

COOK GOVERNMENT — PERFORMANCE

Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [4.01 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its performance in its first 12 months under Premier Cook's leadership, demonstrating that despite new leadership it remains the same old Labor government, failing to address the concerns of Western Australians, and highlighting the urgent need for a change in government.

As we know, it is now a year since members of the Australian Labor Party in this place were somewhat shocked when their number one asset decided that it was time to move on to other things. I remember watching the press conference at that stage and seeing a very shocked-looking member for West Swan standing next to the former Premier, looking decidedly upset. I think the former Premier was looking a little happier than the people around him. As we know, what happened after that was a period of horsetrading during which various union delegates set about determining who would be the next Premier. We thought it was going to be the member for Morley for a while. There was speculation that it would be the member for West Swan.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I think the member for Mandurah flexed his muscles.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The member for Mandurah might have been in the mix; I do not know. I have heard that the member has ambitions for a role. The end result was determined by the member for Cannington's group coming on board and assisting Premier Cook.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: It probably was the member for Mandurah helping out as well. Despite the fact that he failed to get the numbers from his own group, we saw a union-appointed Premier. I am not running the Premier down personally; that is just the way it happened. He did not go to the people at an election with pictures of himself and every member at every booth and people saying, "I want to vote for Mr McGowan; how can I do it?" That did not happen for this Premier. He was there because of the—what are they called? Is it the shoppies that the member for Cannington runs?

Dr D.J. Honey: The miscellaneous workers' union.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Whichever union it was and half a dozen people from a couple of other union movements got behind him and he became the Premier. If members remember, around that time the opposition was calling on this government to stop the implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. We did our utmost to alert the government to the fact that its communication was failing. In fact, the more the government communicated with the community, the worse it got, because people looked at it and thought, "This is not going to work. They don't know what they're doing." We got a different answer every time we talked to an official or a politician from that side. People were not just angry but also terrified; they did not know how they were going to conduct their businesses or stay on their lifestyle properties and conduct their lives as they had been. The minister at the time—he is still the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs—kept saying that the government had consulted farmers by consulting a couple of the farming groups. It actually consulted only one of them, and only once or twice. What the government neglected to look at was the fact that every landholder in this state on a block of anything more than about a quarter of an acre would have been affected by that legislation. We know that the Perth hills, which has hundreds of thousands of that type of smallholding, were caught up in it in a big way. People in communities right across Western Australia were calling on the government to explain how it could go forward with this legislation. Finally, after immense pressure from the opposition and immense backlash from a very energised community, we saw the government crumble; we saw a backflip the likes of which we had not seen in Western Australia before. The minister of the day had described the act as beautiful and seamless legislation. The beauty of it was that it was going to be seamless. Well, it was hardly seamless. It was legless and useless, and it was gotten rid of.

The government was pushing this legislation on the community at that time. That has some resonance with many of the activities of this Parliament under the current government, with little heed being paid to the processes of Parliament. Of course, that led to the situation with the firearms legislation, which has just been concluded in this place. We know that the debate was guillotined in the other place last night. The upper house apparently had a very long time to debate this legislation, but what the Leader of the House failed to say when she was pointing out how long the bill had been in the upper house was that the house had also been dealing with the budget. Just as we do, upper house members can all give a budget reply speech, and that takes quite a bit of time at this time of the year. We moved from a position in which the government was happy for the legislation to go through in August to it suddenly becoming a priority before the winter break so that it could claim a political point.

Dr D.J. Honey: It was a political priority.

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Mr R.S. LOVE: It was just a political priority. It would have made no difference to the eventual introduction of the legislation down the track.

On Friday, I was at the Muresk Institute. In fact, I think I saw the member for Cottesloe there.

Dr D.J. Honey: I was there.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes. Many Western Australians were there to protest to a bunch of federal MPs who were holding a hearing of the Standing Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives into the live sheep export decision by the federal Labor government, which we know will devastate the sheep industry in Western Australia. It is already having that effect. My local shearing contractor told me that he is shearing a lot of red tag ewe hoggets that will then head off to the abattoir. They are the breeders of the future. If a whole generation is taken out of a sheep flock, it is very hard to come back from that. We heard the Premier make some noise about supporting live export. When the panel was over here to do its investigations into the effect of the so-called transition from live exports, the opposition made a freedom of information request. Ironically, we have just finished dealing with the information matters in the Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Bill 2024. We found that there was not much responsible information sharing between the Minister for Agriculture and Food in Western Australia and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in Canberra because there was zero written communication between the two. In fact, if I recall when the committee first came over here, the minister feigned ignorance that they were even coming. We know that was a pretty lame effort at standing up for Western Australian industry. We have seen time and again that Canberra seems to have this view that Western Australia is a cash cow, but it does not matter that its industries are not supported and that they do not have the settings in place that they need from the federal government. The Premier understands that he has very little influence over there. I think that is why he established an office in one of the Labor lobby group offices I think.

Dr D.J. Honey: There's a surprise!

Mr R.S. LOVE: It is a surprise; it is right in the same building. They can talk to each other quite easily. It has had very little influence in getting a reversal of some of those damaging decisions.

The Minister for Corrective Services has just come back in—welcome back, minister. Over the last couple of weeks, I have been asking him questions about his corrective services portfolio and the failure he has made in the last year or so of his office in that role. One of the first things the current Premier did when he came to office was to recognise that the member for Cannington was completely failing as a corrective services minister. He put in place the member for Warnbro, but unfortunately we have not seen a turnaround and it appears it is getting worse. The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has done a couple of reports, which I have asked questions about over the last couple of weeks. In both answers, the response was, “What they say doesn't really matter; it's not that important.” They sweep it under the carpet. That carpet is getting pretty high now. A lot of dirt is sitting under it, which has been swept under there for a long time. It is getting pretty obvious that it needs to be taken out and beaten in the backyard to clean it, because it is not looking good. The Minister for Health is sitting here. We know the dire situation in the health system. The member for Vasse has been highlighting those issues over the last year. From what we see and read, and from the information she brings to this place, we know there are still huge problems in ambulance ramping, elective surgery wait lists, clinical failures in certain circumstances and an inability to address some of the backlog of builds in regional areas especially. It is pleasing to see something finally moving at Geraldton Hospital, seven years after the Labor Party came to office. There has been a shovel moving competition up there and the WACHS shovels were broken out. Hon Martin Aldridge asked a quick parliamentary question to see where the shovels had come from because they seem to have been used a fair bit around Geraldton, but not much has happened. The shovels were out once again, after seven years of government. We now have an earthmoving site, and a bit of activity is happening at long last. That is the most delayed project of many projects, which the Auditor General raised in her *2023 Transparency report: Major projects*. Virtually a year on from the report, not much has changed and the people of Geraldton will not see that hospital in this term of government. That is a great shame for the midwest area because that whole region depends on it being a viable centre.

We also know the current housing problems in Western Australia have largely developed for a couple of reasons to do with this government. First of all, there was the reckless stimulus under the former Premier that was poured into an economy that was always going to be constrained in a period of pandemic. The construction industry was not going to have more capacity in that period when supply chains would undoubtedly be disrupted. The expectation was of some lockdowns and some disruptions in the ability to get people to work. As we know, eventually we saw the complete closure of the borders to most people coming in. It was virtually impossible to see how someone would ever imagine they would be able to build a big glut of houses. Huge amounts of money cannot just be poured into an industry that has a fairly static base of capacity and expect it not to have a deleterious effect on that industry. Another Labor government tried something similar, way back in the days of Pink Batts. I think it was under Kevin Rudd in Canberra. We saw an extraordinary program where huge amounts of money were poured

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into insulation programs. Of course, we ended up with some pretty shoddy programs. Some people were killed by electrical faults. It was a disaster.

When we talk about disasters and public policy failures, Labor seems to take the cake pretty well every time. When we see a reckless approach to government, it is a Labor government. This government is no better. We are not seeing the houses built that the Minister for Housing keeps promising. I think it has only just got back to the level of housing that Labor had when it came to government in 2017. Still, right around Western Australia, communities are crying out for solutions to their housing problems. There are towns where there is not the land supply required. There is no concerted effort by this government to use any levers to ensure that some of that infrastructure that is necessary for development of communities is provided in any forward-leaning sense. It is all provided with a lag, long after the demand is there and long after the opportunity has passed to drive growth. The Pilbara is a case in point. If members look at the condition of the community in South Hedland, the town has the largest port in the world by metric tonnes of shipments going out and what will they see? The town looks to be one of the poorest looking suburbs in an Australian city anywhere. It is a disgrace to think that it is one of the epicentres of the engine room that drives the Australian economy. We see no action and no concern. The member for Pilbara is in his second term. What has been achieved? I was up there with our candidate for Pilbara talking to people around the step-up, step-down facility in Karratha. It has long been promised, for the entire term of this government. In fact, it was funded under the previous government. It has still not been delivered. We are dealing with the aftermath of that when we deal with people who have been affected, with personal stories of how their families have mental health problems. A petition was run by one such mother. It had 2 600 signatures on it, calling for those services to be provided in the Pilbara. I do not think much has changed. The pressure that was put on the Premier around that saw some commitment in the development of that facility going ahead, but again, it will not be delivered in this term. If this government were to be re-elected—we will do our very best to make sure that that does not happen—it would be delivered in its third term. That is the standard of care that the government shows towards people in regional Western Australia, and I am sure the same sort of reflection applies right around the suburbs of Perth, too.

I do not hear great things about this government. People are now willing to openly criticise the government. For a while, with the COVID period many people had the feeling that the former Premier had done a good job, but he is not there to protect the government anymore and that whole pandemic period has gone by, but the government has not recognised that. The government still thinks it is as popular out there as it was, but a bit of a shock is coming up for many government members, as we know, in March next year.

I am a bit suspicious of this government on a number of other matters. Since the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation debacle, a piece of work was being done on water legislation reform. That had been a priority of the Minister for Water, as she said, for a couple months before suddenly it was not a priority and was dropped. I think it was dropped because the government realised that to push through with it at that point may well have caused another period of concern in the community about the protection of private property rights. I do not know what was in the bill; we never saw it. The former government had done some work on a bill in that regard, but I doubt that this government's bill would have resembled it. I think it would have been something far more contentious, and that is why it has been hidden away.

Only yesterday, the Minister for Fisheries announced that the Aquatic Resources Management Act will be shelved—a bit like the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act—apparently because of the government's inability to make it work. The government blamed the act for its incompetence, but one has a sneaking suspicion that the real reason it was dropped had some tie-up to the rapid push for the south coast marine park and other marine parks that will affect the rights of fishers. An act cannot just be dropped when it has been contemplated and worked on for a decade. It was dropped suddenly at the very end of the government's term at a time when the government is dealing with compensation issues for fishermen and taking away fishing ground et cetera from fishers in these marine parks. It makes me feel a little bemused when after nearly 200 years of the south coast being used before Perth was a thing, as people like American sealers and others were on the coast in that area for a very, very long time, we see it described as, "It's so precious; it's pristine." What is wrong with its management now under the responsible management of the Department of Fisheries, local governments and local communities that it suddenly needs this extra level of protection? It is not in need of protection. It is just to achieve a greenwash rubber stamp to say that the government has protected five billion hectares. From what? What was attacking it? Nothing. It was not under threat; it is not under threat. This is just greenwashing by this government to pump up its credentials. During estimates committee hearings, Treasury indicated it was keen to get green bonds and green money. That is apparently a thing. I suspect that that is behind a lot of the decision-making of this government, like shutting down the timber industry earlier and now pulling back on fishing. The government is quite happy to see livestock disappear out of the south west of Western Australia and to lose the sheep industry. I do not think this government would shed a tear one little bit about that.

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Do members know what? People in regional communities who used to vote for Labor know that. People like shearers and truckies tell me that they have voted Labor all their lives, but they will never vote for Labor again. People are waking up. If government members do not know it, that is good. They can stay asleep as long as they want because the people are waking up, and that is all that matters.

We have a Premier who represents Kwinana, and the member for Cottesloe has a great association with industries down there—no doubt. We are seeing the decimation and disappearance of those industries one by one. The nickel industry will probably be next. The Premier does not seem capable of arresting or getting on top of the situation, and he does not seem to really care because he thinks that people will find a job somewhere else. The government cannot keep going along with that mindset because it will end up with no diversity in the economy. We keep hearing that we need to have a diversified economy and cannot rely upon one or two industries or one or two markets, yet what do we see from this government time and again? It is pushing down that track. We are seeing difficulty in new mines being started in different types of industries and different types of minerals. The time taken to get approvals keeps blowing out all the time.

