedics, who have been funded \$1.4 million thanks to the Cook Labor government, are able to attend in the home and be the conduit to the services and help that people need. It is also aided by WAVED, which, again, was funded.

The Cook Labor government has also invested just under \$8 million in a mental health co-response team via WAVED to respond to mental health patients who may need acute help, but who do not need to attend an emergency department. I have said it here before that the placing of mental health patients in an emergency department is not a good combination. All of this is happening so that when a real emergency occurs, one that takes every ounce of paramedic training, St John is able to answer those calls by sending on-road critical care paramedics who have been trained in hospital practices to assess crews and stabilise patients at the scene so they can go directly to trauma hospitals, saving critical minutes and, no doubt, lives. In the last year, more than 200 000 patients avoided going to an emergency department.

I was lucky to have the privilege of going to St John to meet the people who are working in the teams, with the use of all the acronyms that I cannot remember. I thank them for their care and attention. I got to see for myself the change in culture and attitude. The CEO will tell those who visit a very interesting story about a former CEO in their private bathroom. It is not as bad as it sounds.

Working together in partnership is important to ensure that we keep moving forward and do what is right for WA.

***FEBRUARY FIRESTORM: VOICES FROM THE SMOKE***  
**JUDY BALLANTYNE — RETIREMENT**

*Statement*

**HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural)** [6.28 pm]: There is a threat to lives and homes, and residents need to act immediately to survive. It is too late to leave. Leaving now would be deadly. That was the message issued by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services on Sunday, 6 February 2022 to the towns of Corrigin, Kulin and Kondinin and parts of the Shire of Bruce Rock as those communities faced catastrophic fire conditions and a number of difficult fires. I want to draw members' attention tonight to what happened in the days, weeks and months following that event. One of those things was, as we often see in small communities when faced with adversity, the way in which it brings the community together in many different ways. One of those ways was the culmination of a book called *February Firestorm: Voices from the Smoke*. The book was produced by an editorial committee comprising Sue Courboules, Val Downing, Jackie Jones and Jenny Pitman. It was sponsored by the Corrigin community development fund and supported by Shire of Corrigin CEO, Natalie Manton. Only 300 copies were produced and it sold out pretty quickly. It has a number of short, personal reflections from many different perspectives about the fire and its effect on the Corrigin community.

I want to share one of those with the house tonight as well as drawing members' attention to the publication of the book. It is the first reflection in the book and is entitled—I emphasise that I am quoting, President—"The mad bastards saved my house". It reads —

Corrigin stud Merino breeder Steven Bolt is in awe of the courage and skill displayed by farmer volunteers Joel and Travis Bell in the face of the recent terrible Wheatbelt fires.

‘The mad bastards saved my house,’ Mr Bolt recalled as the local community started a massive mopping up and recovery operation.

Brothers Joel and Travis managed to save the home against all odds as fire destroyed virtually everything else on the Bolt property.

Mr Bolt, a deputy fire chief with his local volunteer brigade, was racing along the fire front making sure people were evacuated and helping save other homes as the blaze ripped through his farm.

His number one concern was making sure no one died and he stressed that volunteers should fall back if the situation became too dangerous.

The Bells took a calculated risk in saving the Bolt home, putting out the blaze as it took hold on a corner of the dwelling.

They emptied out the water tank on their fire truck before leaving to refill and then returned to finish the job.

‘The house is still standing but everything else around the house is gone’ Joel said.

‘It was pretty hairy but we had an evacuation plan if it didn’t go well.

We stuck by the house as the fire came over the hill.

The wind was just that strong, it was an horrendous day.’

The brothers figured they could retreat to bare ground on a pasture paddock behind the house if forced to give up the fight.

Mr Bolt said the volunteers had done a remarkable job around Corrigin in protecting lives and property and limiting livestock losses.

‘Volunteers were the first on the scene and the ones there fighting the fire throughout,’ Mr Bolt said.

He said that as well as the local volunteers, the community owed a huge thanks to volunteers from other bushfire brigades who travelled from far and wide to help, and to farmers who had offered to agist livestock.

