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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 6 May 2021

Legislative Council

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THE PRESIDENT (**Hon Kate Doust**) took the chair at 10.00 am, read prayers and acknowledged country.

CYCLONE SEROJA

Statement by Minister for Regional Development

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [10.03 am]: On Sunday, Hon Kyle McGinn and I travelled to Kalbarri to see the progress of the clean-up and to meet with small business owners affected by tropical cyclone Seroja. We were keen to see what more could be done. The clean-up effort has been extraordinary. The progress made by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Power, the Shire of Northampton and the community is a testament to great coordination, hard work and goodwill. Western Power and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services personnel have done a remarkable job to restore power to the town, make safe dangerous asbestos that was exposed during the cyclone and on the general clean-up. However, the effect of this cyclone has had on individual business owners has been profound. Many small business operators have suffered significant losses, not only because of damage directly affecting their businesses, but also the absence of tourists as a result of the closure of the town. The closure was necessary in the aftermath of the cyclone to make sure the town was safe. However, there was a real desire to get back to business. We communicated that to our government. It is great news that as at 6.00 pm tonight, Kalbarri will reopen to visitors. The grey nomads are already on their way!

Outside Kalbarri, the recovery continues. To inform further support needed by our primary producers, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is today distributing a survey on damage assessment to farming communities. The survey asks questions about livestock and cropping impacts, damage to infrastructure, plant or equipment, and soil conservation impacts, with provision for any other comments. The survey will inform recovery measures to be made available under the national disaster recovery funding arrangements. We encourage people to contribute to the survey, as the feedback will assist decisions around further support for both individuals and communities. The survey can be accessed on DPIRD's tropical cyclone Seroja website or obtained from local DPIRD offices. Although there is some way to go in rebuilding from the cyclone, our regional communities are showing their strength and resilience, and our government is doing everything possible in support.

PAPERS TABLED

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

CYCLONE SEROJA AND WOOROLOO BUSHFIRES

Motion

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.06 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (1) acknowledges the impacts of cyclone Seroja on the communities of the midwest, Gascoyne and surrounding areas and the Wooroloo Bushfires north of Perth, and thanks our emergency services professionals and volunteers for their services to those communities; and
- (2) calls on the state and federal governments to make all reasonable efforts to assist those communities to rebuild.

It is not my intent today to take up the full 20 minutes available to me in an 80-minute debate. I am sure that members on all sides of the chamber will be very keen to express their support for the emergency services personnel and these communities. I was pleased to see the Minister for Regional Development jump up and do a ministerial statement on this topic this morning. It is obviously an issue that all sides of the house are quite passionate about.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: We did have a motion on notice about this.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The minister also now has an opportunity to stand and give the government's response. The opposition is here to help, Madam President. We are giving the government an opportunity in the first full sitting week to give a proper response to this motion. I am sure that the minister will want to rush out and make sure that local communities throughout the region are aware of her ministerial statements and the comments she will no doubt be making in the not-too-distant future, so I do not want to unduly take up the time the house has available for this motion. I am sure that members around the chamber, from all parties, will be very keen to make sure that their good intent is recognised. I can see media releases going out in all directions this afternoon, so it is very important.

In relation to cyclone Seroja, it is interesting that, unfortunately, cyclones and these sorts of weather events are going to be a normal part of Western Australia's weather pattern, and have been for a long time. If we look at agriculture throughout those regions, generally Perth and northwards, it cannot survive without those heavy rain events that create the subsoil moisture for significant grass growth and cropping. I was last up in Hon Ken Baston's electorate in, I think, January or February of this year. I drove from Broome to Derby, and I have to say that I have never seen that country looking as green and lush as it did at that time. As I was travelling in the north west, it seemed to be in very good condition. As I drove, I passed many cows that were belly-deep in grass. I have not seen that before. It is absolutely the case that we require these cyclonic events to deliver our agriculture, but, obviously, there is a limit to how much is good. In this case, once again, we have seen nature at her furious best. A bit further south, around the midwest and Gascoyne in particular, the impacts have been dramatic, and not only in those areas. The impacts are spread far and wide. I am sure that members have visited; I know that members across the chamber and from all sides of politics have made the trip through those areas. The Minister for Emergency Services was up there fairly quickly and the local members of the National Party, my colleagues in the alliance, have visited. They were out there quickly talking to their communities. I know that members of the Liberal Party were out there, and the member elect for the Agricultural Region, Steve Martin, was out there as well. I am sure that Hon Colin de Grussa and Hon Martin Aldridge have also made their presence felt. It may well be that other members have attended that I am not aware of, but it is absolutely the case that members across this chamber responded immediately and dramatically to these events.

The damage is significant. There is still a housing issue in those regions. That is why the second part of this motion today calls on both state and federal governments to do everything possible to assist those communities. There was significant damage to infrastructure, particularly housing, throughout that region. It is not restricted to Kalbarri or Northampton or any one of those towns. The impact has been proportionately significant for many towns across that region, and one issue that the governments will need to address is temporary housing in the interim. Where do those people go when their houses are deemed to no longer be safe? It is absolutely the case that temporary housing needs to be looked at as a matter of urgency. It will take some months—many months—for a full response to that loss of housing to be generated. It is not an easy process to start constructing or reconstructing housing in regional areas, and I am sure that regional members are well aware that there is a limitation on workforce, so there will need to be a real focus on temporary housing while more permanent solutions are found. I am sure the government is aware of this. Presumably, the Minister for Regional Development will give the official government response, and hopefully she will be able to address those issues, but I think that it needs to be looked at as an absolute matter of urgency.

Another issue that we need to address is power. My understanding is that the electricity supply has been reconnected to pretty much all the towns throughout the region. That is good. Obviously, the response has been as quick as is feasible. We would all like everything to be reconnected immediately. One day, isolated systems off the grid might obviate the need for long lines to be reconnected, but there is an issue of power, not so much for regional communities, but particularly for isolated individual farmhouses. Whilst the communities themselves have generally been reconnected, there is an issue that a number of farmers, particularly those in more isolated areas, have not yet been reconnected. That becomes an issue particularly in terms of timing, because with all the rain that has come from a few cyclonic events over the last few months, I would expect, Hon Ken Baston, Hon Jim Chown, Hon Martin Aldridge, that it is probably one of the best seasons up that way, or I would suspect that farmers will have had one of the better initial cropping seasons that they have seen for some time.

Hon Jim Chown: The season hasn't finished. It's only just started.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The season has just started. It is a good start. There is always time for it to go to pot, said Hanrahan, but you are right.

Hon Jim Chown: Normally good starts finish well.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, we are touching wood with that one. Obviously, farmers are attempting to get onto paddocks, and that is difficult when there has been a fair amount of rain, but it is an additional issue for someone in a remote area in a farmhouse that has no power. Farmers are trying to get crops in when they potentially have no power or are relying on a generator that may not be completely adequate. They also potentially have staff and family that they are trying to cater for, and in some cases it is easier to send family away, so there is a time-critical issue here in relation to the provision of those services. I was pleased to note that the Minister for Regional Development announced today that the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is distributing a survey, and that is a good start, but there may be more that the department can do, particularly on that issue of how to manage the cropping process.

It is also the case that because those farming communities are out there madly trying to get crop into the ground, some of the longer term impacts of the cyclone such as the impact on people's wellbeing of the loss of houses may take some time to bubble through. I am sure the Minister for Mental Health will be aware of this potential deferment of the impacts. Whilst a farmer is madly trying to get crop into the ground, they are probably very busy and their mind is occupied. It may strike them further down the track. I simply want to make sure that the Minister for Mental Health is aware that there may be additional supports required not only now but for some time into the

future as these impacts start to trickle through over the next six to 12 months. It will be incumbent upon him to look at this. I am sure he is aware; he is a very good minister and I am sure he will be looking at these issues as best he possibly can.

The first part of my motion is really to acknowledge the work done by the emergency services, both professionals and volunteers. Obviously, in the best of circumstances, those two groups work together hand in glove. I noted that Hon Martin Aldridge made some comments about the memorial service for firefighters this week. I thought they were magnificent. I have attended a number of those ceremonies myself. It is a great location and a very important ceremony, so I concur with his words on that one. Obviously, it works best if people are working together. I would like to pass on my thanks and congratulations on behalf of the National–Liberal alliance for the work that they have done and I am sure will continue to do in the future. Regional communities cannot exist without the volunteerism that keeps them alive. I know that volunteerism is important in the metropolitan area as well, but it is absolutely critical in communities that do not have the capacity to provide those services, particularly those given by volunteers, because in a lot of those places there are not enough people to run a professional unit. Country towns and regional communities will not survive without that volunteerism.

Those people who volunteer and stand in uniform do magnificent work and we congratulate them for that. But it is absolutely the case that every community has unsung heroes who also contribute. For the most part, the local doctor in a country town cannot be on the volunteer bushfire brigade because if there is an emergency, they will be required in the hospital, and it is the same for nurses and even vets. In a fire, there is obviously other damage to deal with. We absolutely congratulate the work of the volunteers and the professionals in all those organisations. We commend the work that they have done in dealing with cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo bushfires. We urge them to continue to work together, as they are capable of doing, to provide those services to their local communities. They do a great job. It is often said that the volunteers are perhaps often a little keener to go on the attack than the professionals because, in many cases, it is their houses and their communities, but I have seen the two groups work together to get the best outcomes for a community. There is probably still more work we can do to get that communication happening, but it is very important. In relation to that, it is very hard to pick out a particular group that has done a good job at both the cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo bushfire emergency events. Because it is more recent and pertinent, I mention the Northampton cyclone recovery committee, led by Debbie Carson and Rob Horstman, which has done a particularly excellent job in assisting the community to recover. I am sure that these committees know that at some point they will face exactly the same thing in the future.

We cannot prevent Mother Nature from delivering these negative as well as positive outcomes. Our communities are resilient. In my view, regional people are particularly adept at adapting to the negative environment and making the best of situations. We have traditionally done so stoically and silently and we need to get better at perhaps talking about how we manage it. Regional communities are very good at responding and adapting. They are survivors particularly due to the work of people who work in emergency services both as professionals and as volunteers and those who volunteer around that process to support their communities.

I think this is an important motion. I accept that I could go on for longer but I am sure that in this first week, many members in this Parliament would like to address their support for those communities and those people, and I encourage them to do so.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.21 am]: I rise to support the motion before the house moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is an important and timely motion to consider in light of a number of natural disasters that have impacted not just my electorate but neighbouring electorates in the last few months. The motion reflects on cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo bushfire, although a number of significant fires have occurred. However, obviously the Wooroloo bushfire in particular was quite devastating with the amount of assets lost and how quickly and volatile that fire was as it ran through Gidgegannup and ended up not far from Bullsbrook.

The generosity of Western Australians to other Western Australians in times of need is interesting. I saw that on the ground towards the end of the first week after cyclone Seroja when, along with my colleague Hon Colin de Grussa and colleagues from the other place, I visited Northampton, Binu and Port Gregory. It is interesting how, particularly country communities but not exclusively, come together to help each other in times of need. It was extraordinary to see some of the volunteers in Northampton on that Friday, who were literally doing their best to bring their community together and to help people in need. Those same volunteers themselves had significant losses; that selflessness is not unique to any one community but we see it frequently in times of disaster.

The other thing is the generosity of giving that we have seen. The Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund was established following the Dwellingup fires in the early 1960s. Until recently, that distress relief fund had raised and distributed some \$25 million, which is no small amount of money, due to the generosity of not just Western Australians but Australians. It is interesting to compare over that period from 1960 to today these last two appeals that it has run. The Wooroloo bushfire appeal raised some \$16.4 million and the cyclone Seroja appeal is just shy of \$16 million, and that appeal is still open. It is quite extraordinary that in the space of two or three months, two appeals have exceeded the entire collection of the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund from 1961 to 2021. It is quite extraordinary how Western Australians and, indeed, Australians have reacted to support their fellow citizens.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on this, but it is often at the time of disaster that we see significant impact on our networks—our road networks, communication and power networks. As of yesterday, I received a briefing, and many members have received very good daily briefings from Western Power by email. There are still some 1 150 homes and businesses without power following the cyclone Seroja event. Western Power is predicting that they will be without power in some cases for weeks ahead. Keeping in mind that those homes have lost power now for four weeks, that demonstrates the extent of the damage. As quoted in this email, “Around 20 per cent of the network was damaged.” Obviously, the loss of power and communication networks was significant and does not help with emergency responses. This is an opportunity for the state, Western Power, telecommunication operators and other operators of critical networks to use these events in a really positive way, particularly as we rebuild and recover to try to become more resilient to disasters of the future.

I saw the Premier and the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner on the ground in Kalbarri on the Tuesday after the impact on the Sunday evening, so they were there quite soon after the impact. In fact, we could probably call it day two. They were on the ground and when I was watching the live press conference the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner was asked about losses. At that time, teams of urban search and rescue firefighters in the midwest were doing what is called rapid damage assessments and had done a number to that point. However, the FES commissioner at that point on the ground in Kalbarri could not provide any information on losses, not because the assessments had not been done but because poor telecommunication was impacting the ability to communicate and coordinate the emergency. That persisted for quite some days. I know that local governments in that area had very important roles under our emergency management arrangements but did not have telecommunications until day four after the cyclone had impacted. They are things I think we need to use as opportunities. I am not using them as criticism but as opportunities for us to rebuild better and make sure we have more resilient networks not only to continue to supply power and telecommunications to customers and businesses but also to assist us in coordinating a response.

I want to also put on the record my thanks to the many hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteer and career first responders from across Australia who came to the midwest and to the outskirts of Perth for the Wooroloo bushfire. It does not take long, particularly with these protracted incidents, for fatigue to set in not just for volunteers but also those in the career service. Having our teams of SES people arriving from interstate and having Defence assets mobilised to assist with the coordination and logistics of the disaster are really important. The point I would like to make now is that we need to make sure we are not there for just the response. As the Leader of the Opposition said, the recovery over the days, weeks, months and years ahead will be just as important. The community affected by natural disasters over the last few months took a lot of confidence, but it was empowering to see so many people willing to help. However, there is obviously a limit to that, particularly as we enter the recovery phase and it ramps up. I think the Leader of the Opposition made a really good point around making sure we continue to support these communities.

That is why the government has our support in negotiating what will be very important category C assistance under the disaster recovery funding arrangements to make sure that the communities of the midwest and beyond are supported in that recovery phase. Category C assistance has already been activated for Wooroloo. That is a level of assistance that is negotiated and co-funded between the state and the commonwealth. I am hopeful that we will reach a point in the near future at which category C assistance will be declared for the tropical cyclone Seroja event.

Although the focus has been on particularly the Shire of Northampton and Kalbarri, there has been significant damage right across the wheatbelt, parts of the Gascoyne and inland areas. Communities in the northern wheatbelt still have telecommunication impacts. People still do not have power. It is quite widespread. When I had a briefing from the incident management team in Geraldton on the Friday following the cyclone crossing the coast, some of the very experienced officers in that team stressed to us that they had never managed an incident as complex and widespread as the tropical cyclone Seroja event. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the strain that that has put on both our resourcing and our ability to respond. I support the motion and hope we can all work together to make sure that better outcomes are achieved.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Regional Development) [10.31 am]: I thank the Leader of the Opposition and Hon Martin Aldridge for their very collaborative approach on this matter. We agree, Leader of the Opposition, that this is an important issue. Members may recall that the Leader of the House gave notice of a similar motion as our first item of government business, as we wanted this to be the first matter that the house debated when we resumed.

I reiterate that there is consensus that there has been an extraordinary endeavour up there. We have seen a huge response from government under the leadership of Commissioner Klemm from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. We have seen an extraordinary response from Western Power and, indeed, the Department of Communities. An extraordinary amount of hard work has also been done by the community and the local government in the region.

When I went up there with Hon Kyle McGinn on Sunday to look at how the recovery was going and to meet with the small business owners in particular—I think 40 people attended the event that we held—I found it extraordinary just how much work had been done. It was extraordinary to see the tidy up, the Western Power linesmen activating the power to the last houses and the crews doing the asbestos work.

Hon Martin Aldridge talked about some of the properties in Kalbarri that have not yet had power restored. I understand from our discussions with the Western Power crew that the houses that have not yet had power restored have damage such that it would not be safe to restore power, so there needs to be a major repair of the property first. For example, if a property has lost its roof—in some instances, people are putting tarpaulins on the roof and still living there—Western Power's determination is that it is not safe to live in it with power. I understand that most of those people are using generators. Clearly, there are still issues with power across the region. I know that some farmers have lines down on their paddocks, which has interfered with seeding. The linesmen have told me that some farmers have taken a very pragmatic approach and are leaving four metres on each side and are getting on and seeding the rest of their paddocks. I think there are ways around it, but there is no doubt that this event has required the biggest response from Western Power. It has assessed 1 200 hazards and damage in the region, so it has been a big effort. So far, it has replaced 450 poles, and 150 crew members are still in the region. I think everyone acknowledges that there has been a tremendous effort by Western Power and DFES to restore things as quickly as possible.

As Hon Dr Steve Thomas has said, cyclones have positives and negatives, and autumn rain has traditionally been really quite important for many inland areas. Certainly, Kalbarri is out of the generally accepted cyclonic belt. We are obviously going to have to watch what is happening because much of the climate modelling is telling us that the cyclonic belt will move south as part of climate change patterns. That is something that we certainly will have to watch. I note that some tourism facilities, such as Pelicans Nest, remained totally intact when the cyclone hit. The owner of Pelicans Nest told us that he had built it to cyclonic standards, and that paid off. We very much appreciate that that adds cost to building, so we will have to actively watch the change in weather patterns.

When we met with the business community, obviously there was a lot of concern that the road was closed, notwithstanding the fact that quite a number of accommodation units were available, the asbestos clean-up had proceeded well, all the immediate power dangers had been dealt with and people were very keen to get a date and have some certainty about when tourists could return. We took those concerns back to government and met with Minister Reece Whitby, Minister David Templeman and the commissioner, and I am very pleased that that road will be open from six this evening, which I think will be a great positive for that community.

People wanted businesses back in town. Although some of the accommodation facilities have done okay because emergency workers have been there, retailers have suffered; for example, linesmen from Western Power are not buying surf gear from the retail shops. Many retailers and restaurateurs were relying on the tourism industry to return. I understand that the grey nomads are waiting at Jurien Bay for the road to open and they will be in there like Flynn. That will be a great positive. We are not saying that that will solve all problems. Hon Dr Steve Thomas quite rightly pointed out the problem of the houses that have been destroyed and the number of people who have to move out. I must say that quite a few people are hardy individuals and even though their homes have been declared uninhabitable, they are inhabiting them. The government is certainly working through this issue.

Melissa Pexton, a very competent and experienced person, has been appointed State Recovery Controller. In a meeting with Minister Whitby and the commissioner she made it clear that she saw that addressing the issue of providing emergency housing for those people was a key priority, as is sufficient housing, donga accommodation, to ensure that building workers who will need to come into the town to effect the repairs to those houses is underway. That is very important.

A lot of concern was expressed about the performance of Centrelink. There was concern that Centrelink had not made the assistance packages available. I have said that we will take that up with the commonwealth, but there is certainly a great deal of concern about that. We note that the Department of Communities has provided about \$1.2 million in relief to individuals and has been getting that information out. It is certainly the case that many small business owners have suffered significant loss. My understanding is that they are not necessarily eligible for assistance from the Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund, although I agree with the comments that it is extraordinary how generous Western Australians have been and how they have responded with so much generosity, to both this event and also the tragic Wooroloo fires. The government is investigating whether cyclone Seroja's assessment can be upgraded as a natural disaster, which then will expand the categories of assistance that would be available. We have heard the feedback from many of those businesses. Although the majority of them were more focused on getting the town reopened and getting back business, no doubt a number of businesses have copped it very hard. They have been making the case for some financial assistance and that matter is now being actively considered; that is, what is the best way that we can provide that additional assistance for those who have sustained significant businesses losses.

The issue of insurance was also raised. I give a big shout out to RAC insurance, a Western Australian company. Those who were insured with RAC said that its response had been impeccable. A number of non-Western Australian-based insurance companies that were cited have unfortunately been very unresponsive and we have undertaken to see whether we can raise those issues with the Financial Ombudsman. It is important for those insurance companies to step up and provide a timely response and timely assessment for their clients in their hour of need. Hon Reece Whitby has been to the area certainly three, possibly four, times, and the Premier went up there at the earliest opportunity. We have listened to what the community is saying. We have the town reopened. I note a petition from people saying

that they do not want the town reopened. We do not think we can close this town when we have dealt with those major hazard issues, and we are very conscious that people there with businesses need to make a living and need to key create the opportunities for the rest of the community. We are working throughout the region, not just in Kalbarri, to ensure that we get all the problems solved as quickly as possible and that we have timely assistance available to those who need it. I thank the Leader of the House for the motion.

HON DONNA FARAGHER (East Metropolitan) [10.46 am]: I rise to support the motion on cyclone Seroja and recent bushfires. I wish to align myself with the contributions that have been made by other members already in recognising the devastation that has occurred in the township of Kalbarri, a place that I, and I am sure all members, have visited. I have visited Kalbarri since I was a little girl and as recently as last year it was our family holiday. It is a beautiful part of Western Australia and to see the devastation that occurred is truly felt. Like all members, I want to extend my thoughts to those severely impacted. As others have said, let us hope that the recovery effort, which of course will obviously take some time, will allow this fantastic part of Western Australia to rebuild and to move forward for its residents, for local business owners and visitors alike. I, too, was pleased to see in *The West Australian* today and also in the comments made by the minister in her ministerial statement that, effectively, Kalbarri will reopen as of tonight. That is a step forward.

Equally, I wholeheartedly support the motion as it relates to the Woorlooloo bushfires that caused immense devastation across my electorate of East Metropolitan Region. Members in this house who have the privilege of representing the East Metropolitan Region know all too well that the danger of bushfires across the Perth hills and surrounding areas is always very real. In my time in this place there have been a number of devastating fires. I recall that only a couple of months prior to my first entry into this house in 2005 we had the devastating Perth hills bushfires, which saw more than 27 000 hectares of forest in and around Pickering Brook and Karragullen burnt. Notwithstanding the number of bushfires that we have seen, each has caused individual devastation and heartache for many. We would all agree that in the midst of the lockdown earlier this year, which created its own challenges, the entire Western Australian community was hoping and praying that those in the immediate and surrounding fire zone in the Woorlooloo bushfires were safe.

In saying that, we know all too well that the fire was extremely erratic and intense and that the very strong winds and very, very high temperatures made the task for firefighters and other emergency personnel even more difficult. Once contained, we knew that 86 homes had been lost, countless pets and other wildlife had not survived, and families and individuals had lost literally everything, left with only memories of happier times. Knowing this—this comes to the second part of the motion—I want to recognise the hundreds of firefighting and emergency services personnel, both career and volunteer, and the Department of Communities staff, local government staff, non-government organisations and volunteers, for the incredible work that they did to protect lives and homes and for the support they gave to those who had lost so much. Their tireless work under extremely difficult, dangerous and emotional circumstances, often undertaken with little rest and through consecutive shifts, can never be underestimated. I must say that both as a local member and indeed, now some time ago, as a former environment minister, I have enormous respect for everyone who puts, effectively, their lives on the line to help and support and save others and to keep our communities safe. I must say that when I saw on the news or Facebook men and women whom I had known when I was environment minister, like Murray Carter and others, it gave me enormous confidence that they were doing everything they could to keep these communities safe. I want to acknowledge that.