The government makes announcements and allocations in the budget, but it fails to realise that making allocations in the budget when the state has no more capacity to do the job does not achieve anything. The government has to do something other than just chuck money at it and say, “That’s fixed it.” That does not fix it, unless the government can get somebody to come and do the job. I think we have lost track of all the programs and all the little teams that have been announced. I remember the crack team to be appointed from Treasury to fix the housing situation. That went well! Nicheliving is sitting there with 500 unfinished houses and no plan from this government on how to fix that. The minister acted on that on Monday only. It has been an issue for at least a year and this government should have been alerted to it and it be on the government’s radar. It has taken pressure from the opposition and the ABC, 6PR et cetera to put that on the radar. The government does not care until something becomes an embarrassment. It does not care about doing its job properly. All it wants to do is make sure that the news stories are all good news stories, not the truth. The truth is that the government is failing in many areas in our state.

We have spoken about some of those areas. I know other members want to talk more about more of those areas. One of the biggest problems that I see is this mindset that the way the government is doing business through the government departments that it set up when it first came in in 2017 with machinery-of-government changes, is the way to go. The government will never get an effective public service when it has this mishmash in its departments. The Department of Communities and housing is appalling with the lack of oversight and ability to get the job done.

I think the idea was to cut down on the silos, but all the government has done is make more silos because there is no communication between the various little subbranches in those departments. Directors general might have five ministers over them, but do not really answer to any one in particular. The whole basis of the Westminster system in which there is ministerial responsibility has been lost. The Minister for Corrective Services comes in here and we quiz him because we cannot quiz his department, and the minister is responsible to ensure that things are going well in his department. The minister does not seem to think that; he thinks that that is not his responsibility. Ultimately, under our system of Parliament, it is his responsibility. It is time that some of these ministers start to take responsibility for the limited areas they have control of in some of these mega-departments. I hear nothing particularly good about the operations in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation. I am not bagging any person there. I think the structure that has been put in place makes it unwieldy and unworkable. That whole department is supposed to facilitate state development, and yet the government has had to appoint an infrastructure coordinator-general. Wow! That is like the Vaccine Commander. It is this military terminology—command, command!

Dr D.J. Honey: Especially in WA now that Treasury has set up its own parallel structure.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Yes. In the estimates hearings I found another department that had an infrastructure coordinator and asked him about his role with the infrastructure coordinator-general. He did not even know there was one, so that is working well! Again, that is not a criticism of the people involved —

Dr D.J. Honey: They need it coordinated!

Mr R.S. LOVE: I think they need to get a big whiteboard, some butcher’s paper and write how an effective government might work, so we can get some effective government again. That is the problem. The government has a lot of money because of the huge amount of effort being put in by Western Australian workers, industries, and providers of capital and enterprise in our state, and from the gift of our natural resources. That has all combined to give the government a budget surplus. It has nothing to do with the government being clever. The government did not make any of the money. All the money was made by the hardworking people of Western Australia. All the government does is spend the money, and it is spending more money than it is making, even though we have such a glut of money. The more the government throws money into the economy, the more expensive things get when there is only a constrained number of things that can be bought. Did any government members do economics at

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high school? Maybe they did not. There might be quite a few qualified people in some areas in the government, but not many seem to have any idea about economics.

The ideal time to do some of those big projects is when things are a bit flat in the economy, not when there is already not enough capacity to build the houses, the mines, the hospitals and the projects that really matter. Instead of that, the government chucks \$12 billion into the Metronet program. Some of those rail lines may have merit and some of them may not, but none of them deserve to have so much money thrown at them, with costs continually blowing out and lines that are years behind their completion schedule. The ability of the government to lose over \$700 million through cost blowouts in six months is staggering; it is just mind-blowing. The government did a midyear review, and when the budget came down six months later it had lost another \$700 million. The government cannot tell me that it did not know that things were expensive back when it did the midyear review. It must have already experienced most of the peaks—most of those peaks would already have been achieved. Again, the government was not satisfied with that. We know deals were done with unions. In some of the embedded contracts for the Metronet program we are seeing sweetheart deals done, with people given massive pay rises and working conditions becoming very, very light compared with what they were. The pay rises have been massive with no explanation about why they were necessary, other than the obvious connection that they are sweetheart deals that have been done with the relevant union. That gets back to one of the issues with this government. The Premier was appointed by the unions and the government is now the creature of the unions, and we will see it play out more and more as we head to the 2025 election.

I will conclude my contribution at this point because I know others are very willing to speak to this motion. I will sit down and let my colleague speak.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.34 pm]: I too support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, which states —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its performance in its first 12 months under Premier Cook's leadership, demonstrating that despite new leadership it remains the same old Labor government, failing to address the concerns of Western Australians and highlights the urgent need for a change in government.

I look forward to March 2025.

In my contribution I will cover a few of my shadow portfolio areas and also look at the rallies that have happened in this state over the last couple of years. We have seen an unprecedented number of rallies and gatherings—the discontent of the people of Western Australia. I have not seen the likes of this in my seven years here in Parliament. It demonstrates that the people of WA have had enough. The people of regional WA have certainly had enough. It concerns me that our farmers, timber people, nurses and teachers have to get together and have public rallies to try to get the message across to an arrogant Labor government that does not seem to want to listen. The government seems to love sitting on its \$5 billion and \$6 billion surpluses and saying it cannot afford to help people out, give them a pay rise or help their working conditions, and that it is sorry about that. This is one of the most extreme examples of people power, and I congratulate those people.

I recall that the member for Central Wheatbelt was present when the Country Women's Association rallied in front of Parliament House about the changes to the Schools of the Air made in 2017. Hon Sue Ellery and the Premier could not come in fast enough and kick the people of regional Western Australia in the guts—they could not do it quickly enough. There were the issues with the Schools of the Air, Moora Residential College and the boarding away from home allowance. There are families on stations thousands of kilometres away from Perth and what does the government do? It reduces the boarding away from home allowance, which came out of royalties for regions, from \$2 100 to \$1 300. It is unbelievable for a government that is racking up these surpluses.

I go to the discontent in many sectors, with the strikes and rallies in WA since 31 May 2023. There was the teachers strike on 24 April, and we saw thousands of teachers at Gloucester Park. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act was scrapped in 2023. We saw the rally at the front of Parliament House. I attended the rally of farmers, which was mainly about the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, but also about the live export scenario. There were 650 people at the pavilion at the Katanning Leisure and Function Centre. They were very unhappy. We saw the live export rallies in May 2024, just the other week, when 1 700-odd vehicles and 3 000 people ended up gathering at Muchea. Then, of course, there was the rally at Muresk last week with the standing committee, which another couple of thousand people turned up to. We saw the nurses rally in front of Parliament House. There was the march to end gender-based violence on April 24. We saw three rallies about the proposed south coast marine park in Esperance. The first one had 300 or 400 people attend at short notice. I recall that the Minister for Fisheries was there talking to the Esperance shire council. He was, probably unexpectedly, called out to the rally of those Esperance people who are not satisfied. They had heard that the minister was in town and quickly gathered 300-odd people. To his credit, the minister addressed them and told them to put in their submissions.

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Mr D.T. Punch: I spoke to them on the way in. I made a point of speaking to them.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, that is it. I will give the minister credit for going out and fronting the crowd. Since then, we have had another rally in Esperance of 1 000 very unhappy people, followed by another rally of several hundred people. We have had three rallies of dissatisfied people from the south coast—namely, Esperance—who are not happy and cannot seem to get the message across. We saw it happen today when I asked the Minister for Environment about the petition last week that was signed by 5 860 people who want to have a parliamentary inquiry into the process and what has happened. All the minister wanted to talk about for most of his response to my question was nuclear energy. He did not seem to want to address the 19 000 submissions that have also been put in. I wonder how many of those have come through the likes of the Pew Charitable Trusts, a \$7 billion outfit based in America that, funnily enough, says that it is not going to try to advocate for change along the United States coastline because that would be too controversial. What did its CEO say? He said, “Let’s wander to Australia and put our fingerprints all over the coastal areas in Australia.” That is unbelievable. That organisation is based in Washington and Boston and is a \$7 billion outfit, but it will not have a bar of trying to do anything on the American coastline—“Let’s go over to Australia and the Coral Sea, Ningaloo and the south coast”; the list of where it wants to put its opinions over our population goes on. As the Leader of the Opposition explained, the south coast marine area is a self-sustaining area. The weather is rough down there. You cannot take a boat out every day; in fact, you are lucky to be able to go out once a week. It is a self-controlling environment. There is no need for a marine park or all these sanctuary zones covering 25 per cent of the area, because most of those fishing areas —

Mr P. Papalia: That is your considered fishing knowledge and advice?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have been down there talking to the commercial and recreational fishers.

Mr P. Papalia: You great nautical expert!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am more comfortable on a tennis court, generally, Minister for Police, but I do take advice.

That area of coast is self-managed, it is going well and everyone is happy, but what have we got? The Labor government has come in and wants to put its ideas over everything. “Let’s have 5 million hectares of sea-based and land-based conservation parks, whether we need it or not. We are going to do that so that we can satisfy the voters of Fremantle and those other inner-city areas.” It is no different to the federal government trying to keep inner-Sydney and inner-Melbourne voters happy and doing preference deals with the Animal Justice Party at the expense of our Western Australian farmers and our supply chain. It really does make you wonder.

I will get back onto the rallies that I was talking about because the list goes on. As I said, the nurses took action and rallied, people rallied against the proposed south coast marine park, and farmers rallied against the live export trade and also the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation. The first rally that was held—I suppose we could call it an information session, but, quite frankly, it was the people of Esperance who were frightened and worried. There were 650 people inside the civic centre and the line outside was 50 metres long. I remember the staff from the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage trying to start their briefing. They handed out the regulations, which none of us had seen, 18 months after the legislation had gone through. Within about 10 minutes, the dissatisfaction of the crowd was coming through. People were appalled. I read all the regulations on the plane that night. I remember coming in here the next day and asking the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs a question about what happens if a person wants to dig a dam. The minister replied, “Yeah, look, that’s no problem. That’s okay. You just do this and that and no worries.” I said, “Minister, you are misleading Parliament. You haven’t actually read your own regulations.” Sure enough, the next day when I asked him another question about a dam or a fence, he was backtracking straightaway because he had realised that he had not read the regulations and that he had been giving the people of Western Australia the wrong information. That is another example of why the people of Western Australia are unhappy.

We saw the rally out the front of Parliament House with probably 700 or 800 people standing in the rain. Once again, to the minister’s credit, he turned up out the front and said, “We are listening.” Then, sure enough, our new Premier of 12 months, in his first speech on the first day, or I think it was in question time, made a statement, which he will be well remembered for, about dogs returning to their own vomit. He tried to play it tough, but he got off on the wrong foot and the people of Western Australia will remember that.

I will talk about the native logging industry. Tomorrow I will be standing in this place and talking on the Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill 2024, which will basically see an end to sustainable native timber harvesting in Western Australia. Once again, rallies have occurred in the towns of Pemberton and Nannup, where family timber mills have been running for 100 years. What has this government come in and done? It has shut down the industry with no consultation whatsoever. People like the former minister tempted companies like Parkside Timber to come across to Western Australia and invest \$50 million into mills that they shut down a year or two later. I have never seen the likes of it. This government’s lack of consultation with the timber industry to

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keep its Fremantle and inner-city voters happy was appalling. Now we are having problems with firewood supplies. I would love to know whether every single member of the Labor Party is comfortable knowing that because we have banished our sustainable native timber industry in Western Australia, we will need to import timber that has been knocked down in rainforests in Indonesia and South America. It is the old “not in my backyard” again. The same thing is happening with the live export trade. We have lifted the standard, mortality rates are very low and everything is going well, then what happens? Government intervenes again, messing up the lives of people who are just going about running their family business and are totally unsuspecting of what this government is all about. As I said, that bill that is coming into Parliament tomorrow will see the end of the native timber industry as we know it. Genuine furniture makers will be affected. I remember the member for Cottesloe talking a few weeks ago about the jarrah timber in this chamber.

Dr D.J. Honey: It contains 120 years of stored carbon.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, and we will never see the likes of it again thanks to this Labor government.