Within hours of the immediate danger passing on February 6, Mr Bolt had organised two teams of veterinarians to assess and treat sheep caught up in the fire on farms throughout the district.

The day after their firefighting heroics, the Bell brothers and other farmers were out helping with the clean up and burying livestock that couldn’t be saved.

Joel said that along with help from other volunteers he had buried about 250 sheep on a mate’s property as the community moved quickly to rebound and help those hardest hit.

‘The volunteers just hook in, Joel said.

‘As soon as we see smoke anywhere, we jump in.

‘It is the same with the clean up.’

There are many reflections in the book, of which this is just one. It shows, I think in a very raw sense, the journeys that many people of Corrigin and the surrounding communities have been on since that very difficult day in February 2022. The book has sold out, and I recommend it to members. I would like to thank and recognise the Parliamentary Library for accepting this book into its collection so that members are able access it in the future.

The last thing I wanted to do, particularly given that she assisted me in facilitating this book being added to the parliamentary collection, is personally recognise the contribution of Ms Judy Ballantyne, our Manager Library, Education and Community Relations, who, members may or may not be aware, is retiring later this year after 27 years of service to Parliament. She was here before any other member currently serving in this chamber, and I am sure all members have had interactions with the team and Judy along the way. I would like to thank her for her service to the Parliament.

### **ELECTORAL AMENDMENT (FINANCE AND OTHER MATTERS) BILL 2023**

#### *Statement*

**HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan)** [6.34 pm]: I will attempt to keep this as brief as I can, in light of what detail I have to work with and noting that other members wish to speak. I have spent the better part of 25 years in public life to some degree, either as a bureaucrat at the state and federal level as a ministerial adviser and now as a member of Parliament. In that time, I have observed that there are three preciously rare commodities among executives across the public sector. I include in that ministers of the Crown. Those three precious commodities are courage, a grasp of detail, and the ability to execute plans and implement an idea.

It is with reference to those principles that I make some remarks on the performance of Hon John Quigley, not as the Attorney General, but as the Minister for Electoral Affairs. I might say at the outset that I bear the individual in question absolutely no personal malice, but what I will observe objectively is that that parliamentarian has had an almost beguiling effect on the commentariat over the course of his career, for some good reason. His capacity to beguile and bewitch people is probably surpassed only by Hon Alannah MacTiernan.

In September last year, the Minister for Electoral Affairs, Hon John Quigley, announced sweeping changes to the Electoral Act that was preceded with absolutely no consultation with any of the stakeholders who would be affected by the act. In the course of the debate in this chamber it was revealed that the minister himself was effectively the co-author of about 90 per cent of the provisions embedded in the bill. One might say that the minister is the inversion of the Thomas Edison principle that success is the outcome of 99 per cent perspiration and one per cent inspiration. With all due respect to the minister, the reverse is absolutely true. He is 99 per cent inspiration and one per cent perspiration, which is not to say that he does not work hard, but he does not make it his business to understand the detail and he does not make it his business to implement plans, or at least to encourage the implementation of plans.

The changes to the Electoral Amendment (Finance and Other Matters) Bill 2023, which is now an act, included a range of provisions. Some were geared towards improving the transparency and accountability of political donations in Western Australia. Among one of the major innovations was the idea that an online disclosure portal should be established by which the public of Western Australia would, for the first time, see in more or less real time where the money is flowing—from whom it was flowing and to whom it was going. During the debate during Committee of the Whole at clause 1, I sought an understanding of what the engagement and implementation process of this bill might be, considering that it was due to come into effect in all its attributes and with all its systems by 1 July this year, which is only some seven or eight weeks away. I was reassured somewhat at that time that the stakeholder engagement, as we call it, would be undertaken in earnest in January this year. I refer to the engagement between the Western Australian Electoral Commission and those affected—primarily registered political parties and their office bearers. That did not happen. It did not occur in February, March or April, except perhaps in the last week.