I caught up just last week with the Mayor of the City of Swan, Kevin Bailey, and we talked at some length about the fire. Just to give members a snapshot of those involved, he shared with me, and we discussed, that 105 different fire brigades attended the fire, 58 volunteer bush fire brigades, 47 volunteer fire and rescue service brigades, 17 State Emergency Service brigades and 30 joint task force crews. I am told that the fire travelled 28 kilometres within 12 hours. That is how fast it was moving. Over 300 horses were evacuated to the Magic Millions facility. In total, more than 900 firefighters completed more than 177 shifts over 15 days, and saved over 200 homes and a whole range of other infrastructure inside that fire zone. It is quite incredible. The mayor and I also discussed the recovery effort and where things are at. It is pleasing that there continues to be very good collaboration between the various agencies, other organisations and volunteers. It is so important that this continues throughout the entire rebuild process. As I, and as other members, have said, the rebuild process cannot happen overnight—we know that—but we cannot allow a circumstance whereby devastation, whether as a result of cyclone or bushfires, is no longer front and centre for those who are not directly impacted and the recovery is delayed or hampered. I am certainly hopeful and confident that that will not be the case in either circumstance.

I again want to express my thoughts to those who have been impacted so severely by these devastating events and to also give my very heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been involved, whether they were career firefighters, volunteer brigades or volunteers across a range of spectrums, for what they did to keep these communities safe and for what they are continuing to do as they rebuild. Thank you very much, Madam President.

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [10.54 am]: I am very pleased to rise today to say a few words on this motion. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bringing the motion to this place. It is very timely and a very needed conversation to have. I might just start with the bushfires. Interestingly, the bushfires actually touched part of my circle. It was Christmas Eve and we were heading out to my partner's

parents' place in Bullsbrook. As we were heading out there, we noticed the big smoke plume that was coming up. It turned out that power had been lost and everyone was told not to evacuate but to be prepared and ready. It sent Christmas into a bit of spiral. Later on, when the big bushfire happened a few months later, the COVID lockdown was happening so I was caught up there. My partner and I went out to look after her mum, who had some medical issues. We took her to get an MRI and then came back. We were asleep at about 11.30 at night when my phone went off and it was actually the Department of Fire and Emergency Services contacting us to say get out now. It was so quick. To me, it was just unbelievable. I had not been in that situation before. As soon as we got the phone call, we got up and packed as much as we could. Obviously, my partner was really worried about the chickens, dogs and cats, and we did the best that we could. Once we went outside to go to the car, we could see all the people from the houses along Shady Hills Estate just packing up and getting out as much as they could. We took my partner's mum to our place. What we saw over the next three days in the updates on TV was intense, as was the feeling of not knowing what was going on. From all accounts, the firefighters and volunteers at Shady Hills did an amazing job. Looking at that bush as you drive up there, you can see that it is just so ripe as a fire source once it catches. I know that the first fire at Christmas was from a car fire that just spread out of control; the wind got hold of it and away it went. To the firefighters who put in the effort fighting the fires at Shady Hills, thank you so very much, because when we got back, the chickens were alive and the house was still there, which was really good. It was just such a mammoth effort. We could see the coordination happening with checkpoints and getting people out.

At Christmas time, my partner's dad was down at the property and he was prepared to fight. He was set up and had all the gennies and the dam there. But when he was not there, we were not prepared to do that and we made the decision very quickly to get out. Being put in that position was really bizarre. In this chamber, I want to thank the amazing firefighters and all the SES people and everyone who put in the effort, because that could have been very devastating for my partner's family. I know people lost homes and lots of things; it is quite sad. I come from a background where cyclones were actually quite common. I was born and bred in Darwin, and cyclones are almost second nature there and out in Humpty Doo, and also in Karratha, where cyclones are pretty well known. One thing that shocked me around this was that people in Kalbarri were not prepared for a cyclone because they had never seen one before. That must have been really intimidating for them as it was coming in. One thing that I did appreciate was the response and preparedness of the people of Kalbarri around two days before the cyclone came in, because up north there is probably a little bit of overconfidence. They call it a cyclone party most of the time, and I may have attended one or two of them when I was younger, but they do not tend to see it with the seriousness that it should be seen.

My parents were living in Darwin during cyclone Tracy and lost a car and a caravan, and trees went down. I remembered all the museums and stuff that I had seen in Darwin of cyclone Tracy and it was unbelievable how similar the first image I saw of Kalbarri was to that in terms of the damage done—just the unbelievable ferocity of this wind. Even though the towns up north are built for cyclones, there tends to be this attitude of “She'll be right; it's not going to be a direct hit—it won't be a category 5” et cetera. We saw this huge response in the media and on the ground, with people saying, “This is serious. Something is going to go wrong here.” People were well prepared. I think the towns, the communities, emergency services, the departments and everyone who was involved should be commended. No-one was saying, “It might miss us; it might hit up north or down south.” It was a case of “We're prepared.” That is a huge reason we did not see any loss of life in what I can only say is a miracle. When we see the damage that can be done, particularly the damage that occurred from cyclone Tracy, it is a miracle that no-one was hurt or killed.

On Sunday, I travelled to the affected areas with Minister Alannah MacTiernan. We had great conversations with small businesses. Going through the town, it was interesting to see the sporadic way in which the damage occurred. Some buildings were barely touched while others just down the road were completely demolished. It was really bizarre to see the differences in the damage to buildings in Kalbarri just a small distance from each other. The people of Kalbarri have been so resilient, working together. As members who volunteer would know, nine times out of 10 the State Emergency Service crews were helping at someone else's house when their house was just as badly damaged. That was such a huge thing that was happening up there. I commend all those people who put their shoulder to the wheel and did what they did because Kalbarri is now looking completely different from how it looked just after the cyclone.

When we were in the affected area, we spoke to a couple of Western Power lads from Geraldton who were getting a business reconnected. They were pretty pleased with the response from their angle. They believed that work was getting done real fast. Obviously, it was dangerous in some places, which meant that connectivity was difficult. One of the Western Power guys told me a pretty amazing story about a massive silo that holds grain. He was trying to explain the size of it; it was huge. The wind had picked it up and pulled it out of its concrete bed. It was blown into the paddocks and wiped out a lot of power poles. This thing went “poof” and cut off all the power.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Presumably, it was empty.

Hon KYLE McGINN: Maybe it was but who knows, the way the wind was blowing. I assume, Hon Colin de Grussa, that it may have been empty at this time of year. The wind picked up the silo out of the concrete bed. That is what caused the most damage to the power poles in that area—other infrastructure getting damaged.

There is a lot of work to do with the clean-up. I am very confident about the way the government is approaching this situation. I know that the minister is going up to that area on Sunday. The Minister for Emergency Services has made four visits. We will continue to work with the community up there and with organisations that are providing emergency relief. They are doing a fabulous job. They have set up at the golf club, giving out food and stuff like that. It was really uplifting to see. I will leave some time for someone else to say a few words. I wanted to put my wholehearted thanks on the record to all emergency services in this state that have gone through any of these disasters because, without them, people would have been far worse off.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.03 am]: I want to follow on a little from the theme that Hon Kyle McGinn was talking about and acknowledge the great motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Obviously, members on both sides of the chamber are very supportive of the response we have had to tropical cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo bushfires by the volunteers and emergency services representatives.

I wish to follow on from the theme that Hon Kyle McGinn was talking about relating to the scale of the destruction. I think my colleague the Acting President (Hon Martin Aldridge) was with us when we had a little tour a few weeks back. I am sure he will recall the briefing we had at the emergency services facility at Geraldton Airport. Officers advised us that the damaged area from tropical cyclone Seroja was something like 300 kilometres long and 100 kilometres wide. While we obviously saw the impact on Kalbarri in the immediate aftermath as it bore the brunt of the cyclone crossing the coast—I understand it was in the north-eastern quadrant of the cyclone, which apparently has the strongest winds, hence the significant damage—the damage extended far beyond Kalbarri, although with different grades of severity as it did not hit so many populated areas with the same strength.

During our tour, we obviously had the opportunity to visit a number of farming properties and see some of the damage that occurred. It was quite apparent that the full strength of the cyclone caused damage to a number of those farming properties. On one of the properties, we saw a machinery shed, which was held up by 100 millimetre square rectangular hollow section steel, twisted into nothing. Rather than sheets of tin being blown across the paddock, the entire roof—trusses and all, which amounted to tonnes of steel—was hundreds of metres away. Hon Kyle McGinn made the point that it is a miracle no-one was injured. That is absolutely correct. It is a miracle that no-one was injured or even killed. I saw a portable grain silo, like a field bin, when we visited a farming property. We were standing in a house and about three kilometres away we could see the field bin on the horizon. The farmer pointed out to us that that field bin belonged to his neighbour three kilometres the other way. So, that field bin had been picked up and thrown some six kilometres in that wind, past his house or possibly even over the top of his house. How no-one was injured is a miracle. That in itself is testimony to how seriously the people in those regions took the warnings of the impending cyclone and acted accordingly to bunker down and stay safe.

On one of the properties we visited, we walked through what was left of the house. It had a brick structure, but it had no roof and no ceilings. They were completely gone. It was really interesting to see that the timber framing of the roof of that house was covered in mud. Not only had the roof been torn off, but along with the 90 millimetres of rain that fell in the area, the wind was so strong that mud was blown onto the timber frame of that roof. Again, that really illustrates the strength of the wind that came through that area.

As has been said, the buildings and other structures were not cyclone-ready necessarily because until this point, cyclones had not been a frequent occurrence. It may well and truly be something that we need to get used to in that part of the state. Hopefully that will not be the case but all these things point towards a change that will mean that we need to be more prepared for those things. It is a miracle no-one was injured. It is absolutely apparent that people took notice of the advice. The emergency services workers in the midst of it all responded to the hundreds of calls they received to assist with damage and so on. Again, it was fantastic to hear that they were able to assist without being injured themselves, or worse. We will obviously learn a lot from the impact of the cyclone on an area like this that is not necessarily prepared for it.

I turn to something that occurred as a result of the damage done around the Esperance area after the 2015 bushfire. Obviously, cyclones and bushfires are different. However, the damage to power supply infrastructure in Esperance was very similar—poles evaporated from the heat. In the case of Seroja, the poles were blown over and lines lay on the ground. To its credit, Horizon Power went out to the farms in that area and said that it would put the poles and wires back up. It said it was mandated to do that—that was its job. However, it offered an alternative—to put in a renewable system using a backup generator and batteries on properties, so it did not have to worry about the poles and wires that go out to the farms and the owners could have a reliable power supply and pay the normal power bill through Horizon Power. At first, there was a lot of scepticism about that. As I have spoken about in this place before, those who had it installed, which I think ended up being almost all of them, have realised that they have ended up with a very reliable power system. They know that if there is a problem, they can pick up the phone and Horizon Power will come out to fix it. From Horizon Power's point of view, it does not have to go and check every pole on the way out there either; it knows exactly where the source of power is, so it can easily repair it. In the aftermath of these events, we need to look at how those sorts of things can be facilitated to ensure a reliable power supply. Obviously, that is on a smaller scale in terms of individual properties, but, again, the midwest is a massive area for renewable energy; therefore, what an opportunity it is to look at entire communities there and how this could provide resilience to their power supplies.

Again, I take the time to acknowledge all those emergency services professionals and the community volunteers, who we saw many of in our expedition up there, who were just frantic and were doing whatever they could to provide assistance to those community members who had no electricity, homes or food. It is absolutely amazing to see how communities can pull together in times of crisis. The response from the government was swift. People were up there looking into these things. Obviously, there are some issues that will take time to resolve around the broader effects on the community and on mental health and general health and all those other things as well, but I think that although it may have taken a little while for some of those things to happen, in general, the response was very, very good. People are very happy to see that assistance. Defence Force personnel were up there as well. It was just tremendous to see everyone pitching in, cleaning up and doing whatever they could to try to get some semblance of normality back to the affected towns in the midwest.

I also have to acknowledge the professionals and volunteers who assisted in fighting the Wooroloo bushfires. It was fantastic to see the heavy air tankers providing support to fight those fires over here. I think it was a good demonstration of the usefulness of those aircraft in such circumstances. Perhaps we should look at how we might have more of those aircraft available and find other airfields to locate them at so that they can provide a faster response, rather than flying them in from Busselton as they had to during the Wooroloo fires. However, the aircraft were of great assistance, and I am sure that everyone would acknowledge that although the devastation will be felt for many years to come, those who did their best to help the community and put out those fires certainly deserve our praise. Our thoughts are with all of those who were affected by tropical cyclone Seroja and the Wooroloo bushfires.

HON LAURIE GRAHAM (Agricultural) [11.13 am]: I rise in support of this motion. First, I would like to acknowledge the volunteers. I happened to be in the stream of cars trying to get back to Geraldton on Monday morning, the day after cyclone Seroja hit, and I watched all of those volunteers in their cars pour through. I had some grandchildren with me and I was threatened that I should not take them into that atmosphere and told that my rightful place was to stay in Perth. Therefore, I spent the night in Perth and, fortunately, missed that event. We were very lucky at home and did not get any damage, but the City of Greater Geraldton was obviously damaged. The city now, of course, is some 120 kilometres deep.

I will limit my comments to the bushfire. It is a shame that we do not have three or four hours to talk about this motion. It is one of those things that people are passionate about. I know that the councils in the area, particularly the smaller councils, want to see this issue talked about, particularly from the disaster recovery point of view, and I will get to that in a few minutes.

I have made limited visits to the Northampton, Chapman Valley and Kalbarri areas. With the ministers being constantly there, and other high-flyers, I was getting distinct feedback from my office that what people wanted was to see those troops on the ground, repairing services, and they really did not want to be wasting time talking to politicians. If they have a problem, they will give us a ring. I received a number of phone calls from a number of councils, and I was glad to be able to help some of them navigate their way through the jungle. Many organisations gave assistance. I think it was the Tuesday after the cyclone hit when I was in Bunnings and I watched literally hundreds of generators being carried out the door because people thought that they were not going to have power. Bunnings took all the generators at its shops throughout the state and sent them to Geraldton. The very next day, power was restored. Then there was a call for the generators to go to Kalbarri, and some of those same generators that had been bought the day before were voluntarily given up by those people to go up to Kalbarri. It was fantastic. I do not know if I had had a very expensive generator whether I could have happily just put it on a truck and not known when I was going to see it again. But people just did it. That could not be organised in advance; it was something that was just done on a spur of the moment.

I was at a meeting the other day with a community organisation and someone on the floor said, "Let's put \$5 000 into the mayor's relief appeal." Now, we could afford to put the \$5 000 in, but it was unusual to see a community organisation just pop that money in there when it could have directed that money to the community. But the organisation felt that it was better that the money went to the Lord Mayor's appeal to provide services elsewhere.

I think the biggest problem and the biggest lesson learnt out of the event was that we need to back up the mobile towers. It became an absolute disaster. As I said, I was driving up that day, and when we eventually arrived at Leeman, there was no reception because the towers had gone down as well. That cyclone event pulled the towers down virtually everywhere north of Geraldton, and that is a real problem to have. There were farmers at meetings saying that they would happily go out to fuel people's generators, even though it was a 300-kay round trip to recharge those generators. I am sure that Telstra learnt a fair lesson during this event. Although the generator stockpile was ready to go, there was no management plan to get them out there, and because the communications were down, no-one knew where anyone was, what the issues were, whether the generators had just run out of power or whether the towers themselves were down. Therefore, it was disappointing to see that it took so long to get that up. One of the reasons people in Mingenew thought that they had been forgotten was they had absolutely no communications. Powerlines were all over most of the major roads there and people were reluctant to drive over them. For some days, most of those powerlines were marked just with chemical drums.

Members have commented on the insurance industry. I have perhaps seen the pleasant side of the insurance industry. I happened to lose a fence at home, which is no great deal, and the assessor took a whole two minutes to do the

assessment and said that he was doing another 10 that day. He went through and did a pretty effective job. After this cyclone event, representatives of the Insurance Council of Australia attended most of the community meetings that were held at Mullewa and Chapman Valley—the night I was there—and it was fantastic. People were told to just get on with their repairs and put their bills in later. They were told not to worry about putting in the claim but to just get on with life, and that was great to see. I am sure that there will be argy-bargy over insurance amounts. I am sure there will be issues for people who have insurance that says they will get accommodation if their house is uninhabitable, because if they cannot find a habitable house that is available within the next 100 days, it will make life fairly difficult.

I will touch on what happened in one shire. Although I am reluctant to do it, I will pick out the Shire of Mingenew as an example, as it has raised a number of issues with me and gave me some information as at yesterday. I know the shire has an assessment meeting today, and it may well be that this information will be out of date by the end of my contribution this morning. However, something like five per cent of people in the shire were impacted by the cyclone. Five per cent sounds like a huge number of people. In the Shire of Mingenew's case, it is 25 adults and four children, but over 20-odd houses were lost. The major concern is the loss of those houses. The shire needs to find temporary accommodation not only for people's immediate requirements, but also for seasonal workers when the cropping comes around and for tourists when they arrive. People are occupying accommodation that would otherwise be provided for visitors. If the shire is unlucky, it will miss out on the benefit of what could be a very good tourist season. Having only 25 people and four children affected seems to be quite a small impact, but as people have said to me, if those four children leave the district, that is another pressure on the school. It is another pressure at another level and the whole thing changes. It is five per cent of the population. If they go to live in Dongara, which it is only half an hour's drive away, it is another family gone to the coast, and we will have more drive in, drive out workers and less community. It is important that we retain these communities because, as I said, there is the loss of the football team, the hockey team and the basketball team. They will all end up in trouble.

The major problem was that no-one could talk to anyone. They assumed that that meant that everyone thought that they were okay and did not take any interest in them. In fact, most people realise there were major problems throughout the area. I am staying away from talking about Kalbarri and Northampton as I make these points because I think they have been talked about a fair bit by speakers on the motion this morning. That impact was devastating on those areas but it is important to talk about the other areas impacted. The latest information I have is that 350 Western Power staff are still working on the project. The previous update I had was that there were some 230 staff. Western Power has obviously put in more resources, but it is still weeks away from reconnecting those long powerlines. Hon Colin de Grussa raised the point that a large number of people are looking at the opportunity to convert to standalone power systems. I will finish my comments because I know that at least one other member wants to have a say.

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.22 am]: I want to use the short time that is left available to talk mostly about the Wooroloo bushfires because they started and finished in my electorate of the East Metropolitan Region. It was a significant and intense fire that burnt for some time and was difficult to control. Fires that start in the Darling scarp are always difficult because of the easterly winds that typically blow persistently over the summer and autumn months. In fact, autumn easterlies are sometimes stronger than those in summer, and by the time autumn comes around the forest has dried out considerably and not much moisture is left. It is also hard to extinguish the fires because they stay in tree stumps and things like that. Although the flames might be put out, the embers survive, and when the winds pick up again, it causes flare-ups. The most alarming thing about the Wooroloo fires was that fires were starting three kilometres in advance of the fire front. The gullies and hills in that part of the scarp, which is quite steep and difficult to get to, made it a very challenging fire to get under control for those who took responsibility for fighting it. The other factor with the wind is that it makes it hard for aerial firefighting to take effect. The fires create updraughts that combined with the winds means that helicopters and aerial fire appliances cannot be sent in to put them out. If the winds are strong, it increases the risk factors for an accident, and of course we do not want that. But we did get on top of the fire. We were fortunate in that we had only loss of property, not loss of life. Obviously, we cannot forget the impact on wildlife and animals. We do say there was no loss of life but we did lose the lives of a lot of family pets, livestock, and, as I said, wildlife through that area. We should acknowledge that.

It is always very impressive in this state that when an event like the Wooroloo bushfires or a cyclone occurs our volunteer emergency services, our professional services, government departments and community care services come together. We should not forget those care services; for example, the Salvation Army sets up kitchens and provides food to, and looks after, people fighting the fires. There is a group that looks after people displaced by the fires and there are local government services as well. I think we need to extend recognition of participation to those who support those who fight fires, not just those on the frontline, because exhaustion becomes a big issue for firefighters very quickly. I think the Acting President (Hon Martin Aldridge), as a former firefighter, can attest to that exhaustion in those conditions. Being able to look after those support people is really important as well.

I will leave the mover of the motion a minute to respond if he wishes. I commend the motion to the house.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [11.26 am] — in reply: I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for a brief opportunity to thank members who contributed to this motion. I thank Hon Martin Aldridge, the Minister for Regional Development, Hon Kyle McGinn, Hon Colin de Grussa, Hon Laurie Graham and Hon Matthew Swinbourn for their contributions. I think this has been an excellent debate—one of bipartisanship and general support.

I have a couple of quick comments. Hon Kyle McGinn mentioned Shady Hills. I agree that there are areas in the hills in the East Metropolitan Region to which I would be very nervous about sending firefighters. It is absolutely a risk. I thank the minister for her contribution. I did not raise that powerlines are still down in paddocks, and I am glad that she did. I am glad that the contributions of Hon Laurie Graham and Hon Kyle McGinn raised a few issues that I did not think I had time for. I thought this was an excellent debate and I am pleased to see that the government is up in the area as much as it is, and I think in this case it probably deserves to be congratulated for its work—it is very convivial!

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

National and Liberal Alliance — Personal Explanation

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [11.27 am] — by leave: I am pleased to advise the Legislative Council that following the 2021 state election, the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party have formed an opposition alliance through formal signed agreement. This agreement was signed publicly on 19 April 2021, and the opposition alliance is formally known as the National and Liberal Alliance. On that day, I was appointed Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council and Hon Colin de Grussa was appointed the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council and the official opposition Whip. Hon Tjorn Sibma has been elected the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party in the Legislative Council and Hon Ken Baston remains the Liberal Party's Whip for the next two weeks. For the interest of members, I seek leave to table a list of the full shadow ministry.

[Leave granted. See paper [163](#).]

McGOWAN GOVERNMENT — AGRICULTURE — CARBON

Motion

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [11.29 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house commends the work of the McGowan Labor government to provide opportunities for farmers and pastoralists to benefit from carbon farming, and to equip Western Australia's agriculture sector to be a major contributor to the reduction of our carbon footprint.

I would like to start by thanking Hon Alannah MacTiernan for facilitating me moving this motion in this place. I am cautiously confident that we can continue in the spirit of bipartisanship that we have just established in the cyclone Seroja motion, because I cannot believe that anyone on the crossbench or the opposition parties would want to disagree with some of the things that will emerge in the discussion of this most important issue about the effect that an efficient system of carbon farming is going to have on our agricultural sector in Western Australia. I think one of the most exciting moments of the twenty-first century is the Labor government, on coming to office in 2017, driving this issue after, frankly, years and years of missed opportunities. The people who suffered most because of those lost opportunities were people in the agricultural sector. The world suffered because we made less progress on mitigating climate change, but economically the people who suffered were the farmers of Western Australia.