We can see why the people of Western Australia are protesting, particularly when we see the disorganisation of this government. The Dry Season Taskforce, now that it has finally been activated, has done a good job under the leadership of Rob Cossart, but this government was too slow off the mark. It was not until it had heard about the mental health stories, of people running out of sheep and cattle feed and water and of people having to shoot some of their sheep some six or seven months after absolutely no rain, that this government finally woke up to the fact in mid-April, or somewhere around then, that maybe it had better put the dry season advisory committee together. The timing of it was quite bizarre. That needed to be done months ahead. We see kneejerk reactions from the government. To top it all off, there was the electoral reform, which I have spoken about many a time. The people of Western Australia were appalled with the former Premier saying that it was not on the agenda. He said it seven times in Albany when interviewed by Dan Mercer. Sure enough, it was on the agenda. The Attorney General could not rub his hands together quickly enough to bring that reform in place as the first order of business after the election. What a disgrace. The government is taking away the voices of regional people. I worry for people like the member for Warren–Blackwood who was elected and is trying to do a good job. What do we have? We have a government that has messed up her life. She has no chance. The timber industry in the towns in the electorate of Warren–Blackwood will not forget this government.

I want to express my concern about the education portfolio because we have seen a government that has lost its handle on things. Violence is increasing by 20-odd per cent year on year. Those statistics have been borne out from answers to questions on notice.

[Member’s time extended.]

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Teachers lack morale. When we go back to the Australian education survey of 1 255 Western Australian principals and teachers in March and April 2024, we can see that it is quite concerning. Teacher shortages affected 70 per cent of public schools in the last year; 83 per cent of principals said it has become harder to fill vacant positions; two-thirds of teachers taught merged classes due to the shortages; only four per cent of WA teachers said that their school is well resourced; over 70 per cent of teachers reported either a decline or a significant decline in student wellbeing and engagement in the last 18 months; nine out of 10 teachers reported either a decline or a significant decline in teacher wellbeing and morale over the same period; only 13 per cent of teachers think that the level of school counsellor support at their school is adequate, and 18 per cent said there was none; and, less than one in five WA teachers are committed to staying until retirement. That raises the possibility of acute teacher shortages, which will only worsen until there is real action from the government. That is what worries me. We have 600 teachers in the system with limited authority to teach. They are only midway through their course, or sometimes two-thirds of the way through their course, yet they are now at the coalface. How is that going in relation to classroom management and the like? That is what worries me about behaviour and violence in schools.

I know we have limited time today and other members will make a contribution, but I want to reiterate that the Cook government has lost its way, and the people have certainly recognised that. As I said, that is demonstrated by the rallies and the fact that the State School Teachers’ Union of WA had to commission the *Facing the facts* report, led by former Labor Premier, Hon Carmen Lawrence, to try to cut through to this government, which does not want to listen and say, “These are the issues that are facing our teachers, principals and students.” This government needs to listen. We know how union-orientated this government is. The Leader of the Opposition explained pretty well the way the Premier was basically elected by the unions and not the people of Western Australia. The State School Teachers’ Union of WA is trying to cut through to the Labor government.

Mr D.T. Punch: Who elected your leader?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is ironic, Minister for Fisheries, that the union movement was started by the shearers’ union over 120 years ago and here we are with the Western Australian Labor government seeing the end of live sheep

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exports and potentially the end of the sheep industry in Western Australia as we know it. I have spoken about the critical mass. I am worried about the number of sheep and about our \$700 million wool industry. That is all part of it—the self-replacing merino wool industry.

I have been here for seven years and I saw the slash-and-burn technique of the McGowan government, with Hon Sue Ellery, at the start of the term in 2017: “Let’s cut Schools of the Air, let’s cut Moora Residential College and let’s cut the boarding away from home allowance.” What a disgrace. Now, towards the end of this government’s term and during the 12 months of the Cook Labor government we have seen the uprising of the people, whether it is regional people who have absolutely had enough, and now our nurses, teachers and police have all had enough of this government. They should not have to be rallying like the people of the south coast over the proposed south coast marine park. When we see these rallies take place and the public uprising, we know that there is something wrong. The government needs to open its eyes, realise the mistakes it made and start listening to the people of Western Australia.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [4.56 pm]: I rise to join in support of this excellent motion by the Leader of the Opposition. I will focus primarily on the failings in the area of state development. State development means cultivating ideas for new investment and jobs, and helping businesses turn ideas into reality that will contribute to the ongoing future economic prosperity of our state and people. It also means the government investing in infrastructure in particular to entice private sector investment and ensure that government laws and regulations do not impede economic progress.

One of my main interests in politics, and one of the reasons I became involved in politics, is industrial development. One area of particular interest is the long-held vision for the major economic development of the midwest and the consequent flow-on growth of Geraldton and the other regional towns. As I have pointed out in this chamber before, the midwest is pretty well the perfect place to achieve that goal. It is the pre-eminent area in the world, I think, for renewable energy, with its unique combination of uninterrupted sunshine and wind. It is a sizeable city that already has excellent resources that could sustain a much higher population and the expansion of support services. If the area around the industrial estate were developed, it would allow the nearby towns to flourish. Some of those towns are struggling at the moment. Oakajee, to the north, has been identified for a long time as a potential industrial hub. I will go through a little bit of the history of this government because it talks long and loud, but its actions are found wanting. Companies cannot proceed with projects because of the lack of enabling infrastructure. The reality is that the government has no integrated plan for enabling infrastructure and common-user infrastructure such as power, water and gas. I understand that the member for Swan Hills has been tasked by the Premier to put a plan together. Unfortunately, that is being done in the twilight of this government. I note that the member for Swan Hills is the only member on the other side who has any industrial background, and has indicated that she will be leaving this place. I think it will be a great loss to the Parliament. I have told her personally that I wish her well for her new career; I am sure she will do very well.

The truth is that it is too little, too late. The government has been in power for seven years, heading into eight years. I will go over a bit of history of what the government has promised and what has actually been done. We have been told before that there were 65 submissions of interest in Oakajee as a potential industrial site from companies across the globe. That interest was narrowed down and six were shortlisted. Land options have been granted to at least two of those parties, but what have we seen? We have not seen any key support infrastructure being put in place to enable that project to go ahead. Nothing of any meaning will happen at that site during the second term of this government—eight years in—despite all the promises it has made. There has been no progress on the upgrade of the transmission lines. As I have said in this place before, I have spoken to some of the proponents—not all of them—about that site, and they will not build anything until they have a 330-kilovolt tie to the south west interconnected system. There may be plans, but nothing has been done in eight years, after the government criticised the opposition for proposing that during the last state election. The government now in fact admits that it is absolutely necessary, and industry also believes that it is. Until recently the government consistently rebuffed the idea; it needed to score a cheap political point at the cost of the state of Western Australia.

There has been no progress on the Oakajee port, which is a critical enabler. Having offshore mooring points for natural gas or hydrogen may be part of the solution, but the truth is that the large-scale manufacturing industries that the government wants there will need a port. It has no plans. Two estimates ago I questioned the relevant minister about this. I spoke to the chair of the Mid West Ports Authority and was told that 2 037 port construction sites would be considered before Oakajee. I have consistently urged the government to get on and develop that, given that it is critical to the future prosperity of Western Australia. In 2021, nearly three years ago, the government announced \$61.5 million in funding to supercharge the renewable hydrogen industry, including \$7.5 million for an access road to Oakajee. It is patently clear that an access road is the very minimum that is needed, but what has happened? Three years after that announcement, in the last Labor government budget, we saw that the access road was still a \$7 million line item and that nothing had been done. In fact, the last time I looked, there had been some

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grading of the access road—presumably for a ministerial visit to the site—but it is otherwise still an overgrown sheep paddock. We do not even have an access road in place. Apparently there is some money for the major road infrastructure into that site, because the current road is unsuitable for heavy transport. The government is no closer to delivering that road and the project is struggling to get off the ground.

Let us look at the government’s failure with hydrogen. The truth is that, for all the government’s hype, spin and grand announcements, Western Australia is falling well behind other states and well behind the major players in the rest of the world. We all know that in this space, it is the early movers who will gain the greatest advantage. The government has announced buckets of money for hydrogen. That is the government’s standard response to everything. I have great sympathy for the Leader of the Liberal Party, who constantly asks the Minister for Health about outcomes: “Why is this outcome not improving? Why is that outcome not improving?” What do we get back from the Minister for Health? We get, “Oh, we’ve allocated this money.” Allocating money and, indeed, spending money, is not an outcome; it is an input. We are not seeing any outcomes, and nowhere is that more true than in the area of hydrogen.

We had the ludicrous situation of Fortescue Metals Group—a private company that is making literally billion-dollar investments in this industry—being unable to establish an industry in Western Australia because the government could not provide it with land. So then FMG, our third-largest iron ore miner which is now moving seriously into the hydrogen space, had to go to Queensland. It has now opened Australia’s largest hydrogen electrolyser manufacturing facility in Gladstone, Queensland; not Kwinana, Western Australia, but Gladstone, Queensland, because of this government’s failure to provide adequate land for that company to develop its facility. If that manufacturing facility goes to capacity—and it is forecast to do so, so I assume it will—it will be responsible for half the world’s electrolyser manufacturing capacity. That major facility has been lost to Western Australia because of the inaction and, I would say, incompetence of this government in that area. That facility in Queensland was built and commissioned within two years; I can quite confidently say that that would be impossible in Western Australia. In fact, proponents are now saying that it takes around 10 years to get a major business off the ground in Western Australia, and that is particularly true of mining.

That Fortescue facility in Gladstone is just the first stage of a major green energy facility. The next phase—a 50 megawatt green hydrogen production facility—has received approval from the Queensland government. Again, that will be going ahead in Queensland, not Western Australia, for a Western Australian-based company that wanted to build it in Western Australia. The initial manufacturing centre is a two-gigawatt facility and it will produce 200 000 tonnes of green hydrogen a year. That has happened because of the inaction of this government and its failure to develop hydrogen centres here. Gladstone is now becoming recognised as the hydrogen hub of Australia, but it is not the logical location, which is Western Australia and, in particular, Oakajee.

In Tasmania the state government is investing \$230 million, augmented by another \$70 million from the federal government, to create a \$300 million fund to invest in common-user infrastructure—such as hydrogen storage, transport and export infrastructure—for a hydrogen hub at Bell Bay. That puts Tasmania ahead of us. Contrast that with Oakajee: we do not even have an access road to the site, let alone critical enabling infrastructure.

China does not have the blessings of renewable energy resources that we have in this state, but it is progressing at a great rate. Chinese state-owned oil and chemical giants are going to build a plant in Mongolia that will annually produce 30 000 metric tonnes of green hydrogen and 240 000 tonnes of green oxygen, which is a by-product, using solar and wind power. It is going to use that for chemical manufacturing and the like.

Spain is a country with a vastly smaller economy than Australia’s, and it is an economy that struggles. In terms of sun and, to an extent, wind, Spain has renewable resources similar to Western Australia’s. It is reported that it has 20 per cent of the world’s green hydrogen projects—second only to the USA. Again, Western Australia is blessed with vast open spaces—greater than Spain’s, which is geographically a small country compared with Western Australia, but Spain is responsible for 20 per cent of the world’s green hydrogen. Where are we? We have nothing other than some indicative demonstration projects and some promises of things in the future.

In November 2021, Hon Alannah MacTiernan announced a \$117.5 million fund for renewable hydrogen hubs in the Pilbara and midwest. The Pilbara hydrogen hub plan involved the development of a hydrogen and ammonia pipeline connecting the Maitland and Burrup strategic industrial areas; creation of a clean energy training and research institute based out of Karratha and Port Hedland; and upgrades to port facilities. We welcomed that, and it looks like it might go ahead, but production of hydrogen there will not commence until 2028. We are missing the boat; in some regards we have missed the boat, with major facilities going elsewhere. We are missing the boat in the production of hydrogen, despite the government promoting itself as a government that cares about renewables and the hydrogen economy.

There was some news about hydrogen in March this year. A proposal for a demonstration plant in Northam was rejected by the regional development assessment panel. We have apparently no restrictions on approvals for the

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development of high-rise apartments in the western suburbs, but a major hydrogen demonstration project was rejected. Where is the minister and where is the government on that? How are they working with the shire to overcome the problems and difficulties and get that project going? Nothing—crickets. The government has done nothing. The Northam venture was designed as a demonstration facility. Infinite Green Energy had planned a much larger project—that is, the Arrowsmith hydrogen plant in Dongara. Where has that decision left IGE in terms of developing that hydrogen project? Again, what are the relevant ministers on that side of the chamber doing to get this to go ahead? As I said, there appears to be no barrier to the government’s donor mates building high-rises in the western suburbs, but it is not supporting a major industrial project for the future of this state. Things are not always simple and there are hurdles, but that is the job of ministers and that is the job of government. They are missing in action on that.