What has been the outcome of this implementation? Today we had tabled in response to a question that I asked, an extraordinary piece of correspondence jointly signed by Ellie Whiteaker, State Secretary of WA Labor; Douglas Rodgers, State Secretary of the Nationals WA; Simon Morgan, State Director of the Liberal Party of Western Australia; and Liberty Cramer, Director of the Greens WA. What did they have to say about the process of consultation and the likelihood of this new you-beaut system being ready to implement from 1 July this year?

I will read in the relevant paragraphs. This letter is to the Electoral Commissioner and was written last Friday. It reads —

Since early this year, we have repeatedly sought guidance from the Commission on the interpretation and rollout of the new laws, which come into effect on 1 July 2024. To date, those questions have not been answered.

We have been eagerly awaiting a meaningful briefing for political parties, which we were originally advised would take place in March —

And this was after the January promise —

but is now scheduled for 21 May. This does not provide us with sufficient time to consider and implement your advice for the 1 July implementation date, and we ask for it to be scheduled at an earlier date.

The recent workshops facilitated by the Commission with an external consultant failed to provide any information about the implementation or operation of the new laws and left us with little confidence that an online disclosure system has even been created. Without seeing the online disclosure system being developed by the Commission, it is impossible for us to assess its interoperability with our own existing systems.

The new electoral laws impose a significant additional administrative burden on political parties, and will require changes to our finance systems, internal policies as well as training for candidates, staff, party members and volunteers—with no administrative funding provided to facilitate compliance. We each run relatively small organisations and with the start date of the new laws fast approaching, we are concerned about our capacity to understand, respond to, and comply with any guidance provided at such short notice.

Political parties face significant financial penalties under the amendments to the Act. As Party Agents, we face significant personal penalties, including imprisonment if we are unable to comply.

Every single political party in Western Australia is unable to comply with these laws by dint of an absence of professional consultation and by dint of an absence of grasping details and of being able to execute plans. One might say that this is the province of an independent Electoral Commission, but who has set that commission up to fail? It is none other than Hon John Quigley, Minister for Electoral Affairs. It has been clear to anybody politically invested that this has completely run off the rails. The wheels have fallen off this process, yet the minister, even up until today exudes a breezy confidence that she'll be right, mate, and from 1 July it will all be tickety-boo; it will not be. This is but a small example of where this minister fails. On his farewell lap he is wont to make grand pronouncements, announce reviews and table reports from the Law Reform Commission —

**Hon Nick Goiran:** Eight months late.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** — eight months late. In another instance, he indicated changes to the Guardianship and Administration Act some 10 years, potentially, after action should have been taken. If this system is not operational by 1 July, the one person who should fall on his sword is the Minister for Electoral Affairs. He should at least be relieved of one of his portfolios because he is no longer up to it.

## 2025 STATE ELECTION

### *Statement*

**HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan)** [6.43 pm]: I will just make an announcement that I think is general knowledge, but I just want to formalise it tonight. I will not seek preselection or indeed contest the next election. After 10 years as a shop assistant serving customers, 26 years as a union official serving members and



a further 10 years in this place by the end of this period serving constituents, I am now very contentedly looking forward to retirement. There are four main reasons I am looking forward to that retirement and they are Ella, Darcy, Juniper and Sophie, my four beautiful grandchildren, and I look forward next year, at the end of this term, spending a lot more time with them while they still want to spend time with their grandad.

## HEMP FARMING

### *Statement*

**HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan)** [6.44 pm]: How can I follow that?

**Hon Lorna Harper:** Sit down!

**Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER:** We have a wonderful example from the colleague there of the reason for my contribution this evening because it again refers to governmental inaction, and it is probably planned governmental inaction.

I got a call and visit from a distressed constituent from the south west. I will not name the gentleman, but he is a licensed hemp farmer. As members are aware, industrial hemp has a THC content of less than one per cent—two or three per cent is nothing at all to be frightened of, but less than one per cent is the qualification. He was following the regulations outlined in the Industrial Hemp Act 2004 but noticed that due to changed climatic conditions the seeds for plants below one per cent THC were now producing a little bit above one per cent. He did the right thing and notified the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in November last year and said he had a crop, or at least part of a crop, that would have a higher than one per cent level of THC. He got the advice to destroy the crop, and he did so. He informed DPIRD and, as a consequence, he also informed the registrar and, as a courtesy, the local Nannup police.