It is with my most heartfelt thanks to Hon Alannah MacTiernan that she has been able to drive this agenda. I can tell members, having worked with Hon Alannah MacTiernan for many years, if we have a wicked problem and we want some concrete action in getting a resolution, we want Hon Alannah MacTiernan to be driving the agenda. Nowhere is this more demonstrable than in this issue of carbon farming. I am looking forward, of course, to Hon Alannah MacTiernan joining the South West Region team in a few weeks. I am confident that we will make great strides on this issue and many other issues in the next four years.

I do not know with this new National–Liberal alliance —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: National and Liberal Alliance.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: It is the National and Liberal Alliance. Are you going to call yourself NALA?

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: There were worse that were proposed!

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: I bet there were. We had a few to suggest. I do not know how this will play out in practice, but I am glad to see that the National Party is now clearly the senior partner in the NALA. I am pleased for one particular reason that is pertinent in this debate; that is, the National Party does not have climate deniers amongst its ranks and has not for a very, very long time, longer than I have been in Parliament, whereas the Liberal Party most definitely does. We see that play out day after day on the national level where the Liberals are in control of the agenda. Frankly, it should be a major cause for alarm to see federal government inaction on this issue. But

I have shared with this house many times in the past that when I was elected in 2005, something was brought to my attention largely by Hon Murray Criddle interjecting on a speech I was giving. I think at that stage he was the sole National Party member of this place. I remember he sat where Hon Aaron Stonehouse sits now. I remember that as parliamentary secretary I was talking about climate change and I made some comment about farming practices. He made the point, which I very much took to heart, that farmers started acting to mitigate climate change decades ago, long before it became the topic du jour amongst the political classes. I took that advice very much to heart and I have watched for that to be played out in practice and I have seen it confirmed over and over again. So I am looking forward to firm support from at least members of the National Party as we move forward on this critical agenda.

I suppose the discussion starts with awareness, which Hon Alannah MacTiernan has spoken about many times. One of the things that she does particularly well is craft a fully comprehensible narrative around these issues. When it comes to explaining the impact of climate change on the agricultural sector, Hon Alannah MacTiernan has crafted a good story that can be well understood by people wanting to promote the issues. It starts with understanding how important agriculture is for our sector, but then it moves very quickly to the role of agriculturalists in both generating the problems and being part of the solution. The fact is that agriculture is a major emitter of greenhouse gases. The estimates of greenhouse gases emitted by agriculture range between 14 and 16 per cent, and 56 per cent of methane and 73 per cent of nitrous oxide is generated by agriculture. Those who understand these things will know that methane and nitrous oxide are much, much more toxic in the greenhouse effect and play a much greater role in the greenhouse effect than CO₂ does. That presents a big problem for agriculture. How do they do this? It is largely through nitrogen fertilisers and animal manures in soil, leaching and run-off, and livestock emissions and waste. Who knew that the average cow produces 50 kilograms of manure a day? Hon Dr Steve Thomas, of course, did with his veterinary background.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn interjected.

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: It comes out the other end too. I thank Hon Matthew Swinbourn for pointing that out.

Methane and nitrous oxide, but particularly methane, are major contributors to the greenhouse effect. It is also to do with decay and biomass.

For the last four years, I have chaired the Vasse Taskforce. It has been a great honour and privilege for me to work with those people in Busselton. It has been a great pleasure to work with some really impressive activists in the Busselton area over the last four years. This whole question about nutrient run-off is one that plagues our waterways from the top to the bottom of Western Australia. It is particularly bad in the Vasse region. I am sure Hon Dr Steve Thomas also knows that a quarter of Western Australia's dairies are in the Vasse region. We have had some success. I want to pay tribute here to Dr Kath Lynch. She is a very, very effective operator in this field and largely through Kath's efforts, about 80 dairies are now participating in the program running in Vasse and driven by the Vasse Taskforce, thanks to the support of the McGowan Labor government. The program has four different elements. There is fertiliser management and improved fertiliser decisions. That is the work that Kath Lynch has been doing with the dairy industry. There is dairy effluent management. GeoCatch is working with Western Dairy and many local farmers. There is riparian management and, again, GeoCatch has done a lot of work to restore native vegetation and has put up something in the region of 40 kilometres of stock-exclusion fencing. Probably one of the most interesting and promising developments is the soil amendment trials. Many members will know about the benefits of Phoslock. There is no debate now about the benefits of Phoslock. It is now just a question of working out the economics and how much we are prepared to fund and whether it becomes economically viable to use those soil amendments.

I went into that in some detail because I want to make it clear to the house that we know what does not work. We know what has led to the problem. Basically, we can condense it to three things: deforestation, the decoupling of the economy of livestock production and environmental sustainability—they have been seen as two mutually exclusive things in the past—and also, of course, the drying climate. I am one of many, many parliamentarians across Australia who believe that we can do something about the drying climate. We need to take steps both to adapt and to mitigate. For the sake of this debate, I want to go back to the other two issues: deforestation and unmitigated clearing, and the decoupling of the economy of livestock production and environmental sustainability. That second issue particularly goes to the heart of the work that Hon Alannah MacTiernan is doing to drive change in this area. This is what leads to the complexity of the climate change issue and the difficulty of driving change. The very simple fact that we all ought to have in the front of our minds when we begin to discuss this issue is that it is costing us economically not to act on climate change. That is the message that Hon Alannah MacTiernan has been promoting amongst the agricultural sector in Western Australia—we need to fear more the economic consequences of doing nothing than we need to fear the cost of taking action.

We now have a couple of really important and well-funded mechanisms to drive this change in Western Australia. I probably will not have time to go into much detail, and I know Hon Alannah MacTiernan is keen to contribute to this debate and that she will be talking about the two schemes that have been set up as a result of our election promises. What have we done so far? In a sense there are too many things to canvass in a time-limited debate like this one, but, for me, from going through the background material, the most significant thing is the restoration of

carbon credits for pastoralists who regenerate their land. Another element of this wicked problem is to look at what we can do about the degenerated land across all our pastoral leases in Western Australia. We know that if we are to be successful in regenerating land, we need to look at the kind of soil that we are working with. We know that Western Australian soils do not have a particularly good track record—that is the wrong term. They do not have a particularly good profile for being able to successfully sequester carbon. We need to look very carefully at the soil types and at the climate, and we need to have a major focus on what the land uses are. What we have been able to do in the last four years is persuade pastoralists that a key part of diversifying their use of the land is to link their use of the land with carbon sequestration—with carbon credits.

We had seriously dropped the ball on this by the time Labor came to office in 2017. The commonwealth government had a system for earning carbon credits. I can tell members that, nationally, Queensland was getting 43 per cent of that commonwealth money, compared with Western Australia, which was getting four per cent. When we compare the amount of agriculture in Western Australia with the amount in Queensland, that is appalling. No agriculturalist could have been happy with that figure. That is the change that Hon Alannah MacTiernan will be able to drive over the next four years as we start to spend this money.

Back in April 2018, the McGowan Labor government flagged the possibility that we would support pastoralists to examine carbon potential and regenerate pastoral land. We then set up various working groups; Hon Alannah MacTiernan can talk more about this. In December 2019—less than two years later; 18 months later—we were able to announce what I think is quite properly called a landmark decision whereby we allowed carbon farming on pastoral lands. That is where we are starting our second term from. A very good and very sound program has now been set up to provide a new revenue stream for pastoralists to rehabilitate their degraded pastoral lands.

The other thing that Hon Alannah MacTiernan did was revive the Soil and Land Conservation Council and appoint a new Commissioner for Soil and Land Conservation. To quote one of the many memorable quotes that we get from Hon Alannah MacTiernan, she said, “We shouldn’t just see our soil as something that merely holds plants upright.” The regeneration of the Soil and Land Conservation Council is a crucial part of that.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.44 am]: I rise to make a contribution to the motion brought to us by Hon Dr Sally Talbot, a motion that I think, apart from the back-slapping parts of it, is actually very good. Carbon farming certainly offers opportunities for Western Australian agriculture.

I want to take a bit of time to talk about a bit of history, I guess, from a personal point of view. We all know that agriculture is an industry wholly dependent on the climate. It cannot succeed if it does not understand the climate and work with the climate. I have been a farmer for many years. I remember the days back in the late 1970s and early 1980s—I was a very young bloke back then—when we would wake up on the farm near Esperance to another day of white—another day of dust clouds howling past the windows. That was because of the then standard practice, which was well and truly normal, of cultivating the soil. However, those fragile, light soils could not tolerate the wind.

In about 1980, my father and his brother, whom we farmed with, started doing something that was very novel at that time, which was direct drilling with fine points on the seeder. Of course, that meant that we did not cultivate the soil before we seeded. The effect was that we did not get the dust storms and the soil blowing around. It also meant that we retained moisture in the soil for a lot longer, were better able to control the weeds, and, at the end of the day, were able to retain the living organisms, plant or otherwise, in the soil, which in turn helped to build soil carbon. I remember that we did soil testing back in the early 1980s all the way through to the time we left the farm. Over that period, it was clear from tests that there had been a change in the soil carbon.

It is important that we understand that building carbon in the soil is very, very good for agriculture and very, very good for farmers, because higher soil carbon promotes productivity. It is very profitable for farmers to increase their soil carbon. Those farming practices have evolved over the years, and what was direct drilling in those early days became no-till as we went through the 1980s. I am happy to say—I am proud to say—that my family was a pioneering part of that movement to no-till. What we also did in the 1990s as we further developed that system was that we started to utilise summer cropping. Summer cropping obviously meant that the dead paddocks in the dry of summer had something green growing on them, which in turn grew root material into the soil, which promoted biological activity and increased soil carbon, again a very good outcome from our point of view for productivity. It went a bit against the normal thinking, because growing something at that time of the year that used moisture was not necessarily seen as a good thing. It was thought that we had to conserve that moisture. However, we found that, inevitably, a pasture that was grown after summer crops did a lot better than it would otherwise have done.

I will move on to talk about some of the issues raised by Hon Dr Sally Talbot about the cost of doing nothing. I wholeheartedly agree that we cannot sit by and do nothing about our carbon emissions. Agriculture provides a massive opportunity to be a part of that solution. I agree it is frustrating that it has taken us so long to get to the point at which agriculture can be part of these initiatives, particularly in pastoral areas. There is massive opportunity there for carbon farming, and I think that is a good thing.

It is a good thing that a choice could be offered for pastoralists and farmers to diversify their business effectively and do other things that can help their business become more sustainable. When we look at the carbon sequestered

in the various farming systems, we sometimes get lost in the entire life cycle of a grain of wheat, for example. We look at the production of the fertiliser that is used, the chemicals and so on, and the transport of the product at the end of the day, but when we look at the growing of the crop itself, it is net carbon negative. The returning to the soil of the stubble and the other material through the harvesting process actually increases the carbon. It puts carbon back in the system. But then we have to look at the production of fertiliser and, dare I say it, green hydrogen has an opportunity here. I know that the minister is acutely aware that the use of systems like green hydrogen to produce ammonia and, in turn, those nitrogenous fertilisers that are so high in their carbon emission, is a great opportunity for the state of Western Australia. Other members were in Geraldton for the summit. I cannot remember the name of it; it escapes me at the moment. We heard from various proponents who were looking into producing nitrogen-based fertilisers in that part of the world through hydrogen. That is a fantastic opportunity for Western Australia and Western Australian agriculture.

In terms of the systems in pastoral areas, the ability to unlock these sorts of opportunities for pastoralists has been a long time coming, but increasingly it will be an important part of many of their systems up there because this is not saying, “Lock up your station and don’t run your animals”. Rather, it is saying that they should look at their entire system. They should look at ways they can increase the carbon in their system and how they can manage their pastoral system to ensure that what they are doing puts carbon back into the system while at the same time providing an opportunity for that to be recognised through a system that is profitable for pastoralists. I am all for pastoralists, agriculturalists, farmers, horticulturalists—whoever—to have whatever opportunity they can to diversify their business and at the same time being part of the solution for what is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity in trying to mitigate the effects of a changing climate before it becomes too late. Only moments ago, we were talking about tropical cyclone Seroja and the recent bushfires. It is pretty clear we will have to get used to those things if we do not do anything. I am not sure that too many people in our state and nation would like to see cyclones in that part of the world become a normal part of the system, nor would they like to see bushfires as intense and destructive as we have seen in recent years. Yes, agriculture has a massive opportunity to be a part of the system. I am encouraged by Hon Dr Sally Talbot’s thoughts of bipartisanship on this issue. It is absolutely something that I support and it is a great opportunity for Western Australian agriculture. It is indeed a shame that Western Australian agriculture has missed out to the extent that it has. As it was pointed out, the fact that federal funds went to Queensland versus Western Australia is a disgrace given the scale of the agriculture industry in this state and the opportunity it would have offered our producers. It is fantastic that we now have that opportunity.

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.54 am]: It is with great pleasure again that I rise today to talk on this motion brought to the chamber by Hon Dr Sally Talbot. This issue has a big impact in the mining and pastoral electorate. I have enjoyed watching Minister Alannah MacTiernan advocate and fight for pastoralists across the southern rangelands. A brief history lesson has already been given today. Hon Colin de Grussa just mentioned the opportunity that was missed by Western Australians. I am starting to learn that it is not unusual for Western Australia to miss out with the federal government. It reminds me very much of the wild dog fence funding. When we first came to government in 2017, next to no work had been done on the wild dog fence, which was critical. Today, a lot of members have spoken about the need to innovate, change and be fluid. I have seen no bigger change than sheep farmers turning to farming cattle and goats. Western Australia’s sheep industry was huge and abundant. I have heard many figures about the sheep industry in Kalgoorlie, the goldfields and further up into the Murchison. When I talked to the shire president of Mt Magnet, Jorgen Jensen, he told me that his family used to have many sheep before wild dogs ravaged that area and forced people to change the way they did business. It is interesting. When I go to Carnarvon now, it is very common to see a goat pie being sold on the side of the road! Goat farming is now quite a popular industry. That issue forced change; this is just change. It has been well received by the pastoralist industry. There is a want for more, a want to continue growing and a want to have that access. I commend the minister for her work in that space and for pushing to find access for Western Australian pastoralists.

The fund has been strongly welcomed by not only government but also pastoralists. I refer to the heading of an article in the *Farm Weekly* from 12 December 2019 titled “Pastoralists welcome carbon funding fund”. Pastoralists have missed out in many aspects. I think they now have the ability to access about \$75 million over 25 years, which means there is a huge ability for pastoralists to potentially earn close to \$200 000 a year through carbon funding credits. That opportunity will benefit them financially and allow them to reinvest in other innovation within their pastoral operation. Because I am not a farmer, I do not understand exactly how great this is. However, when I have been with the minister, the reactions and responses of pastoralists have been overwhelming. I remember going to Geraldton recently with the Premier and Minister Alannah MacTiernan. When we were on our way up to the Murchison, we met with a local farmer called Rod O’Bree. Interestingly, he had left a tap running on his driveway and water was running down and across his driveway. He tried to explain how controlling the funnelling of water naturally revegetates an area without him having to do anything. To show us his small theory, he put down a couple of sandbanks on the driveway and we could see how they redirected the water. He had been doing this for about 12 years. He said that a few people thought he was crazy at times. He then took us to an area that he had regenerated. The before-and-after photos are absolutely stunning. The “before” photos do not show any plants because there was no water. The land was not being used because it was not ideal. The sandbanks had redirected some of the water

flows. He did not use any seed or fertilisers. He did not chuck anything in there; he simply focused on redirecting the water. Now there is a dam there and all this natural vegetation is taking place. He explained that the birds play a huge role in that as well. I could go into more detail, but I will not. They basically regenerated this area on which he can now feed his stock. It was quite eye-opening to see that happen after only a small ideological change. He explained that that was not the norm in the area. As I said, he was known to be a little bit out there in that space. When it all started coming to fruition, people started to change their tune. It was good to see the Premier out there as well. He was overwhelmed at how well it had revegetated, without any real investment there, which was great to see.

I refer to an article of 5 May 2021 from the *Midwest Times* titled “Carbon bid game for pastoralist”. As I said, this is such a great news story for Western Australian pastoralists. This article, for me, says it all. It states —

Carbon farming has been dubbed “game changer” for WA pastoralists after one of the State’s earliest projects smashed its five-year goal three years early, generating more than \$2 million worth of credits over two years.

It is fantastic news to see that we smashed a five-year projection in two years. Full credit goes to the pastoralists who are taking that step, going outside their comfort zone and going down an innovative pathway by doing something differently. I know how hard it is to try to change our frame of mind and do something new. The article goes on to say —

It has firmed beliefs the practice—which involves regenerating land to increase vegetation that absorbs carbon dioxide—can give pastoralists an opportunity to diversify and add a second income stream to their properties.

We all know how important that is. As I said earlier, they had to diversify from sheep farming, which was a huge industry in Western Australia. Something that, on the face of it, sounds small—a wild dog problem—can be detrimental to an entire industry and can force change, which in turn changes the landscape itself as well because we no longer have sheep grazing on it; it is now cattle or goats. It is commendable to see pastoralists take that big step and move to a climate change game changer. The article touches closely on David and Vicky McQuie, who run Bulga Downs, just south of Sandstone. They embarked on a major regeneration project two and a half years ago following the approval of the practice by the WA government in 2019. The article continues —

And in a milestone for the project, they have just received their first carbon credit payment through the Commonwealth Emission Reduction Fund.

The project—which involved introducing management changes to reduce grazing pressure on their land and promote revegetation—was executed in partnership with natural capital management company RegenCo, and will run for decades to come.

It is also inspiring to see that this is not just a short-term fix for these pastoralists. They are looking at the long term and at being in the fund and getting credits into the future. It really excites me to see what more they will do with their land now that we have seen the dog fences going up as quickly as they are. Right across the southern rangelands there has been a huge push. I also have to commend the minister, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, again because there has been huge Aboriginal engagement on the dog fence projects, which has been really great to see. I have had the pleasure of going to Yalgoo and seeing some of the work that has been done there. It is fantastic.

Thank you to the mover of the motion, Hon Dr Sally Talbot. We are entering into a new world. Western Australia is finally getting an opportunity to benefit from this federal area and I think that farmers and pastoralists alike will continue to use this fund and hopefully do better for our planet into the future.

Visitors — Como Primary School

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Before I give the call to the Leader of the Opposition, I would like to welcome to the public gallery of the Legislative Council the boys and girls, their parents, and teachers from Como Primary School.

Debate Resumed

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [12:04 pm]: I would like to thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for moving this motion today, particularly on the issue of soil carbon. I will concentrate very much on that, as we did a couple of years ago. I printed some of the debate from a motion moved by Hon Diane Evers on 22 November 2018 when we addressed some similar issues. I will start by reiterating what I have said numerous times in this chamber, which is that I have always been a believer that not only does climate change exist, but also the anthropogenic contribution must be recognised. I have said that often enough now to be accused of repetition. I think this is important. I was drawn, given the comments that have been made, back to this original debate. I will give an indication of the potential importance of soil carbon in particular. I try not to do this too much, but I will quote from myself from a couple of year go when I said —

If the top 30 centimetres or so of soil carbon is measured across Australia, the soil carbon that sits in there represents 25 billion tonnes of carbon.

That is an enormous amount —

If we look at that and take such a low average, if the soil carbon could be increased by one per cent on average across Australia, which in theory would not be that hard because the average is so low, that one per cent would give us 250 million tonnes of carbon going into the soil.

If we could do that, that would be a significant contribution to the argument. Those numbers have not changed significantly. Soil carbon in Australia remains one of our absolute greatest problems in relation to soil fertility and productivity in the farming sector. I have read generally in scientific articles of soils that have a carbon level in the range of 13 and 14 per cent, which I do not think I have ever encountered in Australia. The soils of Western Australia are more likely to contain between one and two per cent organic carbon, so that represents an enormous opportunity to increase it. It is absolutely the case that that would have an impact on the total amount of carbon available. However, it is not easy to do. The issue that exists around what I like to call bio-sequestration is the two versions of organically storing carbon—one in the soil and the other in plants. Obviously, the easiest of those is plant bio-sequestration. We can generally measure the proportion of carbon of a tree as it grows and when it is fully grown. I know that my good friends in the Greens might disagree with this next bit, but if we chop a tree into sawlogs, we can measure how much carbon is sequestered in the sawlogs, which is sometimes for a very long time. That is the easy measurement when we are talking about vegetation. We are surrounded by stored carbon. I think we made the same point two and a half years ago. That is absolutely the case. That is the easy measurement. The more difficult measurement, of course, is organic soil carbon, because it is a much more moveable feast, if you will. We understand very poorly the real and in-depth biological contribution made by bacteria in particular, and fungi, and how that interaction takes place. The healthy soil component is a very difficult thing to measure. The problem we then have is that when we start to measure soil carbon, we have to understand how long that soil carbon has been retained in the soil to give it a long-term value so that we can put an economic value on it. Therefore, if we are to pay for carbon sequestration in soil carbon, we have to measure not only how much carbon is likely to be accumulated, which is not that difficult if we are repeatedly testing it, but also how long it is likely to remain. When a tree is grown and either cut down as timber or not cut down—either way—we can get a pretty accurate measure of the longevity of the storage of that carbon. It is much more difficult to do that with soil carbon farming, because we can increase inorganic soil carbon relatively easily, even though it is very expensive, simply by sticking carbon back into the soil. That does not mean that the microbes can make use of it. When the microbes do make use of a more organic carbon source, the soil carbon will be raised, but for how long will that occur? If we do not keep doing that, how much can we get to?

I think one of the other members—it might have been Hon Dr Sally Talbot—talked about allowing the carbon in the soil to increase, particularly if we allow plants to grow and not necessarily harvest and remove them, but allow them to go back into the soil. That is true. There are vineyards in the electorate of the honourable member and I that have taken some good steps in that direction, and some other farmers as well. The difficulty is that there are questionable measurements relating to how long the carbon stays in the soil as soon as we stop supporting that soil in a fairly intensive way. The soil is very sandy in some of those areas. Let us be generous and say that it is currently two per cent. If we allow plants to grow, even grasses, and, through weathering, they are allowed to get into the soil, with accurate work and supported plants, we can increase that carbon content from two per cent to four per cent over a number of years, but we will not necessarily know that two years after that, that soil carbon will still be there or will be continuing to increase. That is why soil carbon is still a very difficult thing to adopt and measure in most carbon markets.

The other angle that I want to throw in briefly—it was raised by the member—relates to my party's long history of carbon management in the pastoral regions. It is almost a dirty word these days, but I take very much a property rights position on this issue. In my view, no-one should force the manager of a property, be it freehold or leasehold tenure, to run stock if that is not their business model. Funnily enough, my politics remain right wing. If someone with a pastoral lease thinks they can run their finances on carbon and tourism, for example, they should be encouraged to do so, because they are the manager of that property. For too long, we have had this argument about whether property owners must run stock. Time has moved on. The time has come to recognise that the potential for carbon farming might give an alternative. The pastoral regions have an enormous opportunity. This issue does not just affect pastoral regions; the whole of Western Australia is a carbon-poor environment. It is in our soils. We are called sandgroppers for a reason. We have an enormous opportunity to increase the carbon in our soils.