Let us have a look at the government’s record on hydrogen. The government likes to talk about it but where is its consistent, solid commitment in that space? I have spoken about the expressions of interest and where that has gone, and nothing else has changed. I might say that members on this side of the chamber recognised this area and took it seriously before the last election. I was appointed to the role of shadow minister for hydrogen and took policies on hydrogen to the last state election. After the election, the government caught on with that idea and created the role of Minister for Hydrogen Industry, reflecting the fact that the Minister for Energy clearly could not manage that on top of his other portfolios. The role was given to Hon Alannah MacTiernan. Two years later, in June 2023, there was a cabinet reshuffle and the hydrogen portfolio was taken from the minister and given to the Minister for Energy. Subsequently, in late 2023, what happened? Because of their failure, and I suspect out of embarrassment, we saw a cabinet refresh and the title of Minister for Hydrogen Industry completely disappeared from the cabinet list. There is now no minister for hydrogen and hydrogen is not a priority for the state. We can see why there has been a lack of progress. It is because there has been no consistent commitment by the government.

Some private sector projects are going on and little niche things are happening, but the truth is that by now Western Australia should be like Spain. Spain has an economy a fraction of the size of Western Australia’s economy and accounts for 20 per cent the world’s green hydrogen. Here we are in the best place in the world to make green hydrogen and we are getting virtually nowhere, with only things that will happen in the future. That has been the story for a number of years now. There is lots of hype, lots of press releases and lots of talk about what the government is doing about climate change and how it is concerned about it, but one of the major enablers for us to deal with climate change is to create a sustainable hydrogen industry and the technology around that, and the government is completely failing on that.

We next hear that the government is committed to downstream processing. I do not know a government that is not committed to downstream processing. It is something that is talked about, especially for a resource-rich state like Western Australia. However, what have we seen under this government? I think we are seeing the existing downstream manufacturing in the state being wiped out.

[Member’s time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: In 2020, BP announced its intention to close the oil refinery at Kwinana. Although it was an old refinery, in fact, it was the largest and technically most modern refinery in Australia. What did the government do about that? In effect, it did nothing. Under the then Minister for State Development, Jobs and Trade, who is now the Premier, we saw the closure of the industry that started the Kwinana strip. It was in his own electorate and he did nothing.

More recently, Alcoa announced it will close its Kwinana refinery. I was bemused because at one stage somebody thought it was conspiratorial that I had not mentioned I had worked in a senior role in that refinery; it was as if that was a moment. Yes, I did. The beauty of that is that I actually know what I am talking about in relation to the refinery, unlike members on the other side of the chamber. I know that with a relatively moderate investment and relatively moderate support from the state government that refinery could keep going. Instead, what did the government do? This Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade, again, in his own electorate, is letting a billion-dollar business shut down, which directly employs about 1 500 people. By normal multiples that means about 6 000 jobs in an area with traditionally high unemployment. It will be mothballed at the end of the year, which anyone who knows that industry knows is a precursor to shutting down the whole facility. Again, what is the government doing? Nothing. The government says, “There’s nothing we can do.” There is something the government can do.

What else are we faced with? We now face the shutdown of the entire nickel industry in Western Australia, in particular, the nickel refinery at Kwinana. Hon Madeleine King, the federal Minister for Resources, went along to a *Business News* breakfast and made this general reference, “All industries have their time and maybe BHP and other companies need to make investments continually to keep these facilities going”, when all the while BHP has invested \$4.5 billion in the Western Australian nickel business over the last five years. Note that, member. It was

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\$4.5 billion invested over the last five years, yet the federal minister responsible for that area is completely ignorant of that fact and made ignorant comments at a breakfast, saying that effectively nothing had been done except the production credits. When do they kick in? The decision to close that refinery and that business will be made in August this year and the production credits will kick in in 2027. That will be some solace to the many thousands of people who will lose their jobs. I think there are over 3 000 highly skilled jobs in Western Australia that rely on that business.

I will finish on this shortly, but unfortunately this government has given us too much fodder to go through. I hear the Premier and members in this place say that they are going to have a rechargeable battery manufacturing facility in Western Australia. Do members know what is the single biggest input chemical into lithium rechargeable batteries? It is nickel. Moreover, it is the nickel sulphate that is produced in the BHP refinery at Kwinana. BHP spent a couple of billion dollars or more converting the refinery so that instead of just producing nickel metal it can make nickel sulphate for battery manufacture. That facility will be closed as well.

The government thinks it will have a battery business in Western Australia, yet it will idly sit by while the facility that makes the major component that goes into batteries is shut down. That is a farce. Again, it is a facility that sits inside this Premier's electorate. If that facility shuts down, it will be the third major industry to collapse that this Premier; Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade has overseen. I dearly hope that that does not occur, but it is a failure of government.

I might say, by and by, for members on the other side of the chamber who claim that they care about the environment, I understand Rio Tinto indicated that the carbon emissions of nickel made by the pig nickel process, which is used in Indonesia, with the products going to China, are 80 times more than the nickel made by BHP in Western Australia. The government will oversee the shutdown of that industry and we will get 80 times the carbon emissions. No less nickel will be processed, because it is driven by demand. This government has failed in the area of state development. It might like to cherry-pick a couple of little things, but the truth is that major industries are shutting down and the government is not doing anything adequate to promote the development of a hydrogen industry in the state of Western Australia.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [5.19 pm]: I also rise to support this motion that condemns the Cook Labor government for its performance in its first 12 months under Premier Cook's leadership. One thing I have observed is something that I know happens to not just me but also other members on this side of the house. I will speak from a regional perspective. Every question that I ask in this house is valid and has come from very concerned people, but I feel that the questions are often dismissed or even made fun of. I have felt that this week. That is concerning for people in the regions. It appears that the government is failing to listen. I believe that it is not listening in many cases or not willing to address the critical concerns of some of our constituents.

I acknowledge from the outset that there are many hardworking frontline health workers, police, firefighters and volunteers in the regions, and that many people go way above their remit. The number of these people is diminishing in the regions, particularly the number of volunteers. Some towns struggle to get volunteers to man services that are taken for granted in the metropolitan area. We do not have an ambulance driver in some towns on some weekends, which is staggering for the people who might need them. These people are the backbone of our communities, and I think more recognition needs to be given to those people and more focus placed on them.

There is no doubt that the lack of focus and attention on regional areas has meant that life is getting a lot harder in the bush every day. At every opportunity, it seems that something in the metro area is prioritised over things in the bush. I will give an example of why people perceive that to be the case. I had two people contact me recently. As I have said in this place before, they do not expect skyscrapers or the same infrastructure that is in the metropolitan area, but they drive over the Narrows Bridge and see a new footbridge worth millions of dollars while their hospital is falling down. When I ask a question of the Minister for Health, I do not get an answer.

It is really disappointing for people in the regions when that happens. This is a basic service that people actually need. Many people who work in the regions are from Perth; they travel to regional areas to work. It is well within the realms of possibility that many of those people will need to use regional facilities. Tom Price Hospital is an example; it services around 20 000 people who work in the mines throughout that region, yet that 57-year-old hospital is dilapidated. We are not able to get answers on what is happening to it.

The people in my patch in particular, as well as from other regional locations, who contact my office are definitely doing it tough and feel like they are receiving a minuscule amount in terms of what is spent in the regions compared with what they produce. The main issues are clearly health; housing; crime, particularly youth crime; the cost of living; and the cost of doing business in the regions, which we all know is significantly greater. I refer to the price of fuel and the price of water. I went to Shark Bay last week and they are paying up to \$16 a kilolitre for their water. By comparison, people in the metro area probably pay around \$3 a kilolitre. To add insult to injury, the pressure they receive through their pipes is nowhere near what it should be, so they are paying a premium and not receiving

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the service they expect. People take these things for granted in the metropolitan area, but they are challenges in regional areas. They might seem small challenges, but they are not.

Another example of regional people being silenced was the decision by the previous Premier to strip away regional voices. I understand that there are fewer people in the regions, but I have only one office in my 800 000–square kilometre patch.

Could I have an extension, please?

[Member’s time extended.]

Ms M. BEARD: I think it would be only the people in that town who would ever get to visit that office. It is impossible to service all the people.

Dr D.J. Honey: There is something wrong with the clock.

Mr P.J. Rundle: You’ve only been going for a few minutes.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes.

The ACTING SPEAKER: You can keep going.

Ms M. BEARD: In the lower house, the number of regional seats will drop to 14, which is a blow for regional communities because people will not have their voices heard. We will not have people who live on the ground and who understand what is happening and can relay that back. Regional people have minuscule opportunities to contact their local member. They cannot drive or travel to see them because it is way too far. A lot of people would have to travel 900 kilometres to get to my office. I feel a bit aggrieved about that, as do a lot of people in my electorate. It is only reasonable to think that people want representation. It is a grievance that many people in the regions definitely want to push, because they do not believe that the framework we will have will allow them to be represented going forward. There will be an opportunity for members to make decisions in this house that will make it easier for those people, such as by providing extra resources to regional members to facilitate them in representing the people who live in their region because they do not have the 100–square kilometre patches that Perth members have. People do feel let down. I am sure that if decision-makers had been walking in their shoes, they would probably have had more of an idea.

The retention of the population in the regions is something that we need to focus on. People will move to the regions, but only if they have the infrastructure and services they need. One thing that is blatantly obvious is the lack of regional managers and local leadership from the departments. People from Exmouth drive to Carnarvon to try to see a regional manager and are given a phone number to call in Geraldton or Perth. That is a three and a half hour drive. It causes enormous frustration for not only those people, but also the people who live in the regions whose line managers are miles from where they need to be. The line managers probably do not set foot that often in the regions to understand the issues.

Regional health issues are definitely concerning under the Cook Labor government. Yesterday, I raised some issues with the minister about some hospitals. Despite a change in leadership, we have seen the same pushback on a lot of our infrastructure requirements in the regions. The Royal Flying Doctor Service report laid bare that regional communities are forced to do more with less, often having to travel great distances to the metro area to access basic health services. It is not just inconvenient but also a significant barrier to the timely medical attention that people need. The Royal Flying Doctor Service’s *Best for the bush: Rural and remote health baseline 2023* report highlights the alarming health disparity between the 30 per cent of the Australian population living in rural, regional and remote areas and those living in the cities. The report aligns with the National Rural Health Alliance’s call for geographical health equity and demonstrates the massive health underspend in rural areas that is contributing to the heavy burden of disease and shorter life expectancies across a lot of our remote and regional areas. I understand that the RFDS planes do four lifts an hour. It is almost at capacity, if not at capacity.

Dr D.J. Honey: It is at industrial scale.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, it is massive. As regional services and infrastructure reduce, the pressure on those organisations will increase. The pressure on patients who rely on those services will increase as well. The Meekatharra Hospital project has still not kicked off. We saw a \$77 000 amount in the budget for Tom Price Hospital. That has been kicking around for a very long time, to the point at which the community has had to undertake a community campaign to try to bring their conversations to Perth. That is something that I know the minister pushed back on, but the reality of living in the bush and the lack of voices is that they have to do that to get the basic services that they need. I do not know whether any members have been to that hospital, but it is very old. Paraburdoo Hospital is falling down. These hospitals service an enormous number of people in the regions, so the lack of spend on them is astounding. Carnarvon maternity services is another issue that is still kicking around. It causes enormous stress for families. It

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is difficult for the staff. Babies are born in the hospital because babies decide when they are coming. That puts additional stress on the staff who are there, who clearly may not be trained and they find themselves delivering babies.

Moving on from that, the patient assisted travel scheme is another issue. As we see the scaling back of services in the regions, we need to address some of these gaps. According to the doctors I have spoken to, dental treatment is majorly important. They are saying that people need to travel for dental work. They do not get any PATS assistance, so they are not getting the dental work that they need. Audiology is another one, as well as optometry. People need to travel for those services and neither of them are covered. If it is not available or being provided, we need to find a way to provide transport at least. The minister keeps saying to me that the scheme has been increased. Actually, even if it has, it is not good enough because at the moment it is a huge expense, at \$100 or \$106 a night. I do not know whether other members of this house stay in Perth; I know regional members do. I have many people coming to me who are very distressed because they cannot make up the gap in that payment when they need to travel for health. A lot of them do need to travel.