Following that, time passed, and he began to think nothing of it, but on 11 April he was suddenly subjected to 10 police officers from the organised crime division drug squad who fell upon his farm, executed a search warrant and seized a rotting crop lying on the ground. They then went through a thorough search of the premises, they searched visiting family members' personal belongings and caused significant stress to the farmer, his employees, residents and guests. They were treated as if they were criminals.

Before I go on, we have to wonder. This was a hemp crop, and hemp has been in our society for thousands of years and has the potential in Western Australia to produce an industry worth billions of dollars to our state. There are 25 000 potential uses for hemp. I have had qualified opinion in this chamber from the responsible people suggesting that hemp would be absolutely fine to produce, no problems at all, and the problems I am highlighting here are pure figments of our imagination—that was the implication. I wonder how members would view it if they were subject to following the regulations, doing the right thing and suddenly being called criminals and having police running all over their property with the implication that they were now criminals.

This farmer is urging that we have a review of our protocols, and education and awareness—perhaps among members of the government, DPIRD and the police. There ought to be some collaboration. The farmer had given the call to DPIRD and followed instructions, and the department perhaps ought to have coordinated with the relevant authorities, including the police. Perhaps there ought to be some legal protections for those following the law and complying without them being treated as potential criminals, and safeguards that would allow farmers to safely produce the crop. That would make a sensible change, would it not? The farmer wrote —

- Our experience highlights the need for systemic change. Licensed hemp farmers should not face unnecessary stress and trauma while striving to comply with regulations.

I do not think anyone here could disagree with that. He also wrote —

- We believe that a fair and supportive approach—one that recognizes our role in sustainable agriculture—will benefit both the industry and the community.

And it could also add to the environment as well. He collaboratively wrote —

- Let us collectively work toward a more informed, empathetic, and efficient system.

He kindly requested an urgent meeting to discuss these matters further. That was directed towards DPIRD. As far as I know there has been no suitable response, which again mirrors the collective apathy from the side of those who have the power—the levers for change. I request that this be taken seriously.

## ELDER ABUSE

### *Statement*

**HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan)** [6.49 pm]: Yesterday, I had the opportunity to deliver a speech noting the budget papers. One portion of that speech dealt with the longstanding issue of reforms for victims of elder abuse in Western Australia. Members who had the opportunity to listen to that speech yesterday may recall that I reminded members that some seven years ago, the Attorney General, Mr Quigley, promised that he would expedite reforms on elder abuse.

That promise to expedite elder abuse reforms has been raised by me on a number of occasions, including on 27 February this year when I gave notice of a motion, which includes the following —

That this house —

- (a) reminds the WA Labor government that its January 2017 election manifesto on responding to elder abuse promised that it would “expedite” amendments to the law surrounding enduring powers of attorney and guardianship;
- (b) notes that on 13 September 2017, the Legislative Council established, on the motion of the opposition, the Select Committee into Elder Abuse;
- (c) reminds the government that the select committee’s twenty-fourth recommendation in its 2018 final report called on it to “act as a matter of urgency”;
- (d) notes that more than seven years have passed since the election promise was made;
- (e) expresses its deep concern about the impact on victims of elder abuse given its prevalence in our state; and
- (f) calls on the government to apologise for breaking trust with the victims, the electors and the Parliament, and to make amends without any further delay.

The separate limbs of that motion, of which notice was given in February this year, accurately set out the chronology of events, beginning with the commitment by Mr Quigley in 2017 to expedite these reforms. It goes on to confirm that on 13 September 2017, this chamber established the Select Committee into Elder Abuse. Hon Matthew Swinbourn and I were two of the four members who had the opportunity to serve on that committee. One of the other members, Hon Tjorn Sibma, is away on urgent parliamentary business and the other, Hon Alison Xamon, is now a former member of Parliament. A year later that committee urged the government to act as a matter of urgency. That was in 2018. Since then, this matter has been repeatedly raised by me, including yesterday in my reply on the budget.