Until the modelling around the long-term storage of carbon in a carbon marketplace is more accurate and can be defined in the longer term, it will remain a difficult marketplace. I am pleased to see that the federal government has invested significant dollars into this issue. That is a good outcome. It obviously opens up alternative enterprise options for farmers around Australia. I will give some credit to the Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food—perhaps not as much as Hon Dr Sally Talbot, but some—as I think she has worked passionately to support the opening up of this marketplace. I simply make the point that I think members around the chamber—I took this message from Hon Colin de Grussa's contribution—are supportive of the concept and supportive of working through the process to make sure it is deliverable in the long term. If it can be done, this will be a major positive contributor not just to the farming community, but also to the environment. Again, the hard part will be that if we

allow the farming community to do this and it then wants to go back into a cropping or grazing regime in the future, that will impact on long-term carbon storage. A very technical and complicated debate is going on around the world at the moment. It is good to see governments engaging in it. It is good to see experimentation. Much of the engagement in soil carbon storage at this point effectively comes via government subsidies. My only piece of advice is that over the next decades, we will have to move from a somewhat populist subsidy into a genuine measure of carbon sequestration and storage, and that is a much tougher debate.

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [12.15 pm]: I rise because there is still 15 minutes left in which members can speak on this motion. My valedictory, the first of the season, will occur at 12.30 pm. I did not want the time to pass and have to start too early.

This is a subject that I could talk about for an hour. I was delighted that this motion was moved in this place. I was filled with joy for the first time in my four years in this place to hear everyone saying such wonderful things about regenerative agriculture.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: We did the same thing to your motion two and a half years ago.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I feel that we have moved on. I feel that there has been a change, and I am delighted because there is so much more knowledge on this issue in this room. The benefits of getting carbon into the soil is now acknowledged. I know that the difficulty comes in measuring it, but that is not a reason to set it aside or say that it is a great idea but it cannot be done because we cannot measure it.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I'm not saying that either.

Hon DIANE EVERS: Of course the member would not be saying that, because he is in a position of leadership now, and I really want to see him move forward with that because he understands the situation. Maybe he will even help to find ways to measure carbon in the soil so that we can move on with it. It blows me away. I am really pleased to hear it. People in the pastoral areas are also delighted. Yes, we have to give them other opportunities than just having animals on pastoral leases. Of course they do. They have been telling us for years that it is not working. The stocking rates that we originally had when we first opened up those areas have diminished year after year, decade after decade, because the plants are not there to feed the stock. Also, by putting the watering points out there, kangaroo numbers increase and there is more room for dingoes to live. We are putting pressure on these pastoral areas not just from our own stocking rates, but also from the native and feral animals that are out there. We need to start controlling those feral animals as well. That does not mean the dingoes, as they keep the kangaroo population down. We have to do that to allow these landscapes to rehabilitate and for the plants to come back so that we have the opportunity to graze cattle when conditions are right.

This is not rocket science. This is known by some of the people who live in these areas but they want to get what they can out of their land right now so they keep their stocking rates well above what they are supposed to. What is that doing? It is degrading the landscape further. What are we doing? It is their lease, it is their land and it is their right. It is not their right. The landscape belongs to all of us. If people are degrading it, they should be held accountable. That should be in the leases, to make sure that they manage that appropriately.

I also wanted to talk about cattle. It seems that cattle are getting a bad rap around the world. Through their burping for the most part, cattle let out a lot of methane, particularly when they are in feedlots, something that we do not practise here so much. The practice of raising cattle in this country is to still put them on grass pastures, other than the last three months or so of their lives before they are slaughtered. When they are on grass pastures, methane is not so much a problem. When people start quoting statistics about methane and the issues associated with cattle, I ask them to please look at Australian statistics, not necessarily global statistics. Cattle are a part of our system. That manure—something like 50 kilos a day—is fertiliser. It is energy. It is something that we should be using, not saying that it is a problem. The circular economy—the idea that we can use the leftover materials or what we traditionally call waste from one process and put it back into another system to make it useful—is intelligence. Humans have intelligence; we just have to get behind them and let them do it.

I was delighted to hear about the Vasse water system task force that Hon Sally Talbot chairs. I think I came too late to the party on that one to realise that it existed and that it was doing things. But I come from the south west, from the Albany area, where we have been doing those sorts of things for 30 years. Our Oyster Harbour is now world-renowned—get this—for having oysters! The natural oysters that grew there are being replenished and restocked. There are also two oyster farms, including one owned by “Twiggy” Forrest, and a mussel farm. This is what can happen when communities push, encourage, coerce, force and do whatever they can to get governments to support their activities to clean up the messes that have been made by previous people and corporations that have tried to extract every dollar that they can. Therefore, I am delighted to hear that that is going on.

Also—I will probably do a member's statement on this—I just want to mention to Hon Dr Steve Thomas that yes, there are some sawlogs that are cut and then used for purposes that last for 100 years or longer. We can find them in our buildings in Europe going back several hundreds of years. But, currently, more than 80 per cent of our native forest goes to charcoal, chips, firewood and waste. That leaves us with 20 per cent for sawn timber and, of that 20 per cent, a lot of the things that we are constructing are built to last only 30 years. But I wholly support the idea

of carbon sequestration into plantations, and members will hear more about that shortly. We need to draw down that carbon, and I think it is fantastic that now pastoral leases can also do carbon farming. I think that there is so much more to be explored here and, like I said, it puts a smile on my face to know that so many people in here understand and have been willingly speaking about it positively. I am delighted that the Minister for Agriculture and Food is a strong proponent of this. I think that her work has even influenced the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, and I am looking forward to so much more coming out of that.

Even our universities are saying the right words more and more often. If we can get carbon farming into our ag schools and if our ag schools start realising that—as Hon Colin de Grussa was saying, keeping the moisture in the soil, using cover crops and not ploughing and churning the ground up and letting the soil blow away—and teach the positive things in our ag schools and those students go on to universities, then they are going to demand to continue that sort of study and research so that they can actually increase the soil content.

In Western Australia, we clear native bush and get between, say, three and seven per cent soil. Then we plough the soil and farm it for 30 or 50 years and put heavy chemicals into it, and we can bring that down to one to two per cent carbon pretty quickly. But there are people around this state who are putting the carbon back in, and it can be put back in at one or two per cent a year. I do not know what the maximum that we will ever get here will be. I grew up in the lush fields of Illinois where topsoil was two metres thick. That was all I knew—that black, rich earth. Whereas here, we get dirty sand. We need a lot more carbon in the ground. I have hope. I think we might get there, so that is it for now.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (North Metropolitan — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [12.23 pm]:

I thank all the members who have spoken on this motion. I really appreciate their support, because I do think that there is an extraordinary opportunity for us to change this whole language around agriculture. Agriculture is being presented by many as the bad child in the carbon story. We see David Attenborough telling people not to eat meat because of the problem with livestock. We see stories about the plant protein substitute, almond milk, killing literally billions of bees each year in California as people seek to cater for almond-consuming vegans. This is not a situation in which we want to just offset agricultural activity. We actually believe that agriculture can in fact be a major part of the answer and that we can indeed sequester carbon in our soil and in plantations. But, primarily, in our soil, we can ensure that livestock are integrated into the system in such a way that it reduces our reliance on artificial nitrogenous fertiliser, and we can see that the agricultural practice of farming can in fact ultimately become a great sequester of carbon.

I appreciated the comments of Hon Colin de Grussa and the certain strategies that he uses on his farm, which are some of the really basic things that we absolutely need to do. To replace chemical fallow with a summer crop in low rainfall areas is, I think, a critically important part of the future of agriculture. I really want us to focus on soil carbon methodologies that will work in low rainfall areas. I have been to the Haggertys' properties out in Koorda and Beacon and seen what can be achieved when we embrace these modern, regenerative practices. This is not old-fashioned farming; it is farming that is utilising the very latest in science, which will create the products that our consumers will demand into the future.

There is an increased consciousness on the consumers' part about the carbon footprint of the products they are eating. There is an increased focus on the nutritional value of food. There is an increased focus on the carbon footprint of the wool and the cotton and other fabrics that they are consuming. This provides for us an extraordinary opportunity to get ahead of the game and to position us well for the major change in community expectation and, indeed, the change in many markets that is going to be imposed at a national level. The EU and the UK are some of the first markets that will place these carbon requirements on products coming into their jurisdictions.

We think that we get this right, we put the science in, and we use our \$15 million land restoration fund and our \$15 million climate resilience fund to make the right strategic interventions to provide the science and the rigour that farmers can use to embrace these methodologies, which, as Hon Colin de Grussa said, will indeed make them more productive as well. We need to get that science right to understand the nutritional value, to understand what practices work and to really get in there and bring that support to the farmers, as well as provide some incentives for farmers to overcome some of the up-front costs that may be required to move to these new practices. Therefore, we are working very closely with the farming communities. I very much look forward to having the active involvement of the members on the other side during this process, because we really want to get this right. We really want to make sure that we utilise that capability that we have to really make this work and, as I say, make farming very much part of the solution.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

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

That so much of standing orders be suspended as to enable order of the day 2, Statutes (Repeals and Minor Amendments) Bill 2021, to be taken forthwith.

STATUTES (REPEALS AND MINOR AMENDMENTS) BILL 2021*Second Reading*

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.30 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Statutes (Repeals and Minor Amendments) Bill 2021 is an omnibus bill that makes a range of repeals and minor amendments to a number of acts under the umbrella of a single bill. As members may be aware, bills of this nature are a routine part of legislative review and ensure that the state's statute book is regularly updated and streamlined.

Part 2 of the bill provides for the repeal of Western Australian acts and imperial enactments. Part 3 of the bill provides for the amendments. The amendments range from inserting missing words to correcting typographical, cross-referencing and formatting errors, and to account for updates to and repeals of other legislation. Detailed explanations of each of the amendments are set out in the explanatory memorandum accompanying this bill.

This bill was introduced in a very similar—almost identical—format in the previous Parliament, as the Statutes (Repeals and Minor Amendments) Bill 2020. The bill stood immediately referred to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review in accordance with long-established practice. That committee tabled its report on the 2020 bill on 24 November 2020, making two recommendations. Those recommendations were, firstly, that the 2020 bill be passed by the house; and, secondly, that the committee's observations be noted. The 2021 bill I am reading in today includes some additional items for repeal that were not included in the 2020 bill. These items relate to elements of the Acts Amendment (ICWA) Act 1996, which was identified by Parliamentary Counsel's Office as suitable for inclusion, and the Business Licensing Amendment Act 1995, which was identified by the committee in its recent report.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee for its consideration of the 2020 bill. In accordance with past practice, the bill will be referred again to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review in accordance with that committee's responsibility to scrutinise and review the statute book. I look forward to the committee's consideration of and report on this bill in due course.

Finally, I advise the house that pursuant to standing order 126, this is not a uniform legislation bill as defined in standing order 126(2)(a), as it does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental agreement; nor as defined in standing order 126(2)(b), as it is not a bill that introduces a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

I commend the bill to the house and table the explanatory memorandum.

[See paper [164](#).]

Discharge of Order and Referral to Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review — Motion

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.33 pm] — without notice: I move —

That the Statutes (Repeals and Minor Amendments) Bill 2021 be discharged and referred to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review.

HON NICK GOIRAN (South Metropolitan) [12.33 pm]: I indicate that the opposition supports the parliamentary secretary's motion to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review. I note, as outlined by the parliamentary secretary, that a very similar bill was introduced into this chamber on 9 September last year. The Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review tabled a report on that bill in November last year, but, regrettably, there was not an opportunity to consider the bill any further. I simply make the comment that when the standing committee has an opportunity to consider this bill now, it would be of great assistance to the house if a comparison of the two bills could be done in order to enable its speedy resolution, I suspect, when it ultimately comes before the house. That will enable us to understand the clear differences between the two bills and, in particular, I might add, the extent to which the matters outlined in the committee's report have been taken on board by the government, and the reasons for those matters that have not been taken on board.

Question put and passed.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY*Motion*

Resumed from 5 May on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the following address be presented to His Excellency the Honourable Kim Beazley, Companion of the Order of Australia, Governor in and over the state of Western Australia and its dependencies in the Commonwealth of Australia —

May it please Your Excellency: We, the members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our most gracious sovereign and thank Your Excellency for the speech you have been pleased to deliver to Parliament.

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [12.35 pm]: I seek to adjourn my contribution to the Address-In-Reply and continue my remarks at a later stage of today's sitting.

[Leave granted for the member's speech to be continued at a later stage of the sitting.]

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [12.36 pm]: Four years ago, at the 2017 election, I was given the opportunity to make some positive change. I took the role seriously, learnt quickly and did my best to do some good. I listened to people, travelled throughout the south west and found the issues people felt were not being heard or were being ignored. I also found issues that were so big that people felt powerless to even speak out. I soon realised that my role was not just to speak in Parliament on behalf of the people who are not being listened to, but also for those who had not found their voice and those who did not have a voice. I was also to speak for the animals, the plants and the planet. Our system of governance does not provide a voice for the environment. Our government structure was originally designed to represent the voices of wealthy, white males, reluctantly advancing to include those without wealth, women and eventually First Nations peoples. But the design of our system is not finished yet, because there is no voice for our young people or for their future and there is no voice for the health of the landscape, biodiversity or the planet.

Many times I have sat in Parliament hearing old, tired phrases about jobs and growth. But the words belie the motivation. The jobs-and-growth story often seems to gloss over the workers, the employees, and speaks more to the shareholders, the owners and the industry. There is unearned income for the owners of capital. Our system perpetuates the ability of those with wealth and power to increase their wealth and power at the expense of others, driving us to a more inequitable society. Yet this is the system we have, the system I was elected to and the system I learnt to work with. It has now delivered a government with a very strong majority. The majority is so strong that Premier Mark McGowan and his team can do just about anything. They have the choice either to maintain the status quo, keeping the gas industry, property developers and other big donors on side, or to be courageous, progressive and forward thinking and address the ills of our society, act to reverse the causes of climate change and lead us to a bright new future.

Western Australia is a wealthy state and our vast mineral reserves and other assets plus the knowledge and experience within our population means that we have the capacity to provide homes for the homeless, to care for people with addictions or who have mental health issues, and the ability for true recognition of First Nations peoples, alongside the ability to provide supporting social infrastructure as determined by First Nations peoples.

As a state, with Labor in government, we have the capacity to make Western Australia a more equitable society and to stop the degradation of our landscape. This government has the capacity to introduce carbon offsets that can direct funding towards rehabilitating degraded landscapes. It has the capacity to reach a 100 per cent stationary energy target by 2030 and, with the cooperation of the federal government, to rapidly increase the uptake of electric vehicles and move freight transport to electric or hydrogen-powered trains on rail. This government could preserve our remaining native forests, invest in the plantation industry and encourage a rapid uptake of regenerative farming. This may sound like utopia, but it is well within the reach of this government. It has the capacity, but does it have the will? It has four years with only its major donors or the general population to appease. Its major donors can fund the next election, but the population will vote. Imagine four years from now. What would Premier Mark McGowan and his team want on their résumé? Would they want an increase in the number of roads widened and skyscrapers approved? Would it show a decrease in the number of homeless people, people needing mental health support and in the prison population, alongside a decrease in crime? Would the résumé list the reduction in major weather events and wildfires, or will this government expect people will be accustomed to an ever-increasing climate crisis?

I have been privileged to speak in the Western Australian Parliament over these past four years on many issues. Sometimes, I saw that my words had been effective in getting positive change. Unfortunately, I leave now with many of the issues I feel strongly about still in limbo. Given the motion on soil carbon that was debated just moments ago, I think maybe I have had an impact. I thank Hon Dr Sally Talbot for that little boost to my ego.

Throughout my term, regenerative agriculture has been mentioned quite often in this chamber. Not only is the minister a keen advocate, but also there has been some neutral or even positive acknowledgements from some members of the crossbench. Considering the rapidly increasing uptake and development globally, it has been positive to see fellow members of the chamber opening their minds to change, however reluctantly. Within the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, I understand change is brewing and I sincerely wish I could be here to see it mature into full-on support. I appreciate that the minister's promotion of regenerative agriculture will require broad support to fend off the detractors who benefit from the current industrial agricultural systems of land degradation and decreasing nutritional value. Current estimates of viable agricultural land are showing that globally we have just 40 to 60 years remaining worldwide should current practices continue. If that is not a wake-up call to people who like to eat, I do not know what is.

Regenerative agriculture is not rocket science. We need living micro-organisms in the soil to efficiently deliver nutrients to the plant roots. We need to keep the soil covered to hold the moisture in to keep the micro-organisms alive. We need to stop killing the micro-organisms. That is about it. If we do this, we will vastly increase the carbon

in the soil. We will massively increase the water retention capability of the soil, enormously diminishing the impacts from drought. We will grow food with more nutrition and fewer chemical contaminants. Alongside these benefits, the diversified farming operations that go hand in hand with regenerative agriculture will increase economic and social opportunities in regional areas. Integrating animals, crops, trees and even hemp on one farm run by a number of families can provide a diversified experience and a wealth of shared knowledge. Investment in a hemp industry will open new industry opportunities for building materials, clothing and other textiles, as well as food and body-care products. We can even use hemp for railroad sleepers. We could go so far as to integrate timber plantations on farms to be milled on site to be used to construct the homes as the families grow.

This brings me to the topic of forestry. Early in my term I engaged a world-renowned consultant to detail a deliberative process for the government to use to determine the desires and expectations of a broad cross-section of people with regard to our native forests. I received no feedback. Now I desperately wish that this process is picked up and considered as the Conservation and Parks Commission prepares the next forest management plan due in 2024. Following the lack of action to protect our forests, I introduced a bill into this house last year to amend the Forest Products Act 2000. This bill sets out the steps necessary to make changes to conserve our remaining forests, protect our remaining biodiversity, develop the softwood and hardwood plantation industry and dissolve the Forest Products Commission. Please, no-one likes it. The Forest Products Commission is not required.

Understand that the state is losing financially on the timber industry even before we consider the \$135 million write-off in 2018 for an accounting error over the previous 10 years. Understand that there are fewer than 500 full-time equivalents employed in the native timber industry. Compare that with the 3 800 registered beekeepers in the state, with an additional 50 new registrations each month. Does this not indicate that it is time for a change? As bee populations decline worldwide, the opportunities for bee export become nearly limitless. The associated benefits of forest protection are extensive. An active and thriving forest draws down more carbon. A healthy and resilient forest contributes to rainfall through evapotranspiration. Reducing threats to the forests will support our globally significant biodiverse ecological systems. The timber industry will not end; it will simply be based on plantations. If we have not planted it, then we should not cut it down. Please do not knock this back with comments that it takes too long to grow a tree. Start now. Tree cropping integrated on regenerative farms works. Considerable work has been done over the years to determine where the mills and trees should be located. Use this information. It is now time to invest—urgently.

While on the subject of forests, please stop burning them. Dropping incendiaries to ignite them may help with your outrageous key performance indicator of dollars per hectare burnt, but it does nothing to protect endangered species, avoid critical ecological habitats, nor allow for the cool burns associated with Indigenous science and practice. These massive scale hot burns do not even protect us, because if regrowth occurs, it can be denser than ever, will likely have more weeds and may eventually deplete the seed bank for obligate re-seeders—that is, the plants that can regenerate from seed only after a fire and require continued harsh management. If we are after safety, please acknowledge and consider all the research, and recognise that there are different methods or mechanisms dependent on species mix, geology, past human intervention, rainfall patterns and so forth. It is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and it is not a process that should be undertaken with emotion. Fire is a tool—one of many. Let us put aside fear and emotive language, look at the facts and work to find sustainable outcomes. A desert will not burn, but do we want to turn our magnificent southern forests into a desert?

For some time, it has been known that the state's acts pertaining to water are well overdue for review. The southern forests irrigation scheme, regulation changes to charge miners and public drinking water suppliers for the actual costs of licensing, as well as the contemplation of the same for agricultural water users, have raised many important questions. Changes occurring to spring rights is also causing concern. On top of this, we must figure in climate change and the expected continued decrease in rainfall, particularly if we do not act quickly to restore our forests and soils, as mentioned previously.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's website indicates there will be a new act to replace the existing six acts. As this new act will cover water provision, drainage, sewerage, irrigation, allocation and waterway conservation, the drafters of the legislation certainly have their work cut out for them. I have concerns that the magnitude of this new act might overwhelm the potential for scrutiny available from this lopsided incoming house of review. There is so much that could be put into this act and so much opportunity to address many of the impacts of climate change. This new act cannot simply look at the past. It must address the future as modelled by experts, understanding the coming changes. Rainfall decline, more frequent violent storms, increasing pressure on limited water resources through pollution, development, population, industry and intensive agriculture, all these things will need to be addressed. This is an area for collaboration like no other. The stakeholders include not only industry, farming and residential developments, but also local governments, the landscape, and all our waterways, including the ocean and its biodiversity. Consider being visionary for this act and look to how we can improve our situation. Now is the time to invest wisely in assets that will reduce our ongoing costs, or even bring in future revenues. We must look to recharge our aquifers with clean potable water. We must maintain the health of our wetlands and waterways. We must ensure that rubbish and high nutrient loads are not headed downstream and out to sea. We need a government department that has responsibility for the quality of the water

going through our ancient drainage systems. Even if good water management does not win votes, like new roads seem to, this is a time for bold action and visionary leadership. The government has the majority; show us what it can do.

On the subject of environment, there are a few items on my wish list, all of which I have mentioned in here before. First of all, how about a state of the environment report? Would it not be good for the government to have that on its résumé in four years' time—something to show that it has taken action and made a difference? If the government started that now, it could complete it by mid-2022 and have two complete years of results by the time electioneering begins again. The government could use it when the Liberals take the reins in the future to hold them to account. If the government needs assistance in writing key performance indicators for the environment, let me know—I know a few people who could help.

During my term I introduced a few private member's bills on the environment. I would like to take this time to remind the government about that. I understand that the Rights of Nature and Future Generations Bill was considerably more progressive than would ever enable it to get a look in, but I also understand that this is how some acts begin. The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill, which passed through this house in 2019, began nearly 30 years earlier as a private member's bill. I am not quite that optimistic, but I hope that suggesting that bill may have woken up a few people to the idea that we are not making decisions just for the people living today. Our decisions affect many people and the entire biodiversity for some time. One of the acts to be superseded by the new water act mentioned earlier was originally passed in 1914. I guess that there are other bills in force that are even older.

I continued with a more likely bill for the establishment of an environmental court, as has occurred in New South Wales, or an environmental tribunal similar to our existing State Administrative Tribunal, an entity that can make binding determinations rather than simply provide advice. If our Environmental Protection Authority is to perform its role adequately, it will require considerably more funding and considerably more power. I would not go so far as to say it provides a rubber stamp, but having seen some of the proposals and developments that have gone through in this term, I am sad to say that we sorely need considerably greater environmental protections. We have to get away from sizing up new industry or new developments based solely on their financial aspects, and really consider what sort of environment we want to leave to our descendants.