In the nursing posts across the regions in Cue, Yalgoo and Mt Magnet, often only one nurse is available. A change we can make in that space is that some of those nurses cannot work outside their hours. If they get a knock on the door because something terrible has happened, they are fearful of being hauled over the coals because it is not within their contract and they would be outside their hours. It is a reality in the bush that if something happens, somebody is going to step up. Either we need to increase resources in these nursing posts or we need to change some of the protocols that are in place. Shark Bay has a visiting doctor at the moment. Coral Bay is an example of a nursing post that is very small. Between 3 000 and 5 000 people live in the settlement at any one time without a doctor. That is a small town.

Aged care is another area of deficit in the regions. Clearly, people ultimately have to move if there are no services or no in-home care for them.

Mental health is becoming increasingly important in the regions, particularly suicide. We need to find a way to link all these services together in these areas because many displaced young people across the regions desperately need help and they do not know how to get it. Some of those specialist areas are definitely needed in the regions.

Crime is another issue, which I speak with the Minister for Police about regularly. I will say again that police in the regions do an absolutely outstanding job. They seem to be doing a lot more on an ongoing basis with a lot less. There is shifting of resources around the regions. I travel around my patch a lot and I see the same police who are based somewhere else, in another part of the region. Their comments to me are that they have been sent to another area because it is short. They are plugging the gaps across the regions, which is clearly frustrating for the communities where they are left short and clearly frustrating for the police as well. On one hand, crime is perceived to be down according to the government, but on the other hand, if I ask people on the ground, they would argue it is not down. I spoke to the minister about it the other day and he knows about this. A Facebook clipping came through about an abandoned motorbike: "I just found this abandoned motorbike. Has anyone lost it? I tried reporting it to police but couldn't get through." It is a common story. It is not the fault of the police, but if people cannot get through to the police, they take their own actions to retrieve their goods. It happens and I am not going to deny it. There is a litany of stories like this. Minister, if I contacted your office every time, I would be ringing you daily.

Mr P. Papalia: That's not true and you know that if you do, then we will follow it up.

Ms M. BEARD: Okay, so I can call you anytime?

Mr P. Papalia: If you are claiming that someone was not able to get through to the police, you should contact my office with the details of the time and the nature of the incident —

Ms M. BEARD: I can give you this one. There is a whole —

Mr P. Papalia: No. You know who to contact in my office. I have told you and you know that when you do —

Ms M. BEARD: That is okay. I am not going to go there, minister, because that is crazy.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a point of order.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. Carey: No, you never give proper details. Give proper details!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a point of order.

Ms M. BEARD: I will give proper details!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a point of order.

Mr J.N. Carey: You don't.

Ms M. BEARD: I will.

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Mr J.N. Carey: You do not.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister.

Mr J.N. Carey: You just come in here every time —

Ms M. BEARD: You do not want to hear it.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister Carey.

Mr J.N. Carey: You're a disgrace. You are.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Cottesloe.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I understand that the member is not seeking interjections from the other side and I would ask that they desist.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member, I believe the member was accepting an interjection from the Minister for Police but I note that other ministers were interjecting.

Debate Resumed

Mr P. Papalia: Pass that to me when you have finished.

Ms M. BEARD: Thank you. I will.

Mr P. Papalia: You know you need to ring my office if you have a similar incident.

Several members interjected.

Ms M. BEARD: Yes, I will. I will move on because this is what I referred to at the start of my speech. Government members do not hear what they do not want to hear.

Ms M.M. Quirk interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Member for Landsdale!

Ms M. BEARD: There are other things that can be done and there are other complaints. This has gone through to the Attorney General and I am happy to table it. It is about the justice system and the lack of accountability and consequences. An example is that there is no staffing in the justice building at Meekatharra. This is causing issues with youth crime. This is causing issues for the Meekatharra police, who have to assist by using their phones and facilities. There are no phones in the old justice building. There are no services. Youth Focus is the only service that provides general juvenile support in the town. Lawyers are doing their best to help their clients but often they can either not attend or clients are not able to access legal representation. These are all examples of things that are going to help police. That has been sent to the Attorney General. I do not believe there has been a response yet.

On the need for facilities, which I raise all the time, there is a call from communities for assistance with safe houses and transitional housing.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M. BEARD: There have to be wraparound services. We do not have wraparound services, which we require in many of these towns. In Broome, wraparound services have been provided for the last 12 months. People have been calling for it in Carnarvon and some of the inland towns as well to help with these children who are running the streets. It is a problem. People can say it is not, but I live there and I see it. It is okay for members on the other side to accuse me of making this up. I am not making it up. It is a fact that that is what they need. There is a lack of integrated services and individuals have to navigate a fragmented system, often without success. We need a holistic approach that includes mental health support and housing assistance. An example in housing—I expect an interjection here—is that when people try to complain about a house or a family or somebody causing antisocial behaviour in a house, often they lodge that complaint and it comes back saying there is not enough information. It goes around and around.

Mr J.N. Carey: Oh, my god! You are unbelievable; you really are.

Ms M. BEARD: I will send you examples.

Mr J.N. Carey: That's right. Liberals—"Get them out!" They evict people from social housing.

Ms M. BEARD: That is not what I am saying.

Several members interjected.

Mr J.N. Carey: Yes, she is. It's a classic Liberal position.

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Ms M. BEARD: So —

Mr J.N. Carey: Look at your eviction record. It's a disgrace.

Ms M. BEARD: Oh, for god's sake.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a point of order.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr D.J. HONEY: I do not believe the member invited the continuous and vociferous interjections from the Minister for Housing.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms R.S. Stephens): Member for North West Central.

Debate Resumed

Ms M. BEARD: I am not asking to kick people out. I am asking for a change in processes and procedures to address it. That is what I am asking for.

Mr J.N. Carey interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister!

Ms M. BEARD: It is the same with education. We have kids who are not going to school because they do not want to. We need an alternative for children who do not want to be in school, rather than finding themselves suspended every 10 days. We need to find alternatives for education in these regional towns. The one-size-fits-all approach to education is something we need to look at in the regions. It is a suggestion, because that is what I see. Kids do not want to be there. I talk to them on the street all the time. They are not going to go to a one-size-fits-all school because they do not want to be there. I will finish up because other people want to speak.

Another issue is roads. I have brought it up before and the Wiluna–Meekatharra road is still causing a lot of angst for people. It is an unsealed section Goldfields Highway, and we see multiple accidents occur regularly there. It is the same with Mt Magnet–Geraldton Road. We have witnessed tragic accidents there. My point here is that as industries grow across our regions, the infrastructure is not keeping up with what is needed. We need to be open to making these changes because if we keep doing what we are doing, we will only get what we have got and it will get worse. Regional WA contributes enough to the state to have a greater focus from the government.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [5.40 pm]: I rise to speak to this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, which reads —

That this house condemns the Cook Labor government for its performance in its first 12 months under Premier Cook's leadership, demonstrating that despite new leadership it remains the same old Labor government, failing to address the concerns of Western Australians and highlights the urgent need for a change in government.

I want to run through a few things in my portfolios, and, if there is time, I will touch on some of the issues in my electorate. I start with mines and petroleum. I get regular feedback from industry, and it would be no surprise to the ministers involved that the approvals process in particular has been less than overwhelming—or over-performing, underperforming; I think I have the words around the wrong way! Anyway, it is no good, let me be clear. The challenge is that there is a significant reliance on the resources sector. The budget surplus that this state government has delivered over the last several years primarily comes from the resources sector. I had a look at the pre-budget submission from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, and I speak to Association of Mining and Exploration Companies representatives regularly on behalf of industry, and they are pretty consistent in the feedback they provide. This was pre-budget advice to the government and the opposition, because it was made public. There is some pretty forthright criticism, although it is written in the nicest possible way, as submissions coming from professional lobby and industry groups usually are. It highlights the enormous gaps that have been allowed to continue under this government for seven and a half years. Despite the change in leadership and the refocusing of programs and re-announcing initiatives so that everybody is very aware of the government's intent, it is falling short on delivery. We see these gaps continuing to hamper the ability of businesses in the resources sector to thrive.

I spoke about the announcement that the government made about strategic industrial areas. It was one of the issues mentioned in the pre-budget submission from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy. It was very supportive of strategic industrial areas and turnkey industrial land, particularly to support the development of the critical minerals

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industry. That was something it promoted. I was quite excited to see that there was a commitment to funding for strategic industrial areas, I think 13 around the state. But in my budget reply speech I said that when we delved into the detail of that big announcement—\$500 million for these 13 strategic industrial areas—we saw that nearly 60 per cent of that funding would not be spent within this budget estimates period, but beyond 2028. Everyone in Western Australia and across the nation talks about importance of us being ready to take advantage of the critical minerals industry and to support its capacity to get a foothold in a very competitive global market. The problem is well articulated, but the government announced a significant amount of money that has been poked into a special purpose account on the never-never.

The money the government is spending in the forward estimates period is to set up and create more sub-departmental areas to do more work that the department should be doing already. I question what DevelopmentWA is doing. There is \$145 million to be spent by DevelopmentWA on the acquisition of new land. The government has ticked the box on that. It will be interesting to see where and how it goes on that front. There is \$21 million to be spent by the department to establish a new program management office to ensure the delivery of the program. Again, I question what DevelopmentWA is set up to do. It is designed, set up and resourced to look at and acquire strategic land, do that development, cycle it through in non-competitive regional areas and offset those costs so there are opportunities for industry and residential developers to move forward. The government's announcement had a great headline, but looking at the detail we see this government is failing again. A total of \$314 million of that \$500 million is allocated to be spent beyond the forward estimates period. The government is hardly moving at pace or with a degree of urgency.

The other thing the pre-budget submission from the Chamber of Minerals and Energy requested was the reinvigoration of Streamline WA and the reform agenda that this government made much fanfare about in 2018. The government said it would get in there, streamline approvals and make sure that red and green tape was dealt with. That was in 2018. In its pre-budget submission the Chamber of Minerals and Energy said, "Approval processes are lengthy and duplicative." That is the headline on page 10 of its submission. Streamline WA was a program launched by the government in December 2018. On 12 December —

[Interruption.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Acting Speaker, please.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister, do you mind keeping your voice down.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: On 12 December 2023, a media statement was issued by the new Premier, the new Minister for Mines and Petroleum and, I think, the Deputy Treasurer talking about this again. I have the media statement here. It is headed "Overhaul of approvals system to unlock jobs, investment". That announcement was made in 2018. The government says, "We're back. Let's just pull out the old media statements, rehash them and tell everyone we are getting on with the job, but this time we will add more resources." The government will put in \$18 million and create a coordinator general. When the government knows it is not getting any traction, the answer it immediately goes to is to rehash a media statement, splash some money about—because it can; it has significant surpluses delivered by a very successfully and profitably run resources sector—and add more people into the system.

If members remember, back in 2017 there was a push to streamline and flatten the public service. All this government has done since is add layer on layer to look like it is doing something about it. It has people coordinating the coordinators of the coordinators. There is a coordinator general and \$18 million to go into further streamlining the approvals process, which the government announced it would do in 2018. That cannot be considered a win for this government. The Chamber of Minerals and Energy's pre-budget submission has some quotes from some of its members. This is the most recent submission, so it is not from 2018 when the government said it was here to help; this is: "We have had seven and a half years and we've failed, so we'd better announce something else." There are comments like —

Senior decision makers within my organisation are struggling to justify investment decisions for any WA projects due to the excessively long, uncertain and complicated approvals processes. We are looking at a four year approvals program to obtain an additional 12 months of feedstock. Cost recovery has not resulted in any improvement in approval timeframes.

Another quote states —

We have been waiting on primary state environmental approvals on certain projects for almost five years now and continue to receive multiple requests for further information from the regulator.

Another one states —

There is little communication on the status of approvals once they enter the 'intra-government' review process of the assessment. Within this process other government agencies are requesting extensions which

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adds to the total approval timeframe. As there is minimal communication with the proponent, we lose line-of-sight over the approval timeframe.

And another states —

Several recent mining proposals to DMIRS have been subject to requests for information ... that extend beyond their regulatory remit (e.g. visual impact assessments). More broadly, the ‘trickle feed’ of RFI unnecessarily extends approval timeframes. RFI should be consolidated and better targeted.