It is beyond belief that today, the Attorney General, Mr Quigley, decided to publish a media release entitled “Law Reform Commission to examine guardianship system in WA”. I am going to have to go back to yesterday’s *Hansard* to clarify whether I said at the time that the Cook Labor government had abandoned these reforms. I cannot recall whether I said that it had abandoned them. What is clear today is that it has not abandoned them; it has just kicked them into the long grass for yet another year. How is it possible that the Attorney General of Western Australia can face the cameras, face the people of Western Australia and face his fellow members in caucus and say to them with a straight face that he intends to expedite reforms for victims of elder abuse, yet, more than seven years later, face those same people and say that he is kicking these elder abuse reforms into the long grass? The media release that was published today confirms that he has directed that the Law Reform Commission report back on this. When? In April 2025. In other words, it is after he retires, because it is on the public record. Might I just add my comments to recognise Hon Martin Pritchard’s announcement tonight that he intends to retire and thank him for his service. I look forward to continuing to work with him over the next year. Mr Quigley has announced that he intends to retire at the next election. There is nothing wrong with making that announcement. My good friends Hon Peter Collier and Hon Donna Faragher have done the same thing, and I understand that Hon Sue Ellery has also done the same thing. A number of members will make that announcement, as is their right to do so, and we thank them for their service. But this particular member, the Attorney General, promised the people of Western Australia in 2017 that he would “expedite” the reforms—his chosen word about those reforms on something very, very serious—for the abuse of elderly Western Australians, which I suspect we in the chamber unanimously agree needs to be addressed. It certainly was a unanimous committee report.

Three political parties were represented on this four-person select committee—two members from the Liberal opposition, one member from the Labor government and one member from the Greens on the crossbench. There was no need for it to become political in any way. The committee worked extremely well. It was one of the best committees that I have had the opportunity to serve on in 15 years in Parliament, and we did our work. We simply brought the matter to the attention of the government, which had said at the time it was going to expedite it. Mr Quigley and Mr McGowan said that at the beginning of 2017. By September 2018, nothing had happened, so we asked the government to act as a matter of urgency. It is now May 2024.

Having made the submission yet again yesterday in my response on the budget, I cannot believe that the very next act by the Attorney General was to kick this into the long grass and off to the Law Reform Commission to report on after he has sailed off into the sunset. It will be a legacy. The legacy of Mr Quigley to the WA Parliament on elder abuse will have been to have misled Western Australians—to have told them that he would expedite the reforms and, in the end, to have done absolutely nothing over the course of what will then be eight years. That is eight years in which he had an opportunity to do something. It was not as though the work had not already been done. There was already a blueprint in the form of a statutory review report from 2015. That was the very thing that he was beating his chest with and telling people he was going to expedite in 2017. He was reminded again in 2018,

and I am confident in saying that if I check the parliamentary record, I would have raised this with the government at least once a year, and most probably on multiple occasions, ever since then. There has been no cogent response whatsoever, just the typical arrogance that we have seen previously from the McGowan government and now from the Cook Labor government. This will be the legacy of the Attorney General. Mr Quigley will be known as the Attorney General who misled Western Australians when he said that he would expedite reforms on elder abuse and did absolutely nothing. I take that back. He will have done one thing in eight years. He will have kicked the reforms into the long grass and said to the Law Reform Commission, "Please report back to me with your non-binding recommendations in April 2025, when I have retired and I'm drinking my cocktails." Wonderful! What a legacy from Mr Quigley when it comes to elder abuse!

This is disgraceful. This is reprehensible. At the very least, as is said in the motion that I gave notice of on 27 February 2024, we call on the government to apologise for breaking trust with the victims, the electors and the Parliament and to make amends without any further delay. Well, clearly, there are not going to be any amends, but is it too much to ask that it actually delivers an apology on this?

*House adjourned at 6.59 pm*

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