To make environmental protection very simple, I introduced one further bill that I hope to see influence the coming budget. Many in this place have acknowledged the difficulties and lack of accountability with which royalties for regions funds are distributed. On many occasions I have tried to demonstrate to regional constituents that royalties for regions is not being used as intended. It is not fully allocated, and some of the allocations are for services that were previously provided through other sources. An amount of \$250 million a year goes to the Water Corporation to provide equal water pricing across the state; and, as the Water Corporation then makes a surplus, the funds are returned to the state as a dividend. An amount of \$80 million a year comes from royalties for regions for a school bus service previously provided through the Department of Education. The private member's bill I introduced would provide positive benefits into regional communities by allocating \$100 million a year to the environment through the numerous land care and environment groups operating with an extensive workforce of willing volunteers working alongside government departments to restore, protect and rehabilitate our landscape.

The environment does not need humans; we need the environment. This state and our government must wake up and seriously protect, preserve and restore the home that our environment provides. Put an end to clearing unless commensurate replanting or restoration work has provided results. Put an end to native forest logging. Seriously monitor water contamination or misuse; clearing without a permit; and contamination and pollution regulations. Impose effective charges when regulations are ignored or broken.

If members have not already noticed, regional development is something I care deeply about. Development of the regions should not be a piecemeal, ad hoc or laissez-faire exercise. We need some long-term planning. Part of that planning should be focused on supporting and encouraging decentralisation of the population. COVID has driven many people to flee the city and head for greener pastures. This is a positive for the state. This should be seen as something to encourage. The regions provide funding for the state through mining, and food for the people through agriculture, which also provides export dollars. The regions are where we can fight climate change by drawing down carbon into our trees and our soil.

COVID has shown us that people see the regions as a place to be physically and mentally healthy. Encourage this. I recognise that there are some economies of scale in having people in close proximity, but this only goes so far. Perth already has dispersed across a broad landscape, increasing both financial and environmental costs. Economies of scale can also be achieved in regional areas by increasing the density in regional communities and getting benefit from the underutilised existing infrastructure. These regional areas can be hubs of activity if we plan ahead and make the best use of the local resources. Rather than get big, let us get smart. Localise food processing and manufacturing. Create abattoirs where the animals are raised. Make furniture and housing frames where the trees are planted. Process food where the crops are grown. We can do better.

Getting freight on rail will provide a long-term solution. Do not tell me we need a return on investment over 20 years. We have seen that rail lines can be built to last 100 years. Do it once; do it right. I have heard recently how much is being spent on roads in regional areas. This government cannot deny that the majority of this spending is justified by the number of truck movements. Plan for a sustainable future. Plan for freight on rail.

As we plan ahead and create infrastructure to reduce heavy freight transport on our roads, our regional areas will be safer for the rapid increase in regional travel. Again, COVID has changed our travel behaviour. I see this as providing many positive benefits to the regions and for our population. The more people who get out to the regional areas, the more people will choose to live there. The increased economic activity will make it more appealing to more people. The people who are moving into the south west are moving for a better lifestyle, not necessarily a lifestyle in which they spend more, but rather a lifestyle of good health, a friendly community, activity that takes them closer to nature, and so forth. As people arrive in our regional communities to live, we are desperately finding that we need more homes. This provides a tricky problem for the government as many of our small regional communities want to stay small. Here is where good planning can step in to work with the people, the local governments and the developers to ensure that sustainable communities with a range of price points, including some social housing, are integrated into the existing fabric of society using a collaborative approach to find solutions that work for everyone. Dream big. Here is the place to be aspirational. Open your horizons and see what possibilities exist.

Before people move regionally, they often visit as tourists. Our regional areas have so much to offer. First Nations tourism must be nurtured and supported, as it is our roots—our connection to the landscape, to time and to the natural environment. The more we can listen to Indigenous science and Indigenous history, the more we will understand our place in this world and understand the responsibilities of long-term management of this landscape. We have much to learn. Sharing this knowledge widely through tourist-type adventures will assist in keeping the knowledge alive. Combining Indigenous knowledge with ecotourism just makes good sense and assists visitors in getting the most out of their stay.

We can also build on opportunities for accessible tourism to be inclusive of people and their differences or limitations. I understand that some cave tours are now planned to limit noise and excess light to provide a calmer experience for people with heightened sound or light sensitivities. We can also develop activities specifically for people with mobility issues. Providing alternatives can make us a more inclusive society.

One idea which I have come across recently, and which makes sense if planning for a bright new future, is the suggestion of a vehicle racetrack specifically for electric vehicles. Think about it. Unlike the Albany Motorplex, which will be outdated in the not too distant future with its noise issues and concerns of pollution run-off, electric vehicles would make little noise and have minimal run-off concerns. The suggestion is to locate it at Greenbushes near the lithium mine and open it up to everything from trucks to scooters, and even gophers. Out of interest, during the election campaign I asked a few gopher drivers and received unexpected enthusiasm. I had not realised so many gopher drivers had an interest in racing! Universities and other research organisations could be involved to study battery and motor technology. Its location next to the lithium mine would add to the knowledge that we could obtain about how to develop it to grow the industry in that area. Noting the greater performance capabilities of electric vehicles, the researchers should have a rather enjoyable time.

I have noticed over the past four years that the view of this government and its energy entities towards renewables is evolving. From the initial complaints about how rooftop solar will damage the system, the government has advanced to tolerate rooftop solar and is even beginning to appreciate the benefits of integrating it into our systems. Over this coming term, I hope to see an embrace of distributed community-driven renewable systems, as this is where our future lies.

One brief comment on uranium. We know it to be problematic on many counts, and with all its associated negative impacts it is unfathomable that anybody would give any consideration to nuclear energy. In the previous Liberal government's last few weeks in government, it slid through approvals for four uranium mines. Now this government will see those environmental approvals time out. Please let them. These projects pose serious environmental risks and economic liability that will extend over decades, if not centuries.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon DIANE EVERS: Back to business, and particularly small business. This is where our opportunity lies. Small business should figure prominently in our future. It is where innovation can occur. It is the largest employment sector. It can take on the development of the tourism operations and the value-adding to agricultural produce, hospitality and manufacturing. There are unlimited possibilities and opportunities for the development of small business, particularly in the regions.

This government needs to assist. It is not all about red tape and green tape. It is about equity and fairness. The issues are about competing with the larger players who have the means and motivation to reduce competition and ensuring that the big players meet their requirements and abide by the law even when they have better legal teams and financial wizards. I recognise that some work is being done on this front; for example, getting subcontractors to be paid fairly and on time, but this is all so slow. I hope to see further action over the coming term to level the playing field for small business.

In addition, if this government would like to be progressive, encourage cooperatives and other business structures that make it possible for more people to get involved in business ownership, sharefarming is becoming more of a global issue for agriculture. We all know that it is very expensive to get into agriculture, but through the opportunities of

sharefarming—we can look around the world and see how it is being done, and being done well—maybe we can do that here and get some of the young people who are currently in the city but who would like to be out on a farm to find a way by which they can do it without having to have a million dollars or family connections behind them.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is a very good point, member.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I think it is something for our future—I would love to be there—and I would not mind being involved in the conversation.

Innovation in this area can help to diversify our economy, making it stronger and more equitable. Growing small business is where local economies benefit—local jobs, less travel, good for local government, good for communities. There are many benefits to increased small business activity and I look forward to seeing this government take action in supporting small enterprise development.

Of all the portfolios I held within the Greens, I feel I did not speak often enough on sport and recreation; it just did not come up much. There were environment-related issues such as skiing at Lake Mullocullup, a place of significant Aboriginal significance, and the consideration of mountain bike trails in the Porongurup National Park, both of which should not happen. It is not appropriate. It is destructive and it is not what we need to do. Other than environment issues, most of my concerns or interest was related to ensuring that opportunities for sport and recreation were diverse, accessible, inclusive, financially possible and so forth to encourage broad participation knowing that the benefits of fitness, health and social connection make our population and communities stronger.

Given my accounting background, I had the most fun at budget time. I think only Hon Dr Steve Thomas would agree with that. I walked in thinking how depressing it was having watched as the previous Liberal government spent its windfall from the previous boom up through 2014, leaving the state with a mounting debt. Now I have seen this government do not much better. The debt trajectory continued even though extensive cuts were made to staff and services. Some explanation can be placed on COVID-19 and the decision to try to keep the economy humming. I get that. I understand the government's intentions to keep workers employed and money flowing to shareholders. So, as COVID struck, money flowed to shovel-ready projects. Unfortunately, this provided an opportunity for its property developer friends and donors to fast-track development approvals right past the desires of the communities, with little regard for the environment or long-term planning needs of the state.

As an accountant, and considering the big picture, what struck me hard was the speed at which shovel-ready projects were put forward by Main Roads Western Australia. I have not held back in voicing my wariness towards Main Roads. Governments understand that building roads gets votes. People can see the work progressing, and for the most part they get a smoother, more efficient trip to their destination, but at what cost? For example, the Albany ring-road, budgeted at \$175 million, is progressing swiftly, yet for whom? When I asked for the expected truck movements on the new road, it appeared there would be just 1 200 trucks a day, only 300 more than currently travel on the existing road—and those figures were provided for the year 2031! The existing road of two kilometres rarely has more than one or two trucks on it at any time. The new route will be 17 kilometres rather than the current distance of seven kilometres. Members must understand that \$175 million is being spent on a road that is unnecessary. If there had been any sort of comprehensive planning and forward thinking, not just the four years of an election cycle, and not just from the department for building roads, a different solution may have been found. Understand that nearly all the freight transport on that route is either grain or woodchips going to the port. If the government had simply consulted with Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd, which was already exploring a grain terminal at Down Road industrial park, we could have spent \$20 million to \$30 million and shifted that freight task to rail. This would have addressed the traffic concerns at the roundabout and on the connecting roads. I just cannot understand it—other than how I understand that building roads gets votes. There is nothing workers like more than having a clear run on their daily commute. Unfortunately, having more roads leads to more cars, more trucks and more traffic. I see, however, that investment is going to public transport in the urban areas. It seems as though we have put so much into roads and now there is a bit spilling over. Maybe Main Roads has just run out of roads to build. I am not certain, but there is money going into public transport and I am delighted. Well done.

I even feel that I have been heard. Every year for the past three years I have asked the Public Transport Authority whether free public transport would be considered. I am delighted at the plans to cap public transport at two zones. I ask the government that when the trains become crowded to please not put up the price. More passengers indicate that more trains are needed; it is simple. More trains mean fewer people on the roads, and fewer people on the roads mean less need to expand and extend the road network. Give Main Roads something else to do; we need to plan for 50 years, not five. We have to make public transport smooth, simple and inexpensive, and people will use it—even more so, if the traffic is bad.

Another issue that is well within the government's grasp to address is homelessness. Look globally for solutions; there are solutions out there. Many cities are addressing the situation by providing homes for the homeless—amazing. It is that simple. The reduction in costs associated with homelessness—including health costs, local government costs, policing costs and so forth—make it cost neutral, or even positive. Think broadly. We can be a better, more caring society without hurting the bank balance, and if we get that plantation industry going—or even more quickly, a hemp brick industry—we can build the homes using local sustainable materials.

There are so many more issues that have doable, affordable, progressive, sustainable, sensitive, systemic solutions. The government has the support of the voters, it has the financial resources and it has the capacity. Does it have the will and the courage to take action? I can see the shoots of progressive thinking. Green hydrogen—thank you, minister; I think we are going in the right direction, and there is so much future ahead of us that way to greatly expand the technology for renewables. Turn it into hydrogen and transport it where we need to. I have even heard about somehow making fertiliser out of it; I do not have the chemistry background to work that one out yet, but I will get there! There has also been investment in rail—well done. I am really pleased to see that. There is an increased number of national parks. It makes sense now; just give us more, and the resources to look after them. That is all I ask.

But for all these baby steps, it is still not enough. The increasing impacts of climate change are upon us at a rate faster than our system of governance can even contemplate. Corporate interests have more time and resources to keep laws and regulations in their favour than any government has to create or enforce these laws. The job ahead of this government, should it choose to be bold, is enormous. It will require vision and strength to stand up to the old, tired habits of privileged wealthy conservatives who clutch to the misguided belief that their death will arrive before they are personally impacted by the damage humanity continues to inflict on the planet. Harsh, but true.

I understand that saying the word “economy” gets attention from these people, and it even gets votes if people think the government’s words indicate they will have more money in their pocket. But what value is a robust economy if rates of poor mental health skyrocket, alongside drug dependency and suicides? Where is the equity if a thriving economy channels wealth into the hands of a few, while more people become homeless, malnourished or physically ill? The strength and resilience of our social structures must be a priority before we rely on the economy to sort things out.

Where will our society be if we have not reversed the worldwide degradation of our planet? Right here in WA, we have so much to protect that this government and preceding governments have taken for granted. How can we continue to believe developers and miners who consistently go bankrupt when projects go pear-shaped? How can we continue clearing and felling old, healthy, thriving forests, when we know their value for biodiversity, for human health and for moderating climate? How can we? How can the Premier? It is his government that has the opportunity to make a positive difference, to become world leaders, to raise its profile and increase its adoring crowds on an even larger scale. Be bold. Take action.

The steps have been laid out before you on many occasions. Do not worry about where to start, just start. Alongside green hydrogen and other renewables, make legislation to draw down carbon. In our soils alone, we have the capacity to capture enough carbon that we could go on burning coal. The point is to be carbon neutral by 2050—not just aspirationally, but in fact. In my world I would like to see us carbon negative well before 2050. Even as we become carbon negative, the excesses of our past and present will follow us for some time as the carbon already absorbed in our oceans is released. Carbon continues being sequestered in a mature forest, bringing it down from the heavens into its leaves, branches, trunk and down to its roots and into the earth. Carbon is captured in the trees of a plantation, to be cut and sequestered in those affordable and social homes we so desperately need.

Introduce carbon offsets on those companies that emit carbon in massive quantities. These companies must show results where they have sequestered carbon, and not simply hollow promises that they have plans to do so; otherwise, they pay someone to sequester it for them. This can be achieved in land restoration, soil carbon increases and forest restoration. The government should have a look online at www.drawdown.org if it needs some ideas about how to draw down carbon and how to fix this planet. The important message is: carbon negative. We must find a sustainable existence where we are drawing down carbon—that is, net negative carbon—just to make up for the excesses of the past.

My work in this chamber now comes to a close. I hope I have made an impact. It is a strange existence, watching the games that grown men and women play, not to make a positive difference, but to score points. From time to time this place seems so much like a classroom of around year 6, and that is not to put down year 6 students! My expectations of the character of members of Parliament were higher. We seem to act as though, by putting on a suit or the equivalent, we are giving our positions the respect they deserve. By my standards, that respect is demonstrated by our actions, our integrity and our character. I recognise that this system is based on the Westminster system that has been around for hundreds of years, but that does not make it best or right. I think humanity is capable of something more. I see a world where people work collaboratively, recognising that planet Earth is our home, and if we screw it up, we will lead to our own demise. Indigenous cultures around the world recognised the value of protecting their home, and here we are, day by day destroying ours.

I give my thanks to my husband, Tony, for all he has done to support me through the past four years; thank you. Thank you to our son, Carl, and daughters, Rose, Jessica and Tia, for being there and giving my life value. I must thank my Greens colleagues here in the chamber. I thank all of them. Having a Greens team made scrutiny and oversight so much more possible. I appreciate that having the four of us looks nigh-on easy compared with the daunting task ahead. Thank you to all Greens and Greens voters. It is unfortunate that all the work we have done leading up to this day has resulted in just one Greens MP being elected. I have great expectations for the incoming Greens MLC, Brad Pettitt. I wish him all the best of good luck and support from the progressive thinkers in WA,

to carry him through the next term. I really feel that scrutiny of this government is going to happen out on the streets, in the community, amongst the people who care. That is what I hope to encourage with my own work. I encourage people to work through Brad to make sure that their voices are heard here. We have to work together if we expect to have a positive future for our children and our grandchildren.

I would also like to thank my staff for all the work they have done supporting people who needed assistance to have their voices heard. Many supporters have said to me that the amount of work put out through my office was staggering, and I could not have done it without the excellent staff I have supporting me. My heartfelt thanks and appreciation goes to all the brilliant people I have met through the past four years. I have learnt so much, I grew as a person, and I made some good connections that may last a lifetime.

My genuine thanks and appreciation go to all people who work towards a progressive, inclusive, sustainable and equitable society for Western Australia, and to all those people who I feel so close to—the people who recognise that this planet is our only one, and when we damage it, we damage ourselves. When we lose a species, we lose it forever. When we reach that climate change tipping point, this planet will no longer be habitable by the billions of people who now live here. If you think the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging, you ain't seen nothing yet. You had better get used to those climate-related natural disasters: floods, fires, droughts and cyclones. When they affect you or you cannot get insurance for your home, you will have to then step back and think: can I do more? The answer is: yes, you can. We are the privileged ones who have the time to actually make the laws and regulations in here that will affect our future.

In this room in the coming term, a positive difference could be made. Work like professionals and we could all prosper. If you continue to work like children and give us more of the same, we will all be watching as our beautiful habitable climate deteriorates. The new crossbench may see Brad Pettitt as the only voice on the progressive side of politics. That could result in many of the issues that I have raised over this term being all but forgotten—the environmental impacts of prescribed burns, the indiscriminate clearing of native bush, the need for and benefits of regenerative agriculture, the continued destruction of native forests, the lack of real recognition for environmental damage, the loss of biodiversity and so on. Those are just the environmental issues; I leave it to my colleagues to discuss some of the other issues. I focus mostly on my shadow portfolio responsibilities because I see so much possibility for our future, and it is in here where a lot of that can start.

Knowing this, I am committed to raising the voices of people who care about our future, who care about our landscape and who care about all people and not just those like ourselves. A great number of people put their trust in government to manage our society and to keep us healthy, but we need to do more. We need no new gas—of course, I mean LNG and not hydrogen; hydrogen, go for it—an end to native forest logging; an Environmental Protection Authority with authority; a planning department that understands systems thinking and innovation; innovative, sustainable long-term planning; a public transport system that people prefer over driving; electric vehicles running off renewable energy; bulk freight transport on renewably powered rail; a health system that works to prevent injury and disease; mental health systems that address the causes of poor mental health; and a police system that works to prevent and reduce crime, alongside a justice system where all people have equal access to justice that aims to keep people out of prison while ensuring that people who do harm are dealt with fairly and victims are supported. Western Australia has the funds, through the iron ore royalties, which we see flooding in so quickly in great amounts, to be used for good purposes. Those royalties could be used to address these issues. We need to look at the problems as we try to address them and consider—just consider—whether there is another way to look at the problem. Is there a solution that does not require the traditional response of bandaid solutions or billion-dollar infrastructure? Can we look globally, think with an open mind and act with care and concern for the planet, people and prosperity?

I finish here with a dream of utopia. Go on, Mark. Leave a great legacy for future generations. Be visionary. Be bold.

Thank you.

[Applause.]

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Martin Aldridge): Before I give the call to Hon Colin Holt, I remind members that this is the member's valedictory speech and, as is the custom of the house with first speeches and valedictory speeches, the member will be heard in silence without interruption or interjection.

HON COLIN HOLT (South West) [2.23 pm]: That is a bit of a bugger, really, because I find that interjections spur me on!

Hon Simon O'Brien: I will defy the chair; don't worry!

Hon COLIN HOLT: Thank you.

I actually have extensive speech notes here, which is quite unusual for me. I think there have been three occasions on which I have written extensive speech notes: one was my inaugural speech, the other on the delivery of *My life, my choice: The report of the Joint Select Committee on End of Life Choices*, and this occasion. I will try my hardest to keep to script, although I have obviously already gone off it, because there are some really important things that I want to say, and they are the thank-yous to those people who have supported me. I am not going to spend a lot

time reflecting on my time in this place because I do not like talking about myself particularly much. That is why I want to concentrate on thanking those people who have supported me throughout my time here. If members have any important parliamentary business to attend to and they want to leave the chamber to attend to those things, I would not be offended one bit.

As Wadsworth Longfellow said, we judge ourselves by what we feel we are capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done. I am sure that plenty of people in this place, in the electorate and within the state of Western Australia will judge me on what I have been able to achieve and not achieve, and on my contribution. But I prefer to reflect on my performance from my viewpoint because I am my strongest critic.

Do I think I have done some good things in this place and within the communities I represent? I would say generally, yes. I am happy to say that. I think I have helped where I have been able to and I have worked hard to deliver for the people of the South West Region. But do I think I could have done more? Am I capable of doing more? I would say, absolutely. I think there is always unfinished business when taking on roles like this. There is unfinished business in every job that we do. It is difficult to leave some of that unfinished business behind for someone else to take up the cudgel and to deliver on. Undoubtedly, although I feel happy about the role I have played and my ability to deliver, I think that there have been some gaps as well; but, again, that is from my viewpoint.

When I first started in this place, a Nationals MP said to me that this job is like a never-ending flock of sheep that need drenching. As you get through one yard, the next bloody mob is right at the entrance of the race waiting to be drenched. You get through that mob and the next mob is there. There is always a problem to solve, there is always an issue to resolve or pursue, and there are always people to help because the issues keep coming and the people keep coming through your door.

Recently, my staff and I did a bit of a farewell tour around the south west. We went to Dwellingup where I used to have a mobile electorate office and met the craft group there. I would always time my visit at the same time as the craft group because the ladies who came to the craft group knew everything that was going on in Dwellingup. We turned up for a cup of tea, cake, scones and the rest of it, as we normally would do, and they reminded me about some of the things that I had helped them with. I had not forgotten them but I had sort of put them on the backburner. In my mind it has always been about solving the immediate problem at the time, which I would work hard to do and then I could say, “You bewdy, the community is happy.” But then the next problem or issue, or the next person to help, would be coming through the door. The same thing happened when I went to the Shire of Harvey. They reminded me about the role I played to deliver their recreation centre. Again, I had not forgotten what I had done, but it was really just about getting something done and moving on to the next issue.

On Tuesday, I went to Albany with the federal Minister for Veterans’ Affairs to help solve an issue for the RSL down there and to work with the city to deliver some outcomes. The issues just keep coming.

I acknowledge that the end of my time here has come and I am quite happy about that. I made that decision, but I strongly believe that I still have something to offer the people of Western Australia. I do not know what that looks like yet, but I am more than willing and ready to move on.

As members know, the role of an MP is unique and strange and it is difficult to understand unless you happen to be in it. There is no training, there are no guidelines, there is no real way of doing it, and, if you are lucky, you may find an MP or ex-MP or mentor to help you and to give you some ideas about how to do the job. But it has always been clear to me that I have to do it my own way. I am more than comfortable with the fact that I have been able to do it my way. I acknowledge that it is certainly not the way of everybody, and some people have said that the way I do things lacks some merit or is a bit crazy, but that is the way I do it and I am more than comfortable with how I have done it.

I am reminded of a poem by Shel Silverstein called *The Perfect High*. I encourage members to google it, because I cannot read it into *Hansard* as it has some expletives. It is really a poem about being happy within yourself and being confident and comfortable in how you act—do not always keep trying to look for the next high, because the next high is found within yourself. I encourage members to look at that. I do not want to be accused of having some sort of midlife crisis Zen yoga thing—although that is kind of me and I am kind of at that point! The point I am trying to make is that I am fairly comfortable in who I am, what I have been able to achieve and the way I have gone about it, but I totally acknowledge it is not for everybody.