That is the kind of feedback the government is getting seven and a half years after it announced that it was going to institute a whole reform package around approvals and streamlining called Streamline WA. Seven and a half years later, industry is saying that this government has failed. It is not us saying this, but industry, in the nicest possible way because they are always polite because they have to work with the government. In the nicest possible way in its pre-budget submission it has said, “You’ve failed. We are succeeding despite the red tape, the green tape and the complex and convoluted systems that you have within your departments. You are making it more difficult for us to do business.” That is what industry is saying. It cannot be interpreted any other way.

Those quotes were directly from members of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy, but if we go to page 10 of the chamber’s pre-budget submission, under the headline that I read out before, “Approval processes are lengthy and duplicative” it starts by stating —

Inefficient assessment processes and assessment delays present an investment risk because delays are costly. Proponents typically incur significant costs while they wait for assessments to be completed and in turn, production revenues are delayed ...

In this context, the current resources sector experience of persistent assessment delays, protracted timelines, and a backlog of environmental assessments across ... (DWER) ... (DMIRS) ... (DBCA) and ... (DPLH) are a significant concern.

This is not what you want to have on your record card. This would be cause for concern if you were at a parent–teacher night—“Please come and meet with me to talk about your problem child, because we have given you all of our advice, we have told you what’s happening and yet, seven and a half years down the track, you are failing. Every single one of your mega departments is failing.” The submission continues —

The processes, cost, timeframes and regulatory overlap between assessments conducted under the *Environmental Protection Act* ... and the *Mining Act* ... continue to weigh on Western Australia’s reputation as a destination of choice for resource investment. The WA Government’s decision to repeal the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021* ... and replace it with an amended version of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* has also created uncertainty and has delayed the modernisation of our heritage framework.

That is, again, a very polite way of saying, “You completely stuffed it up.” So many hours have been spent in this house talking about just how badly this government did on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act, so I do not propose to talk about that at any great length this evening. The submission goes on —

CME members are also continuing to experience increased end-to-end approval timeframes within and across departments due to inefficient processes and a lack of cross-agency collaboration to remove interagency duplication.

I just have it in the back of my mind that when this government came to power, it created these new departments so that everyone could talk to one another and this duplicative process and siloed approach would disappear. Again, it is a great headline and it is a nice thing to say as a new government, but seven and a half years in, it has completely failed, because that is what the Chamber of Minerals and Energy has said. This is its report card, this is its ask and this is its plea, and this government has failed.

I have been dealing with something that is not within my portfolio, but related to the work health and safety legislation that passed through this place. Under this new legislation, the government has had to extend by more than 12 months the timeframe in which people are required to sit an exam so that they can operate in a mining business, or if they are in the lime sands business, operate a gravel pit. Despite the fact that all this industry occurs in regional WA, the government has, in its absolute wisdom—please note the sarcasm—put all the exam centres in the metropolitan area!

Ms M.M. Quirk: Sarcasm doesn’t work in *Hansard*.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: No, and that is why I have to say it out aloud, member, so that it is absolutely crystal clear.

Ms M.M. Quirk: One of your former colleagues Hon Brendon Grylls once sarcastically said my constituents should be very happy that I was their local member, so of course I used that quote without any sarcasm at all.

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Ms M.J. DAVIES: In the former honourable member's defence, he is still spoken of very fondly in my electorate. It was a truism even if he was being self-deprecating. When the government realised that it had created such a bottleneck with the new work health and safety legislation and that there were not enough locations or spots for those exams to take place, it was forced to extend the timeframe by another 12 months. I understand that the exam is difficult. The excuse that I was given by the minister was that the government cannot put more locations in regional centres because it has to maintain the integrity of exams. The Muresk Institute conducts exams on a regular basis as part of a university structure, and I am sure that facility in my electorate could be used, but this is a metro-centric and very centralised government.

All these industries now require individuals within their businesses to undertake this exam, and it will fall more heavily on the small-to-medium sized businesses and contractors—not the Rio Tintos and Chevrans, because they will absorb those costs. It is the small-to-medium sized businesses that work along the supply chain that will be required to participate in this process. It has been an absolutely chaotic process due to poor planning. Nobody was thinking about what had to happen once the first statement was made. We want to keep people safe; yes, we all agree that, in principle, we need to keep people safe. How do we practically do that? How do we bring in legislation, impose regulations and actually implement things? This government fails at the point where the rubber hits the road. There are so many examples over the last seven and a half years of how disastrous its approach has been.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: I want to talk a little about energy transition from the perspective of imploring this government to please think about how it provides support to local governments and regional communities that are the collateral damage in the transition to renewable energy. There are many renewable energy projects in my electorate. On a regular basis, local government talks about how to plan, approve and manage what is a significant influx of project proponents, along with those who seek property and opportunities in the carbon capture and tree planting offsets industry at the same time. There has been a significant increase in the diversity of land use in what I would say is the midwest, the wheatbelt and the great southern, and it is coming all at once. This government is hell-bent on its energy transition network framework, but it has proven again and again that it is poor at actually consulting with the communities that it will impact. We have this notion at the top that we are transitioning our energy system and we need to move towards renewables. Everybody accepts that there will be a transition of this nature at some point along our timeline. We are very lucky in Western Australia because we have options. We have gas to assist us to transition and we have renewable opportunities across the state, but I do not want my electorate—I am sure the members for Roe and Moore think the same thing about their electorates—to be the collateral damage in the rush to get the headline out. That is what is happening. With the transition, power lines and new infrastructure need to go in. This requires a conversation with the community about the planning and how it should happen across local government areas. I have 27 local governments in my electorate—27! They are all having the same conversation. It is not a matter of sitting down with just one of them because they are all experiencing the same thing. They are all saying they are not getting that type of engagement. Departments already exist within government that are supposed to be engaged in delivering government projects, doing long-term planning and making sure communities are aware of what is coming over the horizon, but the government has set up another one called PoweringWA, as I understand it, that is tasked with having those conversations. I can tell members that no-one has been out and had that type of discussion with any of my local governments, certainly not the ones I speak to when I attend zone meetings in the wheatbelt. I implore the Minister for Energy to consider how that can be done better.

I will provide a quote to members from Renee Manning, who works for the Wheatbelt Development Commission and is also a local government councillor. She has to wear two hats at times. The quote from LinkedIn really struck a nerve with me and encapsulates what a lot of people in the area are thinking about the energy transition. She states —

You think it would be a no brainer to engage communities, especially local governments, early in the piece before the development of large scale decarbonisation driven projects.

What would also help would be a set of enabling policies or guidelines that makes the proponent–community negotiation process easier.

In WA we have a real chance to learn from the eastern Australian experience and perhaps avoid the community divisiveness that can occur.

Those of us in the regions working to support community preparedness urge our largely urban based planners and policy makers to get out and speak with impacted regions.

I echo that. She succinctly said what most of my local government councils are saying to me. There is an opportunity to take communities along for the ride, but I am afraid that the track record of this government when it comes to

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that kind of consultation is not great. However, I live in hope because it is important. It is a very important thing to get right.

There are many other things I could talk about, including electoral affairs—where to start! State directors have written to the Western Australian Electoral Commission and the Attorney General has brought in legislation to amend legislation that we had dealt with only six months ago. It is a debacle, but I vented my spleen on that last week when I talked about the absolutely ridiculous situation we have seen with this government continuing to bring legislation to the house that it amends itself and then has to amend again later down the track. The government ignores the committee and parliamentary processes, the feedback from the opposition and it does not consult. Again, I think we are all very clear about the failings in the electoral affairs portfolio, and I have already spoken about Aboriginal affairs.

I look forward to the government's response to the failings that I have raised. I have touched on and talked about significant portfolios. We have not spoken about housing today, so the Minister for Housing has been given a free pass, although we have had numerous private members' business motions on the lack of housing and the chaos that is creating. I see across all these portfolios and across this government a failure to deliver on the essentials and a failure to get the basics right. The government has a massive budget surplus and an absolute majority in both houses of Parliament, yet we cannot get housing, power, water, health, mining regulation or approvals processes—the basic government stuff. Stop coming up with new names for new departments, tacking on little bits of money and creating more confusion within what is an already confusing government system because of the mega-departments, and go back to the basics. That is what the community needs. We want to feel safe, to know that a doctor will be on site and that the hospitals and the education system are working appropriately. We want our resources and agricultural sectors and all the small businesses and everyone engaged in them to be flying, but all the evidence that has been provided by members on this side of the house today shows that this government has been found wanting seven and a half years in. It has to be about more than media statements and big announcements. The government has to show that it has delivered on the promises it has made. It is absolutely not doing that.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [6.04 pm]: I thank members for their contributions. It is a little unfortunate that the member for Central Wheatbelt was the final contributor from the opposition because she is by far and away the most capable, erudite and articulate member in putting her case. Regardless of the content of her presentation, she is far and away the best member on the other side of the chamber at delivering. That is a little unfortunate because, by necessity, I have to respond to her contribution first. In so doing, I will reflect on the last statement she made and point out the hypocritical or inconsistent nature of the motion in relation to that statement. I understand that we are being condemned after the first 12 months under Premier Cook's leadership for failing to address the concerns of Western Australians. We are apparently the same old Labor despite new leadership. I will come to the "same old" part of the condemnation in a moment, but I will refer to the member's last statement when she said that people want to feel safe. That is an interesting observation coming from the sole political party in the Parliament of any description, as opposed to the disparate individuals on the crossbench in the upper house, that outright opposed the most significant reform of the Firearms Act in the last 50 years in the interests of public safety. The member's party chose to oppose something that had at its very core the delivery of a safer state for the people of Western Australia. That would be ensured by clause 4, I think it is, of the firearms bill that states categorically for the first time in Western Australian history that the key principle of John Howard's National Firearms Agreement would be adopted and implemented in our law. That principle is that the possession and use of a firearm is a privilege, and that privilege is conditional upon the provision of public safety as the primary consideration. I note that that principle was the key element of this legislation and that this is the first time in 50 years that the act has been completely rewritten. All the preceding governments failed to take the action of rewriting and updating the legislation and implementing public safety as the primary consideration, yet the member's party chose to oppose the bill outright without any real thought, which was confirmed by the paucity of any logic to most of the arguments that were put to justify the Nationals WA's opposition. That is disappointing. It is disappointing that I had to reflect a little on the member's contribution in that regard because she is very capable and is by far and away the National Party's best performer. There will be a serious gap in the batting order of the National Party of Western Australia on her departure.

That leads me to revisiting the condemnation that claims we are somehow the same old Labor. We may well be. I would like to be the same old Western Australian Labor government because undoubtedly this jurisdiction has the best government in the country in terms of budget management, the delivery of support to its constituents and in the provision of opportunities for businesses and individuals. This government is easily the best in the country. That has been a consistent characteristic of the Western Australia Labor government since we came to office in 2017, confronting the worst economic circumstances and inheriting the worst budget management in the history of this state. That is what we confronted when we first came to office, as opposed to what the previous government confronted. I think the member for Cottesloe thinks that history began when he arrived in this Parliament. Member,

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our government did not always have booms to deal with. However, we inherited the appalling budget management of the worst economic managers in the history of this state. The Liberal–National government had a huge boom, but it failed to recognise the sense in not spending more than it got, and in not assuming that it would always get the revenue levels it got during the boom. It fundamentally failed that simple task; it spent more than it got and it baked iron ore prices in. Sadly for the people of Western Australia, when iron ore prices dropped, Western Australia went into recession, but the previous government kept spending as though it were still receiving those levels of revenue. As a consequence, when we came to office in 2017, we had to deal with a disastrous budget situation. Fortunately, we applied common sense and discipline, and before the iron ore prices recovered, before there was another boom and before the GST arrangement was agreed to, we had already rebalanced the books. We achieved a surplus before all that happened. That came about solely through good management.

I have to address the Leader of the Opposition. In his fragmented and incomprehensible contribution earlier, he made a snide comment across the chamber. He asked: did we not do high school economics? He was referring to our capacity to manage the budget and our ability to apply good financial discipline to the state's finances. I have to make an observation, Leader of the Opposition. The Treasurer not only did high school economics; she completed an economics degree at university level, became a federal Treasury staffer and was then a state Treasury official. She was then a Treasury adviser to successive Premiers. She has spent the better part of recent decades considering state government budget mismanagement under the previous Liberal–National government, and then providing disciplined and authoritative guidance for the budget management of our government—firstly as a member of the Expenditure Review Committee and more recently as Treasurer. For the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that there is somehow no knowledge of economic management in our government is absolutely ludicrous and runs completely contrary to the evidence. In terms of this government's budget management, this state is in the best possible situation. We have easily the best managed budget in the country.

In common with everyone in this country, Western Australians are confronting cost-of-living challenges. Fortunately, because of our government's good economic management, we are able to assist. An extraordinary range of assistance has been provided to the people of Western Australia, and there will be more, to help them get through this cost-of-living challenge. That is what people are really concerned about right now. To suggest that the government is somehow not focused on people's concerns is laughable. The cost-of-living concerns of Western Australians is the front-and-centre issue for this government.

Whenever Nationals WA members speak, they inevitably claim that, somehow, they care about the regions. We know from experience that when they are in government, they do not. As we heard from the Treasurer during question time today, the Nationals WA trashed and destroyed regional rail. For all intents and purposes, it put regional rail back by decades, and in many cases prevented it from ever being able to recover, such was the extent of its neglect under the previous government. Despite trumpeting royalties for regions and claiming that it was focused on the regions, the Nationals completely ignored excessive regional airfares and refused to do anything about them. For eight and a half years it did nothing about the soaring cost of regional airfares, which really impacted on people in the regions. The member for North West Central was not in Parliament at that time, but she would recall the lack of action by the Liberal and National Parties on regional airfares and the impact that had. It was appalling. Everyone in regional and, in particular, remote Western Australia was confronted with extraordinary airfare price rises to the extent of often being prevented from coming to the city, even for serious family emergencies. They suffered incredibly as a consequence of outrageous airfares.

That issue has been addressed by this Labor government. Regional airfares are now capped across Western Australia. As a regional resident, the member for North West Central will never pay more than those caps, and she knows she is eligible for capped fares, as are regional residents right around Western Australia, as a consequence of this Labor government's initiative. We did that; not the Nationals. I do not think the Nationals really cared at all. Nationals members certainly never put their minds to addressing that problem. They made no contribution to assistance for airfares. That is one of the most significant changes in regional life in Western Australia, probably in this state's history. There has been huge take-up. Regional residents are incredibly supportive and appreciative of that initiative.

In our recent budget, we also provided an extra \$100 for the seniors' travel card and made student assistance payments available. I am a bit concerned that the member for Roe and his colleagues may not be telling their constituents about the student assistance payments, for purely political reasons. I wonder whether the electorates represented by Nationals in this place have received information on those payments as effectively as have electorates represented by government members. Have Nationals members been using their electorate allowances to notify their constituents about that opportunity—that really important assistance payment that is available to everyone across Western Australia who have children at primary school and high school? It would be incredibly wrong if that were not the case. It would be very disappointing if the member for Roe was not telling every parent in his electorate that time is running out for that assistance, but that they still have time now. The member for Roe should

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be out there telling them. He should be spending some of his electorate allowance on notifying parents in his electorate of their opportunity and how they should be making applications.

A \$700 electricity credit is coming to every Western Australian household. An incredible assistance is being provided to address the concerns of Western Australians. The primary concern of Western Australians at the moment is the cost of living. Those initiatives will be followed by more, but the government undeniably has already focused on and continues to focus on the concerns of Western Australians. To that end, it is good that we are the same old Labor Party. It is the same old WA Labor that cares about people in the state who are doing it tough and goes out of its way to assist those people to get by and improve their lot. It also assists everybody. It manages the budget well. I am glad that we are the same old Labor that manages the budget well. We are the best budget managers and best financial managers in the country. I am glad that that is the case. Having said that, we are the same old WA Labor; people are getting what they paid for and what they voted for.

Who is not the same old people? Which people are interestingly and dramatically changing in the near term? That would be the Nationals WA. As my colleague the Treasurer indicated earlier, she drew my attention to a press release on the National Party's website. It is a very interesting post about the recent announcement of the "team of local champions for the Legislative Council" at the next election. Interestingly, not a single sitting National Party member of the upper house is on that team of champions. That would suggest that the people in the upper house are not champions in the eyes of the Leader of the Opposition. They are far from champions. Above them in the pecking order is a range of people who have managed to get themselves preselected higher on the ticket in the upper house for the National Party than any of the sitting members. Not surprisingly, some of the sitting members are pretty depressed and have chosen to contribute a lot less than they might have a week or so ago.

Mr D.R. Michael: It is a personal slight on me because one of the demoted members is my fourth cousin.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Oh, my goodness! You should be affronted.

Mr D.R. Michael: It is the whaling part of my family. We split at some point a while ago.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Are you related to the whaling advocate?

Mr D.R. Michael: Hon Louise Kingston is my fourth cousin.

Mr P. PAPALIA: In fairness, I am not entirely accurate in my criticism or in my ridicule. She is on the ticket, but she has been put so far down it that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that she will be safely beyond election. That is where he has put her. We have to wonder why she was not a local champion even though she was preselected this time around. I assume that she was a local champion for the Nationals WA at that point and then, sadly, has been significantly moved down the local champion ranking.

I urge members or anyone unfortunate enough to be submitting themselves to witnessing this private members' business at home to go to the website and open the link to the Nationals' statement about its upper house preselection and its formidable team of local champions because it is worth looking at and very interesting to note. I am sure that the people are nice people, but they have all leapfrogged every single one of the members currently sitting in the upper house. We have had a few conversations over here about what it might be like in the National Party party room, but I understand that there is not really a party room anymore. That is interesting. It is certainly not the same old National Party.

That will be of interest to the voters of Western Australia, too, because there is something to be said for experience. There is something to be said for having knowledge of how government operates, how an effective government engages with the community, how it works with the business community, and how it supports constituents, individuals, families and small businesses. There is something to be said for having done that for a while and learned. There is something even to be said for having done that in opposition and then carrying that knowledge into government. The candidates come from completely outside that experience or knowledge of how good government works or operates, and how policies are developed and implemented; they do not have any of that knowledge. The National Party is suggesting to the people of Western Australia that it wants to relinquish any suggestion of competence. It will ask the people to vote for novices who have no demonstrated experience or knowledge in the field of endeavour they are about to enter—if they are successful. It offers that as an alternative to an experienced and proven government that continues to deliver on behalf of all Western Australians. The government oversaw an incredibly challenging economic environment at the start of its first term of office and successfully guided the state through the most extraordinary challenge it has faced in probably 100 years, in the form of the pandemic. It got, if not the best, at least the equal best outcome in response to the pandemic of anywhere on the planet. Subsequently, it has moved on to ensuring that the state continues to perform at an extraordinary level. At the moment, we have the lowest unemployment rate, the highest participation rate and the best cost of living in the nation, and we are an absolute magnet for people seeking opportunities, both people who are looking to invest and people who are just looking for an opportunity for themselves and their families.

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The National Party is asking that the proven confidence, success, capability and capacity be denied or dropped. As an alternative, it will put into Parliament, potentially into the seat of government, people who have not even been visible in public life or in the Parliament of Western Australia. They have demonstrated no capacity and no knowledge of how good government works. They are to be guided by only the last two remaining Nationals. It is potentially not two; I should not be so presumptuous about the member for North West Central. She could win and then there might be only one National Party member left. The National Party has chosen to take an interesting angle. They would somehow suggest that it is bad to have an experienced, competent, capable and proven government and that we should change that for an inexperienced, incapable and unproven group of people who are not even in Parliament.

Finally, before I allow my colleagues to make a contribution, I appreciate the member for North West Central sending me a photocopy of the Facebook post she referred to. I have said before that I am happy for the member to contact me. By way of interjection, I drew to the member's attention that it is my expectation and hope that if she ever had a problem with a police response, she would contact my office. The member knows that that works. She knows that there will be action as a consequence of raising a matter with my office. A post made by someone who is pretty much anonymous—there is no name on the resident's Facebook page—is not really a report to the police. The statement "I contacted police but couldn't get through" may or may not be true, but it is almost impossible to verify in the absence of a date, a time and the nature of that contact. In this case, the member was talking about reporting a bike that was parked on the side of a track that might have been stolen. That is reasonable, but I urge the member to encourage her constituent to contact the police. As I have said before, do not ring the old phone number for the police station; ring 131 444. They will get through. If that failed and the constituent did not get through, I need to know about it, but I at least need the date, time and nature of the attempt so that I can verify it, determine whether it was a failure by police and then rectify it if it was. In the absence of any of that, just responding to a random Facebook post is not really a responsible act by a member of Parliament. If the member knows who posted this, she should contact them and get them to give her the additional necessary details. She can then get in contact with my office and I will follow it up. I give the member that commitment. I will let the member for Baldivis take over and perhaps make a few reflections on the claims made about energy and the power system.

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Energy) [6.31 pm]: I thank the minister and the Deputy Speaker for the opportunity. I am going to oppose the motion that has been put this evening. I understand that oppositions are here to criticise governments, but I have to say that the type of motion we are looking at tonight is pretty wishy-washy. It is a bit of a shotgun spray at us, really. It is something that an opposition would come up with if it could not think of any specific issue. If it is not hot on any issue or if it is hard to nail something down, it can just have a wishy-washy shotgun spray to say, "You're no good and it's our turn", which is essentially what the motion is about.

I have actually been around for a while. In my earlier capacity, I was a journalist and a politics reporter, so I have seen a few governments come and go. I have seen good ones.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Hopefully, there will be another one gone in March 2025.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: Does the member for Roe reckon? How much does the member for Roe want to put on it?

Governments come and go. Sometimes they are good, sometimes they are pretty ordinary and sometimes they are terrible. As members would expect, we should compare this government with the previous government. Let us think of the government immediately before this one and how there was a turnover of ministers, how there were scandals, how there were ministers who had to stand down and how there were ministers who had portfolios taken away from them. All that turmoil occurs pretty regularly in Australian governments, but our government has been remarkable in its discipline and stability. Even in opposition, this team was remarkably stable and disciplined. That has absolutely been the case in government. We have seen no scandals. No ministers have had to resign in disgrace, as was a feature of the previous government. We saw the blowout in the finances last time. It was a job that we had to repair, and we are still doing so. The previous Premier made this observation in opposition; he said the previous Liberal–National government was the government that won lotto and still went broke. The reference was to those sometimes tabloid stories that we read of a family hitting division 1 and getting an enormous amount of money, but they just do not know how to deal with the finances. A couple of years later, someone will track them down. The front yard will be full of flash cars, but there will be no money left. The people in that family will still be struggling; they just blew the finances because they could not handle it. The previous government was elected to government and then went to an election in 2013. Virtually almost the day after it won its second term, things went sour. The Premier of the day was judged to be an emperor. Arrogance had set in. There was a sense that the government was on the nose almost from the beginning of its second term. As we know, the historical nature of governments in this country at both the state and federal levels is that most governments last two terms. That has been the history in Western Australia, with some notable exceptions around the place. This government still has a sense of having a vision and freshness as it goes forward. There is no sense that it is a hanging carcass that is waiting to be cut down, which was the real whiff that we got during the second term of the Barnett government.

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The other point I will make about the government before I go into the various issues that I want to reflect on in terms of my portfolio and maybe respond to some of the things that were said is that this is a good government. It is a sensible government. It is a government that sits in the sensible centre. It is moderate. It is practical. It is a government of grown-ups. We undertake the tough decisions but we strive to get a good balance. Our occupation of that moderate, practical, centre ground is having an impact on our colleagues across the way. They are being forced to the extremes, if you like. We see this in the Liberal Party in particular with its Christian fundamentalist rump, which continues to have enormous control over the party. We are seeing that Christian fundamentalism having an impact on its approach. Ours is a government that has had significant achievements. The number of jobs we have created since we have been in government is enormous. The achievement of Metronet is often derided, but it is a once-in-a-lifetime—it is probably more than that—or once-in-a-century uplift in vital infrastructure for this city. I know that members opposite make great play of that and say it is a city-centric project, but Western Australia has to invest across the regions and it has to invest in its major metropolitan area. The laying down of Metronet, which is about building a true network for the people of Perth, is historic. In 50, 60, 70 or 100 years' time, people will look back at the foundations of that modern way of moving people around Perth. It will be fundamentally important to the future of Perth. We used to look back at the turn of the century or the early 1920s and 30s or the great boom of the 60s, when Perth developed, but we are building things now with Metronet and our road systems. This is historic stuff. Yes, it is expensive, and, yes, it can be difficult, but we have had success in rolling it out. We are providing railway services to parts of Perth that have never seen commuter rail transport before.