I came into this place pretty unexpectedly, perhaps a lot like it has been for the people who will be sworn in the week after next and for some who were sworn in last week. It probably happened a little unexpectedly for them, too, but there is nothing wrong with that. At the time, back in 2008, I was asked to run by the then Leader of the National Party, Hon Brendon Grylls. Wendy Duncan, who was the president of the party, said, “We’ve got no-one. Can you put your name on the south west ticket, because the preferred candidate pulled out?” I had been involved with the party for about three years and I was actually vice president at that time. She said we needed someone who knew a bit about the royalties for region story who could at least stand up and string a few words together—which, of course, I could not!—and I accepted the challenge. I was happy to, because, as I have said, I had been involved in the party since 2005.

I came to the party when I was running a community development company, and our work was almost exclusively with regional communities. I took the decision that I wanted to contribute more to those regional communities in whatever way I could. I did not really have any ambitions of representation or leadership; I just got involved and said I was willing to help where I could, and I became vice president, then president and then a member of Parliament. But I never took that step until one of my business partners, Lee, who is very, very good at poking people in the ribs, suggested it was time for me to step up and take a place at the table that we kept saying other people had to sit at. I was more than happy to do that. I put my name on the ticket. It was on the back of the call by Premier Carpenter for an early election. It could have been called an unexpected result, but perhaps not as unexpected as the result we have seen this time. The people of the South West Region had not elected a National Party MP for eight years. Wendy and Brendon said to me at the time, “Don’t worry, mate, you’re not going to get elected. You can go back to your day job. It’s no good; we just need someone to put their name on the ticket.” We have heard plenty of those stories, and I bet members opposite will have heard plenty of those stories in the last couple of weeks! As it turned out, royalties for regions was a new policy and a new concept for country people. At that time, we had also very much become an independent party. I think on the back of that and preference flows, by which you get elected to this place when you are in a minor party or you never quite get to a quota, I found myself elected. The good people of the South West Region have elected a Nationals MP three elections since—never with the full quota, but always relying on some overflow, generally from our good friends in the Liberal Party. The electorate has embraced the Nationals royalties for regions policy and our independent stance.

I have to say that I am probably a strident anti-coalitionist within the National Party. I strongly believe that when one vote, one value was introduced in the Legislative Assembly, the power of independence helped us rally against that tide and delivered us not the expected result of one or two members in the LA, but 10 members, which grew to 12. It is clear in my mind that our independent stance was a major factor in that result. I remember being president of the party and having to go to Canberra quite a bit to talk to our federal colleagues and management. Of course, if you have studied anything about National Party politics in Australia, you would have found that every state implements a different model. The federal guys have their own as well, which is a coalition. There is the coalition in New South Wales and the coalition in Victoria, but there are no National Party members in the South Australian or Tasmanian Parliaments. Over in the west, we are seen as the rump that tries to break the rules and do things differently. Then there is the Liberal National Party of Queensland.

I used to have to go over to Canberra quite a bit. I often went with Tony Crook, who had been elected as the Nationals member for O’Connor after the 30-odd-year career of Wilson Tuckey. We left the poor bugger with the unenviable task of prosecuting the independent stance of the Western Australian Nationals in the federal sphere. What a great challenge for him! I stood in that federal management office and got yelled at quite a lot of times by federal MPs and state presidents. They said, “You Western Australians are going to be the ruin of every government.” I turned around and said, “I think you guys in Queensland, the conjoined model, are going to be the ruin of the Nationals.” I will stand by that every time. In my mind, Tony Crook is a bit of a political hero, probably unsung, in that we just sent him over there with the support we could give him, but we were never on site to help him prosecute that argument. I think he deserves great accolades from the party for what he did. I have to point out that he was ably supported by the Acting President, Hon Martin Aldridge, who worked with him very closely during that time. Happy birthday, Mr Acting President! Marty and Tony Crook did a sterling job in prosecuting our argument. It is a pretty lonely old job trying to prosecute something by yourself, and I am sure the crossbenchers understand that perfectly. The new incoming Greens member is going to understand that perfectly. When they are here by themselves, it is very difficult.

I have completely gone off script, of course, as I knew I would! I will try to pick some of it up. Since coming to this place, I have been very fortunate to play a number of roles. You cannot take on those roles without the support of your National Party colleagues, especially in this place. The National Party Legislative Council team has been working together very, very well. In my 12 years, we have had members come and go, but I think we have always worked very well together. We are all different people. We all come with different viewpoints, backgrounds and opinions, and that is how it should be. If we want to represent the people we do, we need to be as diverse as them. We have been able to demonstrate that through robust debate and argument about our viewpoints and rigour in our thinking, we could get to an outcome that everyone could work towards. I feel very confident that the members of the National Party who have served in this place, and also more broadly, have done that. I honestly thank them for their support and comradeship over that time, because like I said, you cannot do it by yourself. Every member of a major party would know that, and crossbenchers from minor parties with very few members would know how hard it is to deliver by themselves. I thank all my National Party colleagues, both past and present, for their support over time. They have all had an influence over me in some way.

This may not come as a surprise to anybody, but I am probably the most left in the Nationals WA party room. I have no problem with that at all. After my inaugural speech in here, someone from the Labor Party said to me, “Are you sure you’re sitting on the right side of the house?” I am, because I strongly believe that if a person wants to influence the culture of an organisation or a party and they want it to reflect their values, they had better get involved in it. That is what I have done. I have inserted myself into the Nationals political party and I hope that during

my time, some of my values have been reflected in the culture of that organisation. I have no doubt that once I leave, others will come in and influence it in other ways, but that is okay too because everyone has their time and they contribute as much as they can when it happens.

I would especially like to acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition, Mia Davies, who was elected into this house at the same time as I was. I remember when she was a Legislative Council member and we used to sit up the back and share stories and support each other. I have seen her grow into an extremely hardworking Legislative Assembly member who is completely committed to the people of Western Australia and completely capable of doing a fantastic job as the Leader of the Opposition. I know that her father would have been very proud of her, her family is very proud of her and I am pretty proud of her, too. She is doing some amazing stuff, so keep it up.

I also served two terms on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs. It would seem strange to most people, but I actually requested to go on that committee. It is the committee that is the most democratic and engaging with the people of Western Australia. It is based on the petition system, which allows members to engage with the community and the people whom they represent. It provides a fantastic conduit for those community voices to be heard in Parliament. I will continue to be a strong defender of that committee as long as I possibly can. I encourage the ongoing members to think about the fifty-fourth report of that committee, which has a longwinded title but I will read it out anyway: *The functions, processes and procedures of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs — Are they clear for petitioners and do they reflect its core petitions role?* I encourage members of this house in the next Parliament to look at that report and implement the changes. I notice a motion on the notice paper in Hon Simon O'Brien's name that is a little in conflict with this report, so I look forward to hearing that debate and how it might shake out in terms of what that standing committee will look like into the future. I am really proud of the good work that we have done as a committee. The committee system in this Council is seen as really valuable. That system has probably done some of the most valuable work across this Parliament and in other Parliaments that probably do not value it in the same way.

During my first term in the thirty-eighth Parliament, the committee produced a report titled *Inquiry into the transportation of detained persons: The implementation of the coroner's recommendations in relation to the death of Mr Ward and related matters*. Madam President was actually deputy chair of the committee at that time. It is good to see you here, Madam President. When the committee said that it was going to inquire into how the coroner's recommendations were going to be implemented, it put a spotlight on the whole issue and bang! Things started to change. The recommendations started to be implemented and tangible changes were made to how detained people were transported. That was a great outcome. We did not even have to deliver the report because as soon as we put the spotlight on the issue, something was done about it.

During the fortieth Parliament, that committee produced its fifty-second report titled *Punitive not protective: When the mandatory registration of young people is not based on risk*. That report was only tabled in May 2020 and it was based on a petition with just two signatures; that is how powerful the petition system can be. That report was about how young people were treated within the judicial system and put on a mandatory reporting list, which is completely unfair. Everyone who was called in as a witness to give a statement agreed with the premise that this needed to be looked at. I encourage the government members who helped to pen this report and were on the committee, to take it up with the new government. I would like the minister who represents the Minister for Police in this place, Hon Stephen Dawson, to raise that report with the Minister for Police because everyone is waiting for the change. The police, the judiciary and the community are waiting for the change and we should be making it a priority. Good luck with that. I hope Hon Samantha Rowe and Hon Matthew Swinbourn can take up that matter. I try not to be too political but I just had to shove that in there.

I also need to thank the staff of that committee who had to put up with me quite a bit. I can be annoying. They knew I was annoying and they tried to circumvent me in quite a few ways, but I stuck to my guns. They were very supportive and nice but I was a pain in the proverbial, and they know it. The work of a committee cannot be done without its committee staff working as they do to deliver the outcomes that committee members want to see, so I thank them.

I was a parliamentary secretary for a number of ministers in a number of portfolio areas and I thank those ministers for that opportunity and their support. Of course, I was a minister for almost two years in the Liberal–National alliance government. The thing about a minister's role is that they need to be fair dinkum about it, to work bloody hard and to ask their ministerial office to work very hard alongside them. In fact, a minister probably spends more time with their ministerial staff in the ministerial office than they do with their own family and loved ones. Those staff become your family for that period of time because you build up a heap of trust and respect and you know each other very well. We worked hard for those almost two years.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to those people in my ministerial office. They were all wonderful people and many of them I will always call a friend. In fact, I talked some of them into owning a racehorse with me, and you need to be good friends when you own a racehorse together I can tell you! It is mostly about non-success, really. Karen, the Divine Miss M, Sue and Terri were willing to stay with me at Tuck Waldron's office when I took it over. I modelled myself on Tuck, including my haircut. Tuck had set the standard in that office. Everyone who knows

Tuck Waldron knows that he is a very friendly, gregarious bloke. He set a culture in that office that I was very fortunate to move into. Kay rocked up with her trolley bag as housing adviser, even though I had not yet asked for an adviser. She claimed the desk and she was not leaving. She was of great value. I somehow talked Andrew, Donna and Andrea into giving me a hand for a couple of years; they gave up a lot of their life to pitch in and I thank them. Then of course there was Alex and Ben, the chief of staff, who both really ran the show. They kept the team together and working in the same direction. They are both extraordinary young men and they saved my bacon on quite a lot of occasions, most notably on a number of small bar tours that I they insisted I do as the “minister for liquor”. We will not mention the Varnish bar—I do not have a lot of memories of that bar—but I took my role as the Minister for Racing and Gaming very seriously. When I was the minister, we delivered some really good legislative reform to the Liquor Control Act in this place, with bipartisan support on the supply of alcohol to minors and other things. That had been hanging around for four or five years. Ben and Alex’s professionalism, intelligence and hard work is a great asset and a great credit to them and holds them in good stead for the organisations they work for now, and I need to thank them very much.

I think my approach has always been to be quite collaborative, both here in Parliament and in my electorate. I just think you get more done that way. I know it does not work all the time, but sometimes it does. That is the way I was always going to work. Even when I ask questions without notice to a minister in this place, often it is for me to raise issues to them that they probably need to look into, because I know that when one works with departments—we have mega-departments now—one just cannot know what is going on at every level. I remember when I was a minister on that side of the house and people would ask me questions, I would say, “Jeez, that’s a really good question. I want to know the answer to that. Thanks for raising it with me.” I would go back to my department and say, “What does this mean? Why are they asking me this? What’s going on?” To me, it was a great revelation, because it helped me to understand more about what the department was doing, so I think there is a great value in questions without notice if people want to treat them the right way.

When I was minister, we did a lot of hard work. The sale of the Western Australian TAB was a hot topic at the time. I know it was dear to the heart of Hon Darren West, who turned up at every community meeting I went to and argued against me, only to then flip over when he got back into government. I remember I had to rally against the member for Murray–Wellington who was out there giving out bumper stickers, “No sale for the WA TAB!” Even at the very beginning, the Racing and Wagering Western Australia board and the CEO were completely against the sale and came out and rallied against it. I decided that I needed to be better informed about the issue, because I thought at the time that was my role. It was my responsibility to the industry to ensure that I was the most informed I could be if I was going to advocate for a particular position. I found that a rewarding and difficult situation, because I had to front up to a whole industry that would often yell at me because the old way was delivering for them. My point was that we do not know what the new way could deliver. Let us see what it can do if we test it. We never quite got there, for a variety of reasons, which probably will need another hour to explain.

It is interesting that while I was the Minister for Racing, Gaming and Liquor, regional casinos came up on the agenda. I went and visited a few of them. I went to Alice Springs, and the Alice Springs casino said, “We do it because we want to see international travel and tourism opportunities, and they’re the ones who bring in all the money.” It is not true. They have a thing in casinos called churn, and it is the local people who provide the churn. It is the local people who turn up at three o’clock in the afternoon on a Monday or a Tuesday and provide the churn. They are the ones putting the 10¢ or 20¢ in, and that is what keeps them going. For that reason, I could not back any regional casino. In my opinion, it would be a disaster for regional communities. I understand the tourism argument; it is just that the arguments do not deliver. I was more than happy to get myself across that.

In the housing portfolio, I was the minister who took the \$560 million social housing investment program to cabinet and got that approved. That changed the way we did some of our social housing in those times. However, my time as minister was brief, and that was mainly due to party leadership change. I made the decision at the time that I was going to be the collateral damage to enable a “smoother” leadership transition, because a leadership change in the political world, as we all know here, is never easy and is almost always ugly. I thought it was pretty ugly at the time, so I made the decision that I was the one who needed to step back to make a smoother transition. But do you know what? We all move on. Just like every election, we move on. We take the medicine and we move on with it and try to contribute in whatever ways we can.

I would like to thank the staff of Parliament House and the Legislative Council, and also those in this house who have supported the Parliamentary Nationals WA team and the National Party. This is one of the strangest workplaces you would ever want to visit, but at least I have found that the people here are generally pretty sensible. They are just like you and me. A number of staff have come and gone over time, some who have endured beyond me, came here before me and are still here and will still be here. I hope that I have afforded them the respect they deserve, even though I often call them “chicken” or “brother” or “sister”. There is no offence intended; it is a point of affection. That is the colloquial language that I use. They have never shown any offence, and they have always shown me respect back, and I hope that they think that I have respected them, because there is definitely no disrespect intended in the way that I talk to them. In fact, I have a great many friends in this place. I thank them for their friendship and support. I would like to name some of them, but I know what will happen is I will miss someone out and they

will want to come and egg me later on. No, they would not! But I hope they know who they are, because I have really enjoyed our friendship. I have found interaction with the staff just as rewarding as anything. I really thank them for that. One day, I will get to play that game of golf, and I will get to have half a horse with that guy who wants to do that with me. At some point we will do that. I just want to say thank you to all of them.

I started my office in Albany and it was there for about four years, and then I moved it to Eaton. I have been very lucky to have had a fairly stable staff in my electoral office over that time. If you ever go to Albany, you will still see the signage on my office wall there, even though I left there seven years ago. They move quick down there! They have not been able to rent the office out, so I kind of have free advertising there. I now kind of regret taking off the really big sign; when I left, I thought I might be able to put it up in Eaton, but I have not been able to.

I think one common thread with all the electorate staff I have worked with is that I am not quite sure who was the boss; in fact, I am pretty sure I was not. I am pretty sure most of them were. As all country members know in this job, the people in the office are your frontline, your point of contact in the community, and they carry your reputation as much as anything. I think, in this sense, I have been very, very fortunate. I would like to touch on a few names. Sam started with me as a fresh, enthusiastic 21 or 22-year-old. We both had no idea what this thing was about, but I know one thing: he taught me more than I ever taught him. He was a great help. Roxy is a wonderful, generous spirit who was a great asset to me. She never pulled any punches and was not afraid of telling me, “That’s a pretty dumb idea, that’s not going to work.” If you ever know Roxanne, you will know what I mean. She did not say it that way, I can tell you! Then there is Michelle, who joined my office around 17 months ago. She hit the ground running and is an amazing woman who knows how to get things done. It has been a great start to her electorate office career and I hope it continues for many years to come, because she will be a great asset to any office. Then there was Jules who stuck with me for quite a long time. What can I say? She was a tireless boss who drove me all the way. She is a smart and savvy operator who is totally committed to the community and its political representation. She always went above and beyond the call of duty, not because I asked her to but because she wanted to. She was enrolled in it. We had some fun and we had some tears. We had the odd angry face, which she would remember, and we had some wine. I have to tell members that she is the best at picking wine. In fact, at lunch, she did it again and picked the best wine on the menu. She is quite extraordinary at it. Jules, I am not sure how I can thank you enough for your friendship and support. Relationships are established on shared experiences, and we have had a lot. When I look back on it, we have done a lot. We still have things to do, so thank you!

I want to quickly mention Codee-Lee, who came to my office for some work experience. She is a remarkable young woman, who is starting out on her career and her family career. She really brought a spark to the office with her kindness, her personality and her willingness to have a go, and she taught us a fair few things. I would like to say good luck to Codee-Lee.

Finally, I had better talk about Vicki. Vicki signed up for four years not knowing it would be 12! Our friendship started way back in Carnarvon, 15 years before I was elected. By my reckoning, that is 27 years of working together or knowing each other through, I have to say, some pretty stressful times for us both. She has been on her own journey. She is the most tolerant and understanding person I know, who is just the ideal face of the office. We probably should have had her photo on the office window, not mine. It would have been much better if people had been looking at her picture, not my picture every day. She is everything I am not. She is well organised, meticulous and good at detail and I am none of those things; I freewheel way too much. I reckon I must have driven her mad with my kind of organisation—it is a kind of organisation, but not her kind of organisation—and my idea of detail. Vicki, I could not have done this job without you. In fact, I would never have done it without you; I would have pulled up stumps a long time ago. Thanks for signing up for what has been a great journey with me.

I have always tried to be well grounded and to keep a well-grounded viewpoint while I have been in this position. I think the bubble of Parliament is a very dangerous place. It is my family and friends who have kept me well grounded. There is so much more to life outside this place. We talk for hours in this place—I am doing that now and I apologise—while all the time life and the world go on around us, and I have tried not to be distracted by the bubble that we exist in.

I want to mention the Spinifex crew, the squealers mob, the Jody and Gaz group of friends and the boys from the Harvey Golf Club, who really did not care whether I was an MP, a minister of the Crown or the feather duster I am about to become, because they would rubbish me anyway, as they always have. That is what I like and that is how it should be. They should see me for who I am, not the title I hold.

I would like to give my perspective of my time in this place. This is what has happened in a personal sense over the 12 years I have been here.

My father died a year before I was elected. When I first signed up he said, “What the bloody hell do you want to do that for?” He never lived long enough to see me as a member of Parliament, but I reckon he would have been saying the same thing now. I am pretty sure his opinion would not have changed; he would have said exactly the same thing.

My mother is now almost 94. She has gone from being an active senior, living independently, to now being in full-time care. She has really had enough of this life. She wakes up every morning and asks, “Am I still here?” and when she realises she is, she says, “That’s a bugger!” She really is ready to go.

My daughter, Ebony, was 19 when I was sworn in. She is the most wonderful, remarkable and determined young woman you would want to meet. She bought and ran her own cafe in Harvey when she was just 22. She is now a mother of two ratbag kids, Sienna and Niamh—spelt the Irish way; good luck with that!—and is completely supported by her brilliant husband, Matt. Even though he is from Victoria and is a Collingwood fan, we have still adopted him.

So I came into this place as a father and I leave as a grandfather. Back in 2009, when I was sworn in, our eldest son Zeke was 16. He had left home the year before that to tread his own pathway to an apprenticeship. He has been a fully qualified heavy diesel mechanic for eight years and is now an operator for Woodside, working alongside his partner, Meghan, whom we absolutely adore. He is a son I am very proud of, not just because of his work ethic but also because of the person he is. He cares about people and will always help when needed.

Then we have Denzel and Frazer. The boys were 12 years old when I first got here. We would bring them to dinner dressed in their oversized suits and shiny shoes. They are now 24-year-old men, bigger and stronger than their father, which is not hard—I understand; I am only five feet seven and three-quarters! They are both forging their own pathways in life and making their own decisions in this world. To grow through their teenage years and high school stresses when their father was stretched between south west communities, parliamentary roles and ministerial duties is a testament to the people they are. Floss and I even went away for six weeks during their year 11 exams, leaving them to fend for themselves. The fact that they survived that and did well at school is a real testament and a great credit to them. I am not sure why we did that—probably due to our own selfishness. They have brought into our family Shelby, whom we have truly adopted and love, and Caitlin, who has recently been inducted and we have not scared her off yet! There are a few tests to come. I want to thank all my children for your love and support.

I wanted to spend a little time on that 12-year journey from my family's perspective because I think it is a perfect demonstration of why we do this job. It is not about what we get from the role, but what we can achieve for people and the community whom we serve: the ageing parent in need of increased medical support; the young businesswoman willing to take a risk and work hard; the young man wanting to get a trade and contribute to our industries; and young adults working through their education and looking for opportunities that we, in this place, can help create. That is what I reflect on and those are the things that motivated me the most to get out of bed every day to try to achieve, obviously not just for my family but for all those in the south west and the rest of the state. That is what has driven me and that is why I wanted to be connected to the community rather than just rely on the bubble.

I have been very fortunate to be able make the decision to leave this place on my own terms, I believe. I do so with the knowledge that I have worked very hard and I have done some good things that I am proud of, but it is time for someone else to have a crack at this political arena. I leave also knowing that I am leaving with plenty of energy, capacity and passion to keep contributing to the WA community and its people in other ways. What that looks like I do not know yet. I am a great believer also in what you do in your past prepares you for the next stage of life or the next work you do, and I must say I feel well prepared for that next path.

Finally, I must make my last words today about my wife of 30 years, Floss! Firstly, I will apologise in advance: I am going to be under your feet and annoying you for some time while we both adjust to this new phase in life—sorry about that. I know you are already regretting it. But can I say that no gift will ever be enough, no words will ever fully convey and no actions will ever express how much I love you and appreciate you. Thank you for your unwavering support, especially over the last 12 years in this role, a role I was 100 per cent committed to but only because you were 100 per cent with me all the way!

And with that, Madam President, I thank the house for listening and I wish you all well.

[Applause.]

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Hon Colin Holt; you will be missed.

HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan) [3.09 pm]: In my first address to the house in 1997, I quoted this article of belief —

Under the blessing of Divine Providence and given goodwill, mutual tolerance and understanding, an energy and individual sense of purpose, there is no task that we cannot perform and no difficulty that we cannot overcome.

Later, when officiating at the opening of a major infrastructure project in 2009, I introduced my remarks in this way —

When I was very young and travelling in the family car through the South West I was intrigued to learn that my father had been a member of the team that had built the substantial wooden bridge we were just then crossing. I was enormously proud of having a dad who had made such an impressive and enduring structure.

There are a lot of Western Australians of all ages who can be mighty proud of their family connection to this project. 3 000 workers were involved in creating this magnificent addition to our road network—a total of some 3.8 million man hours, to create more than 140 km of carriageway with six interchanges, 10 intersections, 19 bridges. They moved 12 million tonnes of sand, a million tonnes of crushed rock base and 27 000 cubic metres of concrete. The bridge just here is two separate structures each 272 metres long.