I grew up in Perth and have lived here all my life. For me, growing up as a kid in the northern suburbs in Balga, a train was unheard of. It was a mystery, fantasy thing. My grandmother lived down in Cottesloe and I used to see the train and marvel, thinking: fancy being able to have a train in your community. In Balga, it was the 353 down Wanneroo Road into the city and that was it.

Mr D.R. Michael interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: It still is the 353, is it? I have a good memory from all those years ago! If you did not get to the bus stop on time, your chances were gone. This is revolutionary stuff, having modern frequent rail services in the north east and the south east corridors, creating a true network that connects to the city.

The member for Central Wheatbelt had some things to say about our approvals system. I will briefly respond to them. Coming out of COVID and with the energy transition gaining pace, and as a consequence of our excellent economic management and building a very strong economy, of course we had an avalanche of projects coming down the pipeline. There were renewable energy and critical minerals projects; my colleague the Minister for Mines and Petroleum knows all about this. We are not shying away from it at all. We are embarking on significant and major approvals reform in this state. I have said it is the most fundamental of reforms in many years. These reforms and changes have not occurred in this state for decades quite frankly, from both previous conservative and Labor governments. This is another fundamental milestone in our history.

The member mentioned Metronet. The approvals reform process is necessary. We are committed to it. It is more than creating names or units in government agencies. It is a fundamental change to the structure of the approvals process. Yes, the member for Central Wheatbelt made a very good contribution on the consultation needed for the rollout of renewable energy. It is a challenge and we have seen really bad examples of this in the eastern states in particular. My government and my agency are committed to that consultation. In fact, it is being rolled out. Although the member might not have heard of it happening, I hope in coming months the member will hear about it because it is rolling out now. We are going to be very much involved with the Western Australian Local Government Association and all local governments because we need to bring communities along with us. We need to inform people and make sure they are aware of the challenges and opportunities for the great transition. What I would be concerned about, and I am concerned about—I ask for the assistance of even members opposite, please—is that I hear members of the Liberal and National Parties trying to weaponise this issue, trying to use it for political reasons, for scaremongering, to create anxiety in the community. It is to spread falsehoods about what renewable energy does and what it means and its consequences. Yes, we will inform, consult and work with local communities, but it is a bit cheeky for the member to urge that and then have some of her colleagues out there weaponising it and using it as a cheap political weapon to score some points and create anxiety in the community.

I have a long list of achievements but I know my colleague the Minister for Mines and Petroleum is very keen to make a contribution. I will mention just some of the broadscale achievements in the portfolios I am currently involved in. In energy, of course there are the household energy credits. We have provided \$1 800 in household electricity credits to more than 1.1 million households and 90 000 small businesses since 2020. This is an important and really significant cost-of-living initiative. We are ending coal power in Western Australia. We are having a very sensible, informed and predictable timescale, as opposed to the confusion coming from the other side, which first saw the end of coal in six months but has now extended it to God only knows when. That predictability is with us. We

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have a very careful plan. We are investing in renewable energy. It is a major and significant investment, not just in storage but also in generation. We are investing in standalone power systems for remote communities and for people on farms at the very edge of vulnerable powerlines, which is important as well. I could go on about the opposition's contribution in energy policy. I had a bit to say about that earlier today, but it would keep me here all night, so I will step over that and refer members to my earlier comments.

On the environment, we have ended native logging in Western Australian forests. This is a big achievement. The vast majority of Western Australians support this. We have been sympathetic and serious about the transition, with a just transition plan and funding to support communities and workers. For the Aboriginal Ranger program, we have spent \$100 million employing 1 400 people in on-country jobs. This is really significant stuff. It is life-changing for communities. It is inspiring for communities with some of the most vulnerable and underprivileged people in the state. I could go on about our plan for plastics and Containers for Change, which was opposed by the previous government. We put it through. We made it happen and it is one of the most successful in the country. Our Plan for Parks is rolling out an unprecedented amount of conservation estate.

I could go on, but I see the numbers ticking down. I know that my colleague is really desperate to make a contribution tonight. With that, I will sit down.

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [6.46 pm]: I thank the Minister for Environment for his comments. It is good to be able to talk on this motion, which of course I and the government oppose. Thinking about the last year of the Cook government, it obviously correlates to my term as a minister in the government. When I got to this place, I did not think I would ever be a minister. A few of us who came in the class of 2017 looked at those members of Parliament who went through opposition for Labor. They were all giants—some of them are still in cabinet. I see the Minister for Police, who has done the hard work in opposition. I assumed they would be there for a very long time, and, if we ever got a chance, it would be if we were lucky enough to hold our seats. I am incredibly privileged that I have had the last year as the minister initially for Local Government; Ports; and Road Safety and the Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport. On December 8, I lost local government, the thing I knew about, and got the incredibly important ministry of mines and petroleum for Western Australia.

Being in the cabinet and looking at some of the decisions being taken and the great work that is happening around our state, as we have just heard from the two ministers who spoke before me, I am incredibly privileged to see that energy and drive to make Western Australia better for all Western Australians. Looking at some of my portfolio areas, I will start with the first one—the one I have had for a year, ports. I have been to some ministers' meetings over east for various portfolios. Especially when I was new, when they asked, "What are you a minister for?" I would say I am Minister for Ports. They would ask, "Why do you have a ministry for ports?" I would say, "Because we didn't sell them!" Most other states have various degrees of privatisation or leasing or other arrangements. Knowing what I now know about ports, I think we are incredibly lucky. I feel very proud that the Cook government, over the last few years, and obviously with me in the last year, has been able to invest in our ports. This is no direct criticism on anyone, but I reckon over many decades, the maintenance of our ports probably has not kept up to what it should have. I think some of the asset maintenance at a port level, especially when the ports were not amalgamated and they were regionally administered, probably could have been done better. That is a comment on multiple former governments. I know that this government in ports, with Hon Alannah MacTiernan and the most recent Minister for Ports, Minister Saffioti, started to rectify that situation. I hope that I have been able to continue it.

We have some great ports around the state. I will start from the top. The four regional local governments talk to me about their three ports, being Broome, Derby and Wyndham. We had some luck in getting an application approved by the federal government for first point of entry at Broome port. We see some enormous issues up there without first point of entry. I am told that in the past, federal governments would approve first point of entry ships to be inspected for biosecurity and those other important things on an ad hoc basis, and would delegate Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development or local government officers to do that work if its officers were not on site. In Broome, we cannot get containers in and cruise ship passengers can come in for tourism but their bags have to be sent via Fremantle because we cannot get them inspected in Broome. Frequently, fertiliser has to be trucked in from Fremantle, Port Hedland, Darwin or somewhere in Queensland for that important horticulture and agriculture that happens near the Ord River because we cannot bring it in from overseas through the port of Wyndham. These are challenges that we need to face. I am glad and very grateful that the Albanese government has agreed to first point of entry at Broome. There is a bit of work to do to get that over the line to make sure we comply with all those important biosecurity measures. The Cook government has money in the budget to make sure that we do that necessary work in Broome to help the economy and the Kimberley. The federal government has not shut the door on our application for Wyndham port, but it wants more information. I look at this as a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation. It wants to know what trade mix would come into Wyndham, but we say that until we get first point of entry, the trade will not come there. We are working through that and I am confident we will be able to tell

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a good story for Wyndham, and the government will be able to look at upgrades that might be needed to get federal government assistance.

As Minister for Mines and Petroleum, I frequently have visits from international delegations, ambassadors or people from overseas, especially in the mining context from fledgling countries that do not have a good mining regulatory system but know they probably have some minerals under the ground and want to know how to extract them in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible way. I think this has happened for many mining ministers in the past across multiple governments. We basically say that if they can replicate the Mining Act 1978, it is a good start. I tell them all that next time they come to Western Australia—I also tell this to our friends in the east—to please visit Port Hedland, walk up the control tower and have a quick look. What happened in Port Hedland is absolutely amazing. I suspect that many Western Australians do not even recognise the enormous activity and wealth, not just for Western Australia but our country, that goes out of that port every day. I am really proud for the Pilbara Port Authority, including Port Hedland and Dampier ports.

We have been able to get money in the budget to do that incredible project at Lumsden Point with the support of the federal government. That will help the critical minerals future, with a critical minerals zone at the back end of the future Lumsden Point project. It is going really well. Not only that, Lumsden Point will provide an opportunity for all those resource projects. As minister for mines, every week either current or future prospective mining project proponents visit me with their flipbook of a PowerPoint presentation. Lumsden Point will help with the sheer numbers of 20-foot equivalent units of solar panels, wind turbines and wind turbine components required for the decarbonisation they are planning, whether it is for a current or proposed mine. It will help with laden area and getting some of the materials out to site to help the resources industry decarbonise.

I will skip over a few of the small ports. They are equally important but I will get on to them at a different time because I do not have that much time left to speak. Further south is Geraldton port. Much like Esperance port, it is very constrained. They are built into the side of a town and are obviously very historic. They do an absolutely amazing job. There is the work that Geraldton port does for the agricultural industry through Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd and the grain that goes out, and for tourism, with the cruise ships coming in. Increasingly, we see further trade at Geraldton, including iron ore. I am really proud that in the budget there is allocation for the surge that happens at Geraldton a couple of days a month. We now have science that says that if we were to build a rock wall, we might be able to significantly mitigate that long wave that stops shipping for a couple of days every month. Put over a whole year, that is possibly a 10 per cent uplift on the number of ships that could come in every year, rather than them being trapped in demurrage out in the ocean. That will be an amazing project, especially for the new trades like iron ore that will come in. Last time I was in Geraldton, I saw lots of scaffolding because CBH is doing some work to upgrade its facilities there. There are some excellent workers at CBH. That will give an uplift to Geraldton. That is part of port maximisation project for Geraldton worth over \$300 million, which we continue to work on. This will be the first part of it, with, as I said, almost \$100 million, which will give the port enormous uplift.

I will skip over Fremantle port and Westport because we talk about them quite often, and I could talk about them for some time. The only thing I will say is that all our ports have been working together over the last few years as WA Ports, and when they come to government, the minister or Treasury, they cast the lens over the whole state rather than coming in as separate port authorities. They talk about things like their sustaining capital. One of the drivers of that was the former CEO of the Fremantle Ports, Michael Parker, who sadly passed away several months ago. It is my first opportunity in Parliament to offer my condolences. I recognise his legacy. He was well known in Western Australian industry.

Mr P. Papalia: It is a fine legacy.

Mr D.R. MICHAEL: Absolutely. He did so much to bring our port authorities together to come to government and look at things as a whole rather than individually. Again, condolences to his family. Fremantle Ports is obviously all the better for having had Michael at the helm for all those years.

At Bunbury port, there is again enormous trade. Bunbury port is part of Southern Ports. At some point in the next decade or so we will need a maximisation project. The Minister for Environment talked about wind turbines and those kinds of things. The minister said he had some consultation and was awaiting the rolling out. If a project comes into being on the offshore zone of the south coast, at the moment we probably do not have the facilities at Bunbury to bring in the amount of kit to port to allow that to happen either onshore or offshore, so working out how we do that at Bunbury is incredibly important. Again, Bunbury port is a little constrained because it is close to the City of Bunbury, but that port does an amazing job.

Albany port also does an amazing job. There is some money in the budget to do some planning for berths 1 and 2. We are working with CBH, which also has some plans at Albany and is working through its project. We are making sure that our planning matches that of CBH, which is one of the bigger users of that port, so it is incredibly important.

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Then there is Esperance port, which is the first port I visited when I became minister. Again, it is very constrained. There are some incredible workers at Esperance port who do enormous work. The port is a major employer for the town. Last week or the week before, we announced new trade going to Esperance. I note that Mineral Resources Limited made an announcement this afternoon, and some of that will come off with that announcement. We will continue to look at what we can do to support the port of Esperance, its workers and the community there to make sure we increase trade as much as we possibly can. There is money in the budget to look at the port of Esperance's pilot boat area. We have been able to come up with a really good solution to the Taylor Street jetty issue. The first thing that the council, as well as some tourism operators, talked to me about down there was Esperance's well-loved fishing jetty. It is about to fall into the ocean, but we have come up with a plan that I look forward to rolling out with the Southern Ports Authority.

That was a little bit about my ports portfolio. I am really proud to be the Minister for Ports and, as I said, over \$350 million of investment was announced in the last budget for our ports across the state. This will serve our state well into the future. I am very proud to be the Minister for Ports.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.