A prodigious physical and technical achievement, completed months ahead of schedule. Most importantly of all, they did those 3.8 million hours using heavy equipment and hazardous materials without a lost-time injury.

To those 3 000 men and women I say congratulations on a job well done; this will be an enduring symbol of your achievement and we are all very proud of you.

Thank you for your efforts.

The latest Kwinana Freeway extension and the new Forrest Highway is an investment in Western Australia's future.

Of itself, this is the largest single road project in our history. It has transcended several State and Federal Governments and I thank the many members, both State and Federal, for the roles they have played in its concept, funding and construction.

Occasions such as those demonstrate that my optimism is justified, and that is the message I want to leave with members for posterity.

I have to approach this speech with a theme, because I cannot possibly refer to everything that has happened over the journey—to the hundreds of local government members and officers I have worked with, the many inquiries I have been part of and all the remarkable incidents and events. But I do want to recognise that it is not all about me; it is about the many people who have made it possible for me to achieve whatever has been achieved and who demonstrated by their commitment and support that, by acting together and with the right motivation, we can do some amazing things.

I reflected also in 1997 on the debt I owed to my parents, Everard “Bill” O’Brien and my long-suffering but eternally loving mother, Dulcie O’Brien nee Shooter. He was the member for Murchison from 1952 to 1959, but, more importantly, a fundamentally decent family man and she was a much-respected nurse and carer. I restate now my thanks to them for everything.

People come to Parliament with various aims. Some want to legalise this or ban that. I was motivated to enter Parliament because I wanted to be involved in public affairs, whatever the issues of the day, and pursue worthwhile outcomes, and I have been able to achieve more than I might have hoped.

I joined the Liberal Party in August 1985 at the ripe old age of 25. I ran for a tough seat at the 1989 election. I did very well, never admitting that I could not win, coming second. Informals came third! I became president of the Fremantle division, applied myself to growing the party, learnt that one man's branch stacking is another man's membership drive, and did all the other stuff you do when you are young, ambitious and keen in this game.

At this point, I want to acknowledge some of the many people who have supported me all this time, some for over 30 years, and never let me down, including Stephen Knight and Hayden Shenton; together with apologies to my oldest friend, Brad Hankinson, who is in theatre as we speak, for prevailing upon him to be the inaugural president of the Bibra Lake branch, a role we can safely say he needed like a hole in the head; friends and family members such as Marilyn and Clive Noall, who stood at a polling booth, she vivacious and no doubt vote attracting and him big and ugly and also vote attracting for another reason; my brother, Bernard O’Brien, who dressed up in his Liberal rosette finery, with his hat on, hoping that his Labor schoolmates from Mt Magnet would not happen by on that day, no doubt; and sundry O’Briens, Shooters, Mehmetts and so many others.

In 1993, I was number three on the South Metro ticket. We got 45 per cent of the primary vote; the Greens got five per cent. We got two seats and the Greens got one. No complaints. That is the system. In a strangle-worthy example of stating the bleeding obvious, a kindly assistant returning officer gave me the nose-tapping advice: the secret is to get higher up the ticket. Then in 1996, at a surprise early election, I gained the number one spot on the ticket and was duly elected. That same electoral official came up, beaming, shook me by the hand in congratulations and said, “See, I told you that would do it.”

Now, there have been many elections since and, to chop and change around a bit, in the thirty-ninth Parliament, I was chair of a standing committee. A new Labor member arrived for our first meeting. For the purpose of the exercise, I will just refer to her as Samantha. My colleague noticed that she looked a bit unsure and uncertain as she entered the room and I said to him, “Don’t worry; she’ll be all right. The Labor Party probably teach them the Liberals eat their young.” Indeed, she was all right and the five of us had a great four years, with some very worthwhile inquiries, including a two-year inquiry into hydraulic fracturing, which produced a landmark report that passed muster with the Environmental Protection Authority inquiry a few years later. We travelled to exotic locations like the Canning Basin, the far north west of South Australia and Dongara! Hopefully, our friend concluded that we were not too bad after all and do not eat our young!

There is a TV show called *Australian Survivor* that members might have seen; it can be a bit addictive if you start watching it. It has the motto “Outwit, outplay, outlast”. Members who are used to the political scene will understand. I have sometimes felt like I am just in a very long running series of *Survivor*, because when preselection came around in 2000 or thereabouts, some presumed to recognise my efforts by giving me the flick. My wife, Joy, came

to the preselection meeting, which was an all-day affair, to show support and wait outside for the results. During the meet-and-greet stage, Joy's greeting to another candidate's partner of, "Hi, how are you?" was met with, "We're very well, but for you it'll be bye-bye." Charming! I am sure Joy had a great day sweating on our future. I am sure that after I held on by a slim margin, she enjoyed farewelling that same couple with a cheery "Bye-bye"!

I came in here on the following Tuesday and Norman asked me how I went at preselection and I told him that it was a near-run thing. He said, "Oh, yes; the first re-endorsement is a real danger point. Sorry; I should've warned you about that." The next preselection, or visit to tribal council as I have come to know them, was really interesting, with the late Doug Shave throwing his hat in the ring. Doug was a serious player, and this matter attracted considerable attention. A number of the delegates were friends of us both, which prospectively made things very difficult for them. In the end I scored the number one spot with a solid majority and he got number two by one vote. The bottom line is that he was the best counter of numbers I have ever encountered, but paradoxically he could also be ruthlessly pragmatic: "Outplay, outwit, outlast", as they say on *Survivor*.

Let me tell you a bit more about the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party is a collection of like-minded people working in concert to get members elected, and to get them elected in sufficient numbers to form governments. Together we have shared great highs and morale-sapping lows. The show always goes on, though, and there will be more of these in the future. As Hon W.N. Stretch used to put it, all governments fall. Bill also used to observe that there are some people who are indispensable; as proof, we have cemeteries full of them! But I digress.

One thing I do know is that I would not have arrived here or stayed here without the Liberal Party, its thousands of volunteers, its handful of staff, its many members, office bearers, state presidents, former state presidents and state directors. I refer to the Val Kloppers, the Jo Stantons, the Collette Wiltshires, the Sandra Browns and the Jim Maddens. To the Liberal Party and all its supporters over the years, I say a sincere and humble thank you.

This appreciation extends even to those among you who taught me the hard way that sometimes the only person you can take at their word in politics is the one who looks you in the eye and says, "I'm not voting for you." Yes, even to those who try to take me down by various means, I extend a backhanded thank you as well. Those experiences helped toughen me up for a tough game, and in due course avoid being eaten up and spat out.

When I arrived in this place, on day one, I was elected to the estimates committee. When we knocked off I said, "What happens tomorrow?" They said, "Oh, it's estimates week." So on the second day I found myself in estimates hearings, even sharing sessions, which is a great introduction to the structure and functions of state government, the personalities, the major agencies and their budgets and all that. There were maiden speeches. Some members over the years have declared at the outset that the Legislative Council should be done away with. Those same members, in my experience—and I have seen a fair few of them—declare in their final speech that they have changed their view, with the benefit of experience. I commend those members for their frankness. That should be the answer to any armchair expert who persists in the view that a unicameral system is a superior option for legislative integrity.

I feel sorry for people who come in here thinking they know it all, because if you think you know everything, you are ultimately destined to learn nothing. In my political career it has been a great privilege and delight to explore so many parts of our wider community. People want to show their member of Parliament their project, their school, their business or their factory. They open up about their aspirations and share their concerns. I certainly worked hard to get to know my region and its people, and I think all members are busy. They work long hours and get roped in to serve on management committees and so on.

I soon learnt that most people go to their Assembly member first for assistance, then come to an MLC—sort of as a member of last resort, perhaps because they were not happy with the response they have received. The funny thing is, I always found that about 90 per cent of the problems that came to me—usually they were matters late in the piece, such as final notices or court summonses for unpaid fines—could be fixed with a phone call or an article of advice. That was surprising.

I also found satisfaction in sorting things out that others had given up on. Again, they tended to be difficult or protracted problems, but so much the better if I could make it happen through my own efforts. There is a place down on Almondbury Road in Applecross, between the high school and Garden City. They all told me, "It can't be done. We've all tried. Don't waste your time." That crosswalk has been there for 20 years now.

The sound walls you see completed by the freeway off-ramps at South Lake—when they were the new freeway off-ramps, they were not completed, because of noise contours and stuff like that. I got on to Rob Harvey, who I knew through the Melville safer roads committee as a colleague. He was then acting as head of Main Roads. I said, "Rob, I don't care about your noise contour measuring. My housewives in South Lake are getting your dirt blown onto their washing." Rob is a decent man and a married man. Go down the freeway now and you will see those completed sound walls.

I was once told by a working group that I was on, "Look, we know it's a tragedy this student was killed, but the thing is we do not put 40-kilometres-an-hour signs up on 70-kilometres-an-hour roads, we don't put fences up on the median, and we do not paint the speed limit on the road." If you go to Murdoch Drive now you can see all of those, there and elsewhere.

I had a lot to do with Kidlink in Kwinana. For years it did not have the wherewithal to move into the surplus Homeswest house that my predecessor had arranged for it years before, so my office had to step in and arrange the refurbishment through a number of private contractors that were involved in the Kwinana refurbishment at the time through council utilities providers, and I remember David Lloyd in my office being particularly effective; he is no longer with us now.

I was made an honorary member of the Totally and Partially Disabled Veterans of WA organisation, because I worked with the organisation to obtain a peaceful bushland site for permanent respite accommodation. I also managed to get it an ex-Public Transport Authority bus, which it put to good use. We then secured funding to build dwellings that have now long been occupied by veterans in need of such accommodation.

Yes, there are many things we can all achieve as private members assisting community groups and individuals, but we do not do it without owing a great deal to electorate office staff who, as our colleague Hon Colin Holt just observed, actually run the place. My current team of Danielle Rudolph, Laurissa Forbes, Natalie Strother and Myleigh Barclay have been with me, between them, probably for about 30 years, and they are more than wonderful. The end of my Parliament term is also a challenge for them as they contemplate the next chapter of their respective lives. I also want to acknowledge Kelly Terry, Renee Dunstan, Chelsea Kierath, Nichol Kabugua and every other casual, relief, volunteer or work experience helper who has contributed to the life of my office.

Hon Norman Moore often told us that you really need to be a minister to get things done. Well, that is easier said than done, as we all know. I did an apprenticeship for many years, establishing good working relationships in a variety of sectors, doing the hard yards of travelling the state, going out to sit on the oil drums, as Howard Croxton used to say, and getting up at 5.00 am to ring around the media outlets to see if they would let you have a grab on whatever the issue of the day was.

I came into the disabilities portfolio with little experience. I was in the Developmental Disability Council's "Politician Adoption Scheme", having been "adopted" by Toni Catlow and her parents, Chris and Helga, but I was really starting from scratch. Over several years I got to know the sector. Haydn Lowe provided great support, as did John Knowles and a host of others. Colin Barnett and I launched a major project signalling disabilities as a major priority. After the 2005 election, quite a few people in the sector privately expressed their disappointment that I had not got in to deliver the outcomes that we had identified, which is some comfort; not much.

I had a number of shadow portfolios that kept changing with the merry-go-round of opposition leaders from 2005 to 2008. The amount of money I wasted on redundant business cards! Predominant amongst these was transport. I launched a policy about the future of Fremantle port container operations. Labor attacked me with enthusiasm; the Libs loved it. Now the Labor government is all for moving container operations to Cockburn Sound, while the Liberals are deadset against it! It surprises me that no-one in all this has thought to come and ask me what the thought processes were behind my proposal in 2006, when I first brought the idea into a public debate. I would tell them for nothing, and it might help. Still, perhaps some people reckon they know it all.

In late September 2008, we found ourselves in government after a remarkable string of occurrences. I was sworn in as Minister for Transport and, to my surprise and delight, Minister for Disability Services. About a week later I started suffering severe pains in my back for about three days continuously. To cut to the chase, I had been having a series of heart attacks. I owe my life to the expert care of cardiologist Dr Xiao-Fang Xu. After six days in the ICU at St John of God Murdoch I was able to go home on a very strict regime of rest and recovery, which does not go well with initial ministerial duties.

At a subsequent consultation I had with Dr Xu, as she was whacking on the blood pressure cuff, she said, "Oh by the way, my mum said to thank you for bringing in free off-peak travel for seniors." Xiao-Fang and her husband, Bruce, are now valued friends. My wife, also, was amazing in providing the care and diet that I required. I really did not know how ill I had been. It was a difficult time because there was a great deal to be done. I was initially unable to walk to the end of the street, let alone assume ministerial responsibilities and it took a long time eventually to clear the backlog.

In all the things that I have mentioned, there is one constant companion and one full capacity partner—my wife of 41 years, Joy. She has organised polling booths—indeed, whole election campaigns—in difficult seats. Of course, we upper house members are condemned to look after all the difficult seats—we have plenty now—sometimes, dare I say it, with difficult candidates who come and go. She organised fundraisers of all sorts—quiz nights, dinners and fashion parades. She even had Brendon Nelson walk her down the catwalk at one of them when he was federal leader. She has crocheted many blankets and donated to many worthy causes or run many raffles to raise money. She has been a branch president and suffered through more AGMs and conferences than any human being should have to suffer in a lifetime. With Mrs Lee Moore, she helped organise functions for members' spouses not only for social purposes, but as a form of pastoral care for members of the wider team who might otherwise feel isolated by the harsh realities of political life. In due course, Joy took over the role Lee had established, assisted by the very capable Margaret Buswell. More importantly to me, she has been the one person on whom I could rely in all circumstances—the one to help me be strong when I might be flagging and to endure when I might have thrown in the towel. There have been occasions that she has provided the inspiration for me to dig deep when extra effort was needed to prevail.

Many of you have noted my wide and eclectic collection of ties, and some of you have scoffed—go on and admit it—when I told you that my wife is the one who selects my tie every day. Over the years, many people have noticed us as a couple at a function and said, “Gee, you guys go well together, and doesn’t Joy always look immaculate.” There is no accident here. It is just that Joy is the only person who could possibly enable me to be simultaneously a minister of the Crown and a matching handbag!

Joy and I are looking forward to new challenges and new chapters. At this point, Hon Donna Faragher, I hope you have those tissues handy. Together with our daughter, Nadika, and extended family—grandchildren Rita, Hayley, Tania, Jacob and Jazzmine, and seven great-grandchildren—we have got a whole new purpose. It is great to have someone calling me “dad”. I have so much to be grateful for and I am quite happy to declare it to the whole world. If it were not for Joy, my life would be crushingly incomplete. Thank you.

I come back, however, to the ministerial office. One of my first priorities was to re-establish the Department of Transport. That involved separating the transport areas of the then Department of Planning and Infrastructure and uniting them with Main Roads WA and the Public Transport Authority. I will never forget the look of gratitude on the face of Eric Lumsden as he was relieved of all the transport stuff—licensing, school buses, taxis, regional air routes, ramps, jetties and all the rest—so that he could concentrate on his beloved planning. The new Department of Transport works well, as does its various constituent parts. Visiting Carnarvon at the time of the new department coming into effect, I was surprised to be warmly greeted by the DoT officers at their waterfront office. They were already wearing black jerseys with new Department of Transport logo on the breast. It turned out that they were not issued; they were so pleased to be within the Department of Transport that they had gone off and arranged for them to be made themselves.

The new head of transport whom we appointed was Reece Waldock, who I imagine would be known to most of you. He delighted in playing Humphrey Appleby to my Jim Hacker. I embarked on a great learning curve—me doing the learning and him doing the curving. There are one or two other people in this chamber he has worked with and they will recognise this. When I would come up with a bright idea and say, “Why don’t we do this?”, he would say, “Well, minister, you could do that, but what would happen”, and then he would recite a litany of potential disasters about how the world would end and everyone would hate it and I would be attacked left, right and centre. He would then conclude with the phrase, “But, minister, it’s your call!” I would then go, “Right, next item on the agenda.” If I looked particularly disappointed, he would say, “Don’t worry, minister. It’s my job to make you look good,” a challenge worthy of his talents I suppose.

When I left that portfolio at the end of 2010 I was provided a typed list of achievements. I have it here. It runs to about four pages, which I look back on with great affection. But some of it is what I would call “business as usual” matters such as funding rounds for regional boating facilities and regional airport development. But most of it, though, I am pleased to say is for standalone projects, and ones where I either had to fight to get the funding or fight to get blooming Buswell in Treasury, when he was there, from taking it away.

One of the major decisions I had to take to cabinet was for the deepening of Fremantle harbour and associated works that fundamentally would rebuild the north wharf area through land reclamation that would greatly increase—I would say at least double—the port’s land estate. Some might see that as a variance with my previously mentioned views on the future of container operations, but I can assure members that it was not without consideration that the cost of \$360 million could be ameliorated. The fact is that land will be able to be used for container operations for many decades if land-side transport links can be established in some sort of suitable form indefinitely. Conversely, they will greatly increase the value of the location in funding the development of other facilities elsewhere, if that is ultimately the chosen course.

Another notable success I want to touch on is the construction of the Utah Point multi-user facility at Port Hedland, which had stalled when I arrived. There is no blaming anybody; it was a partnership that had not been able to achieve what it needed to achieve. I was able to resurrect it, get the required government input particularly by way of funding—about \$80 million I think it was—and we were able to complete the building and open that facility. I am proud of both those projects. I cannot think of too many transport ministers who have built substantial new port facilities such as at Fremantle and at —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Check out Geraldton.

Hon SIMON O’BRIEN: I said “too many”.

The Mandurah entrance road project was brought forward by a year and, more importantly, expanded to be a major four-lane road complete with rail tunnels to meet future needs. We initiated and completed the second stage of the Lancelin–Cervantes road, providing 55 kilometres of new sealed coast road from Ocean Farms Estate up to the Pinnacles drive. That was widely welcomed by tourists and locals alike, who had been calling for it for years. It took a great deal of pressure of the Brand Highway by separating much of the tourist traffic, which still remains problematic, from the heavy traffic, which had been in conflict for many years. I apologise to my brother, Mitch O’Brien, who for many years has had the biggest panelbeaters in the midwest at Moora, for any reduction in business that might come his way—tongue in cheek of course—because of the conflict being taken off the Brand Highway!

Many of you would probably know Mitch, but he looked at me conspiratorially and said, “Simon, you have got very clever engineers at Main Roads, but they cannot engineer out the kangaroos!” The business is still running very well indeed!

I thought one of our biggest successes was the contribution of my department, particularly the Public Transport Authority, to getting the federal funding necessary to commence the Perth City Link project, which was failing until it was identified, basically by me, at a late-night meeting at Perth Airport with Colin Barnett and then Prime Minister Rudd, that what was actually wanted was a public transport project not a planning project. So we rejigged it, sinking the bus stations, the railway and all of that. The next thing you know I was out there announcing it with Minister Albanese just down the road here. That was a major coup at the time.

There were many other roads and bridges constructed at the time, much of them made possible by a more favourable tendering environment that fortuitously arrived, so there was luck as well. We introduced air-conditioning to school buses in the regions. I have already mentioned the free off-peak travel to seniors and people with disability. I also initiated the Butler rail extension. I took it through cabinet and the Economic and Expenditure Reform Committee. I took the enabling legislation through Parliament, awarded contracts and started construction, but did not get to finish it, because that is what happens when you move on. There are always projects underway.

It is not very often a new ferry comes into service in South Perth. They are good, because they are the parts of the public transport system that almost pay their own way. It was a happy occasion when Maxine Pental, Joy, and the similarly irrepressible Shelley Taylor-Smith got together to launch a new South Perth ferry, *MV Philip Pental*, at about the anniversary of his passing. Do you remember Reece Waldock, whom I mentioned a minute ago? “My job, minister, is to make you look good.” He showed me the two big bottles of bubbly with ribbons around them and all of that so that I was able to tell the ladies officiating, “You tip the cheap one over the boat to launch it and for the official toasts use the good one.” Thanks very much, Reece!

In late 2010, there was a ministerial shuffle of cabinet, and having been the first Liberal transport minister since Cyril Rushton, I now became the first Liberal finance minister since Max Evans. We set up a new portfolio and another department I created within the portfolio of finance, commerce and small business. With the Department of Finance, formally commenced in July 2011, we had the redoubtable Anne Nolan in as director general, with some other very good people on board. The portfolio was responsible for a whole range of industry boards and so on, as well as the principal Office of State Revenue, Building Management and Works and the Office of Shared Services. I promptly took a cabinet proposal to wind up the Office of Shared Services, which in my view was a failing experiment that had cost hundreds of millions of dollars and was about to cost hundreds of millions more, and just about everyone was fed up with it. That move was well received by just about everyone in the public sector and beyond. It was lurching on and needed someone to bite the bullet and say enough, so we did. The first thing I did after the decision was to go to Cannington and speak with all the staff to reassure them that they would have options to return to their parent agencies, to be employed elsewhere or to receive a redundancy. It was their choice. Ultimately, I think most were satisfied with the arrangement. It was not easy, as you can imagine, and I think I earned my pay that week. Curiously, no-one has ever asked me how shared services, which are pretty good in theory, could work. If anyone wanted to ask on either side, I just might tell them! Just saying!

I was pleased to work with another building agency, and Building Management and Works was a great success story, and still is, I think. The works program we had inherited in late 2008 was beset by cost overruns. I do not want to make this a political thing, but there were all sorts of difficulties that were systemically embedded, as well as an unfortunate economic environment at the time. Government projects worth over \$10 million—there were 58 of them at the time I think—were on average 92 per cent over budget. I did not bring on the works reform package, but I did consolidate it with BMW with a thing they called strategic asset management to make sure that these projects were actually funded and planned right in the first place, so we did not have people wanting to put car parks under the Perth Arena, then take them out and then put them back again, or put extra floors on hospitals when they had almost finished construction, and all of those things that are very poor practice indeed. I used to take a spreadsheet of all of our larger projects to cabinet every now and then. There would be about 60 or so on them at any one time. The spreadsheet listed all the projects in progress, maybe 60, as I say, at any point, with a green, amber or red light by them to show whether they were at risk of cost or time overruns. I was very glad to see that the predominant colour was green, green, green. That is a tribute in particular to the people in that agency. In commerce there was a great deal to be done, and working with the team headed by Brian Bradley and Anne Driscoll, who many of you would know, was a great pleasure indeed. We did all sorts of things that were outstanding. I think we were charged with a sense of purpose. I do not know why so many things had been languishing, but most of this legislation here, which I took through this place, is from commerce. We did a great deal in sorting out problems in commercial and retail tenancy. One of these large volumes here is a rewritten Workers’ and Compensation Injury Management Act. I remember Greg Joyce, the chairman and, Michelle Reynolds, the then CEO, of WorkCover were so happy with that outcome—it went through the Parliament, and I acknowledge the then opposition for its assistance—that they arrived at my office at the next meeting with one of these enormous boxes of Whitman’s samplers. I had never seen one like it; it was about an arm’s length long. For months afterwards my ministerial staff were saying, “Hey, does WorkCover need any more legislation going?”

We did all sorts of things, and I will not try to go through them all, but there were some things that are worth noting. We brought in Sunday and public holiday trading and the world did not collapse, but most people found that after Saturday, Sunday was now the most popular day of shopping. I even brought in a workers' compensation system for the first time for jockeys. They had their national president and everyone out here on the front steps with me. I was really hoping we would have some pictures, because it is not often I am in a gathering and I am the tallest person in the picture! The national president of the Australian Jockeys Association said, "Minister, we really appreciate what you've done; that is what counts. If this had been a bad story about cheating at the races or something, the media would have been here in their droves, but this is good news, so we're happy, let's leave it at that", and we did.

I appointed the state's first Small Business Commissioner along with his alternative dispute resolution service, which does not sound that sexy at first glance but it provided a free or low-cost alternative to resolve disputes without people having to get blooming lawyers, courts and what have you involved and it taking forever. It has been a great success and it continues to this day under the commissionership of David Eaton, whom I appointed. I also want to acknowledge Jacky Finlayson with whom I worked closely at the Small Business Development Corporation.

It is in disabilities that I want to conclude my discussion of ministerial jobs. We were able to greatly increase resources in a range of areas, something carried forward by Hon Donna Faragher as a subsequent minister as well. I will mention just one area: the Alternatives to Employment Program. Members may think "Oh, bewdy!" Well, the Alternatives to Employment Program is so important. Previously, families with a child with very high-care needs would receive perhaps two hours per week of respite assistance after that child had left school, while full-time schooling in effect provided about 40 weeks a year of respite. We increased that entitlement from about two hours a week on average to four days a week. I want to give a shout-out to the people in disabilities. About one in six of us has a disability. Look at the numbers in this room. About one in six of those needs some assistance in their daily life. Of course, another smaller cohort requires a very high level of care and assistance indeed. But of all of the care that people need that is provided through the various mechanisms, a lot of it by government, 73 per cent is provided by family and friends. If it were not for that spirit of caring that exists across all divides in our community, our system would collapse and a lot of people would be in a parlous state.

I have told this story before but I want to tell it again. Several years later, I was visiting a senior campus and over morning tea in the staff room I was approached by a lady who said, "I hope you don't mind. I just wanted to say thank you very much for the program you brought in when you were Minister for Disability Services. We have a grown child with high-care needs and we know many other families in the same boat. Thanks to you, our family, unlike others that we have seen in the past, has stayed together. I have been able to keep working, which has saved my sanity and brought in some money. Unlike others, we haven't had to commit our child to care or suffer divorce or even suicide in the family. We are doing okay and I just wanted you to know how much it is appreciated." Madam President and members, I think that is why we are in this game, to achieve those sorts of outcomes.

I would like to thank my ministerial staff over the years. My chief of staff all along was Eacham Curry. He was that big, shaven-haired bruiser who apparently the member for Armadale at the time took exception to as an adviser in estimates, I believe—happy memories. I also thank Brett Barton, Tony Papafilis, Keetha Wilkinson, Steve Eadie, Nichole Kabugua, Dean Roberts, Alan O'Brien, Ursula Checksfield, Lom Piggott, Susan McCall, Ginny Jankowski, Yvette Roper, Hanh Tran, Mae Sta Maria, Phil Payne, Peter Groves, James Campbell-Everden, Charles Hayne, Ashleigh Clarke, Stella—Stella knows I could never pronounce her name but it will be in *Hansard* as Grgurinovic—Jessica Humphrey and Rebecca Hawkins. Rebecca Hawkins was one of my personal assistants who used to look after my diary and, jeez, she was good. She was the apple of Mrs Minister's eye—they use to call her Mrs Minister—because she would look after the diary so well and make sure arrangements were made. But I will never forget—again, like the Australian Jockeys Association—Bec, bless her, was about yay high. After all those years of doing it all for myself in opposition, if someone needed an appointment, not a ministerial appointment, but for an electorate issue, I would say, "Why don't you come up on Friday at whatever time?" And I would just put it in the computer calendar thing. The next thing you know, Rebecca would be there looking up at me, lips pursed, hands on hips like this, and go, "Now, minister, you know you're not meant to do that, don't you?" Then in due course she would go on and say, "I've spoken to you about this before, haven't I!" Me, my old chief of staff—the big shaven-haired bruiser—and anyone else who was nearby would all be shuffling our feet and I am going, "Yeah, sorry, Bec. I won't do it again." Bless her!

Madam President, I am hoping to conclude my remarks shortly so that I can earn the gratitude of members, by decision, for you to leave the chair early for afternoon tea. With that possible point of ingratiating said, I will just note that I have been a member for 24 years. I guess that amounts to around 500 sitting weeks. That is a lot of standing committees and committee inquiries. I know I have attended over 200 cabinet meetings, each of which was a substantial exercise. Here is where I do the old codger bit! I never had a mobile phone or an email until I came into Parliament. There were 34 members then—36 now. It surprises me how few names that we have all had between us. When I arrived in 1997, we had the three Murrays. The Liberal Hon Murray Nixon, who I acknowledge in your gallery, Madam President, and the Nationals WA Murrays—Criddle and Montgomery. Recently, of course, we have three Colins—two of them are Nats. Indeed, there are some in my crowd who think that possibly, on occasion,

one might even be a bit much! We used to have a couple of Toms—Tom Helm, who used to make me and everybody else laugh, and Tom Stephens, who I quite liked even though he was mad as a cut snake! God bless you, Tom, if you are reading this. But it gets worse, Madam President. Now, we have two Alanna-hs! By any measure, we are exceedingly blessed!

Bill Stretch, who I mentioned before, was one of the great characters who I met in this place as a colleague and I just want to recall briefly the benefits that I received over the years through the example, experience and friendship of members like the Hons George Cash, Norman Moore—these are my mentors—Peter Foss, the inimitable Derrick Tomlinson, the lovely Muriel Patterson, Bruce Donaldson, Robyn McSweeney, with whom I shared an office—that ministerial office and then the on-the-way-out office—for eight years, and many others. I also acknowledge the late Kim Chance, the Hons Nick Griffiths, John Cowdell, Ljiljana Ravlich, Murray Criddle and Ken Travers as members who featured on so many occasions on my parliamentary experience.

There have been 107 members of the Legislative Council during my time here—or 109 if we count a couple who have been and gone twice. Therefore, I hope members will understand that I cannot mention them all, but I do say to each of them: thank you for sharing and adding to my life experience as a member of the Parliament of Western Australia. To all members I would say, we have had many shared experiences. I will miss you and, of course, I wish you well in every phase of your lives.

To my Liberal colleagues, I am not going to go round and give an individual greeting on the floor of the house. Judge not lest ye be judged. But to those of you who will be going on, if you continue to perform as well as you have during all the time I have been here, the future of the Liberal Party and the Parliament is in good hands. I wish you all the best.

To others, I will single out only our new Leader of the Opposition, and congratulate him on acceding to that role at the tender age of —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Fifty-three.

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: — fifty-three. All members need to know for now is that he is a short-tempered veterinary surgeon, so some of you blokes over there, do not be too smart alecky. That is my advice; take it or leave it.

I have some general reflections, Madam President, as I bow out. One thing that the media and reporters particularly want to see is people they can write about who have, in their terms, set the world alight. I have always preferred to see a minister's role as stopping bushfires in the first place, anticipating problems and making sure that either they do not occur or that measures are in place to deal with them. I think that is the measure by which all ministers should ultimately be judged. I also point out, and some do not agree with me on this, but I reckon—I firmly believe, in fact—that it is a minister's duty to be a buffer between the bureaucracy and the people they represent and not an apologist.

In politics, we hear so much about getting tough on this or cracking down on that. When I reflect on my time in Parliament and in government, I am very pleased that my contribution has not been centred around that. It has been about making it easier for people to go about their lives and their businesses. I am very satisfied to be able to look back on my time here in that spirit.

Before I go, I want to thank some long-suffering people in the Parliament. The “Clerks party” and chamber staff. There have been many over the years. To all of them, together with the committee office staff, and, indeed, all the staff of the wider Parliament, particularly in the dining room, and the paymaster—I have one more transaction with him—I say thank you for your service, but, more pointedly, thank you for helping me to go about my role in a professional and tolerant environment.

To you, Madam President, it has been a privilege to know and work with you these 20 years, now. We have had an interesting time over the last four years, working ever closer together. All sorts of issues of the day come along, but I will say this: I know that there are unique challenges in the role of President. Sometimes, you cannot freely acquaint members at large or your party room with facts that are related to your job in a way that others may pretend they can. I do not know if you are able to share or if those members at large know about some of the stresses and strains that you have been exposed to and how you have dealt with them, but I will tell members that the Deputy President does know. In that capacity, I say to you that you have performed and continue to perform your role with distinction.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN: May I go on to say that it has been my very long experience in public life that those who are prepared to stand up to the duties of their office and perform them when others might presume to suggest that their duty lies elsewhere, those who resist that sort of pressure and show integrity and strength thereby, are the people who grow in stature, respect and understanding. You, madam, deserve all of those accolades. It is a great privilege to serve with you and I wish you well in the future.

To all members, I recognise that it is a hard game we are in. As Norman used to say, “You don't go through it without acquiring some scars along the way, and if you haven't got any scars, then you probably weren't a player.” Having spoken about all the good stuff, as one does in farewell speeches, I will acknowledge the tough road that

you all have ahead. It can be tough when you have all sorts of pressures from your party room or the media or constituents—whatever the pressures are—and people presume to tell you what your duty and responsibility is, but you know in your heart of hearts that it lays somewhere else and in what you are going to do about it. I wish you all the best in being able to deal with those challenges that you will confront in the future.

In offering my house—this house; it is not mine anymore—my most genuine best wishes for the future, to each and every one of you, I conclude where I began —

Under the blessing of Divine Providence and given goodwill, mutual tolerance and understanding, an energy and individual sense of purpose, there is no task that we cannot perform and no difficulty that we cannot overcome.

[Applause.]

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 292.]

The PRESIDENT: Members, I think the clocks may be wrong this afternoon, and so noting the time, in accordance with the request of Hon Simon O'Brien, I think I might leave the chair until the ringing of the bells.

Sitting suspended from 4.07 to 4.30 pm

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CORONAVIRUS — SMALL BUSINESS — ELECTRICITY TARIFF CREDIT

49. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the state government's \$500 electricity offsets put in place in response to the last COVID lockdown in February.

- (1) How many businesses are eligible to receive the \$500 electricity credit?
- (2) How many businesses have received the \$500 electricity credit since the February lockdown?
- (3) What is the expected total cost of the credit, assuming it is paid to all eligible businesses?
- (4) What is the total value of the credits paid so far?
- (5) Of this, what is the total value paid to metropolitan-based businesses?
- (6) Of this total, what is the total value paid to regional-based businesses?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The following information has been provided by the Minister for Energy.

- (1) The whole information cannot be provided in the time frame given. However, I can say that 82 518 Synergy and Horizon Power small businesses and charities are eligible to receive the credit.
An additional number of businesses and charities not directly billed by Synergy or Horizon Power, such as those in embedded networks, will be able to apply to receive payment through the Department of Finance. Those applications will open in mid-June 2021.
- (2) A total of 82 518 eligible Synergy and Horizon Power customers received the \$500 small business and charity offset payment.
- (3) This information is not able to be provided in the time frame.
- (4) The total value of the credits paid so far is \$41 259 000.
- (5)–(6) It is not possible to provide this exact information in the time provided; however, figures can be provided for the south west interconnected grid and the remainder of the state. The SWIS extends from the Perth metropolitan area to Kalbarri in the north, Bremer Bay in the south and Kalgoorlie in the east, with an offshoot to the east of Merredin. The amount of \$38 469 000 has been paid to eligible small businesses and charities in the SWIS and \$2 790 000 has been paid to eligible small businesses and charities outside the SWIS.

BGC — KWINANA PORT

50. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Ports:

I refer to the comments of the Minister for Regional Development on Tuesday night in the Legislative Council in which she indicated that the then Labor Gallop and Carpenter governments' objection to the proposal of BGC to build a new privately funded port at Kwinana was based on the proposed employment contracts and Labor's generic opposition to individual workplace agreements.

- (1) Are there any outstanding court proceedings or negotiations for compensation in relation to the BGC proposed —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I am struggling to hear the member on his feet ask the question. At least let him ask the question.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I ask —

- (1) Are there any outstanding court proceedings or negotiations for compensation in relation to the BGC proposed port?
- (2) If yes to (1), what are those proceedings or negotiations and what is the cost risk to the state?
- (3) Can the minister confirm or refute that the Labor Party's opposition to the port was indeed Labor's position on industrial relations?
- (4) What was the proposed total cost of the BGC plan in 2001 and what is the proposed total cost of the government's currently planned new port at Kwinana?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) The proposed port did not progress sufficiently far through the planning and approvals process for a final investment decision.
- (4) The McGowan government is committed to delivering Westport and has commenced the next stage of the project, which will further define design and total cost.

BIOSECURITY AND AGRICULTURE MANAGEMENT ACT — REVIEW

51. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to the long-gestating review into the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007.

- (1) Did the review of this act commence in early 2020, as stated in the minister's response to question without notice 227?
- (2) What is the status of the review and when will it be completed?
- (3) Have any industry groups been consulted to date; and, if yes, which groups were consulted?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

- (1)–(3) It is true that we have had a few things happen since I answered question without notice 227—for example, the COVID pandemic. We have also had a real increase in the number of biosecurity incidents. It is true that because we needed to put back the completion of the animal welfare review and we had a lot of resources diverted to biosecurity incidents and COVID management, I put back the commencement of the review into the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act. However, it has effectively started. It started in September 2020 with the commissioning of an analysis of comparable legislation in other jurisdictions and consultation with those other jurisdictions. At the moment, I am considering potential panel members to oversee the review. That panel will engage with all the stakeholders much in the same way that the panel oversaw the review and did the consultation under the Animal Welfare Act review. The panel will advise me of the time lines for completion of a review, but it will have to be a pretty complete review. Obviously, one of the big issues will be the regional biosecurity groups, so that will be a fair body of work. However, my aim is to have that review completed in the third quarter of 2022.

LOTTERYWEST GRANTS — VICTORY LIFE CENTRE

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

I refer to the response to question without notice 10 asked on Tuesday, 4 May 2021.

- (1) What were the “other reasons” that the Lotterywest grant application by Margaret Court Community Outreach was rejected?
- (2) Why were the “other reasons” not included in the response to question without notice 1158 asked on Thursday, 22 October 2020?
- (3) With reference to part (4) of the question, how was Margaret Court Community Outreach notified that its grant application containing all of the reasons referred to in (2) had been rejected?
- (4) Will the minister table all correspondence referred to in (3); and, if not, why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) I refer the member to part (3) of the answer to question without notice 10 of 4 May 2021.
- (2) The board determined not to progress the application to full assessment.
- (3) I refer to the answer to part (2). The reason for not progressing to full assessment was outlined to representatives of Margaret Court Community Outreach at a meeting on 2 October 2020 and in writing on 7 October 2020.
- (4) I table the correspondence referred to.

[See paper 165.]

ROAD SAFETY — BUSSELL HIGHWAY

53. Hon COLIN HOLT to the minister representing the Minister for Road Safety:

I refer to the road safety issues at the entries and exits at the Capel and Peppermint Grove Beach town sites along Bussell Highway.

- (1) Is the minister aware of these road safety issues and the community's concerns?
- (2) Is the minister aware of a road safety campaign by the Capel Road Safety Action Group to address concerns regarding Bussell Highway and the Capel–Peppermint Grove intersection?
- (3) Will the minister meet Capel representatives on site to discuss the issues; and, if yes, when can they expect this to occur?
- (4) Will the minister raise these issues urgently with the Minister for Transport?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

On behalf of the Minister for Mental Health, I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Road Safety.

- (1)–(4) The Road Safety Commission has met with the Country Women's Association, which is a member organisation of the Capel Road Safety Action Group, including about Bussell Highway and the Capel–Peppermint Grove intersection. Main Roads WA is currently undertaking roadworks in the area and will review the intersection further, including the speed, when roadworks are complete. The Minister for Road Safety is happy to meet with local representatives on this matter. The McGowan government, through the Minister for Transport, has negotiated the regional road safety program, which will see lifesaving treatments, including audible edge lines and the sealing of road shoulders, rolled out across more than 7 000 kilometres of regional roads, with works totalling \$455 million to be delivered by July next year as part of this program.

AGRICULTURE — PACIFIC LABOUR SCHEME AND SEASONAL WORKER PROGRAMME

54. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the Minister for Regional Development:

I am aware that chronic labour shortages on farms throughout Western Australia still exist. I also refer to the government's significant funding efforts towards facilitating agricultural training through various schemes such as Work and Wander Out Yonder, subsidised accommodation, free skillset offerings at Muresk, TAFE transport operator training, and funding the multicultural services Australia training to get migrants working in the regions. How many additional workers have been retained in the regions through these schemes, and does the government believe that these have been successful in their approach?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. However, I just want him to appreciate that this is an issue all around Australia. The fundamental problem is that we have a global pandemic on and we cannot bring people in. We have all understood that that will be a challenge. The number of backpackers across Australia has gone down from 137 000 to some 36 000. We can see that that has been a real decline. We cannot make new people, but we can do everything we can to encourage Western Australians to go out and do that work, and to some extent we have been successful. We are not saying that this solves the whole problem. We cannot do the Pol Pot thing and go down with a gun and make people go out of the city and pick fruit. It is not going to happen.

Our incentive scheme has managed to attract quite a few people. To date, we have made payments for 1 152 applicants. That is a considerable amount. That has resulted in about \$1.5 million going out. I am very pleased to see that. One of the reasons that our scheme has been successful is that it has not been very bureaucratic. People do not need to have lots of receipts; they just have to show that they have been employed. The commonwealth government scheme has not really worked, but it has recently announced changes to make that more workable, and that should help.

I am proud of what we have achieved with the Seasonal Worker Programme and the Pacific Labour Scheme. So far, in some very challenging environments, 786 seasonal workers have come into Western Australia, and they are doing a fantastic job in all parts of the state, from Albany all the way up to Kununurra and over to Broome. The next flight has been approved for May, there are two for June, and one for July. At the end of July, that will mean we will have 1 400 workers, principally from Vanuatu and Tonga. I do not have the precise numbers on the projects that are being run by Muresk and TAFE, and I will get those for the member, but they have certainly had a great take-up of both the harvest operations program using the simulator at Muresk and the heavy vehicle driving operations skills program. We have not been able to work out what the multicultural program is, but I can say that our goldfields migrant scheme has really been successful. We have 69 people from basically African and Middle Eastern backgrounds who are now working in Kalgoorlie.

OUT-OF-HOME CARE

55. Hon ALISON XAMON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) As of 6 May 2021, how many children are currently in out-of-home care?
- (2) How many of the children in part (1) are First Nations children?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1) On 30 April 2021, there were 5 349 children in the care of the chief executive officer of the Department of Communities.
- (2) There are 3 053.

To maintain consistency of statistics across both the housing and child protection portfolios, Department of Communities statistics are provided at the end of each month. This ensures that the statistics are always easily comparable from year to year and month to month.

METROPOLITAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — WAIT TIMES

56. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to metropolitan child development services. Will the minister advise of the current median wait times for children in the primary years of schooling to access the following services —

- (a) speech pathology;
- (b) occupational therapy; and
- (c) physiotherapy?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

On behalf of the Minister for Mental Health, I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

I have been advised that further time is required to answer this question. The information will be provided to the member by 11 May 2021.

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE — INVESTIGATION

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

I refer to the investigation being undertaken by the Ombudsman into delays by the Office of the Public Advocate in notifying families about the death of a loved one.

- (1) When did this investigation commence?
- (2) When is this investigation expected to be completed by?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer on behalf of the Attorney General.

- (1)–(2) The Attorney General referred the matter to the Ombudsman on 2 March 2021. The timing of the investigation is a matter for the Ombudsman.

ELECTORAL REFORM — ADVISORY COMMITTEE

58. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Electoral Affairs:

I refer to the answer to question without notice 24 asked by me in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, 4 May 2021 and the minister's inability to answer the most basic questions, so I will ask it again.

- (1) What is the estimated cost of the committee?
- (2) What is the estimated cost of remunerating each committee member?

- (3) Given the likely impact of the minister's review on regional representation, which was not on the government's agenda immediately prior to the election, how many of the committee members currently reside in regional Western Australia?
- (4) Was the establishment of the committee supported by a decision of cabinet?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) Total costs are yet to be finalised and will be reported to the Parliament in the usual manner when determined.
- (2) Committee members will be remunerated under the Public Sector Commission guidelines. When the full cost is known, it will be reported to Parliament in the usual manner.
- (3) The member's question pre-empts the outcome of the ministerial expert committee report and is therefore hypothetical.
- (4) The decisions of cabinet are cabinet-in-confidence.

WA LABOR — INAUGURAL SPEECHES

59. Hon ROBIN SCOTT to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to this morning's edition of the "Rumour File" on 6PR, during which a caller stated that the Premier's staff had contacted all incoming Labor MPs demanding copies of their inaugural speeches so that the Premier could vet them for any undesirable content. Can the Premier confirm whether there is any truth to this rumour?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question because he has nothing else to do.

The Premier does not respond to rumours.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN 2014–2023

60. Hon DIANE EVERS to the minister representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the expiration of the *Forest management plan 2014–23: Conservation Commission of Western Australia*.

- (1) When will the government commence work on the new plan?
- (2) How will the community and stakeholders actively participate in a process for the development of a new forest management plan?
- (3) Will the government run a deliberative process with the community to determine the priorities and expectations for the long-term conservation of the forest in which the outcomes of the deliberations guide the creation of the forest management plan?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of Hon Stephen Dawson.

- (1) The Conservation and Parks Commission, through the agency of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, has commenced work on preparation of the next forest management plan.
- (2) A stakeholder engagement and consultation plan is being developed to facilitate active stakeholder and community engagement in the preparation of a new forest management plan.
- (3) Consultation and engagement will facilitate a comprehensive consideration of views of traditional owners, conservation, science and industry groups to inform policy settings for the next forest management plan.
- (4) Not applicable.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE — FORTESCUE METALS GROUP

61. Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the article in *The Guardian* of 25 February 2021, "Fortescue Metals should be prosecuted over Pilbara breach" and the statement by the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, "I have been advised by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage that an alleged breach of the Aboriginal Heritage Act is currently under official investigation."

- (1) Has the official investigation commenced and on what date did it commence?
- (2) Has it been concluded and on what date?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?
- (4) If yes to (2), what were the findings and will the minister table them?

- (5) If no to (4), why not?
- (6) Will FMG be prosecuted for its breach of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972?
- (7) If no to (6), why not?

The PRESIDENT: Nothing like a lengthy question, member. Leader of the House.

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

Thanks, Madam President, but I have a very short answer.

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

- (1) Yes. The investigation commenced on 5 February 2021.
- (2)–(7) The investigation is ongoing. It remains a high priority and the department is currently seeking legal advice.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — AISHWARYA ASWATH

62. Hon MICHAEL MISCHIN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the Attorney General's answers to questions without notice 38 and 39 of 5 May 2021 asked in the Legislative Assembly by the member for Vasse regarding the Attorney General's power under section 22 of the Coroner's Act 1996 to direct that a coroner's inquest be held into the death of Aishwarya Aswath.

- (1) Why can the Attorney General not direct the coroner to hold an inquest "at this stage"?
- (2) At what stage will the Attorney General be able to direct the coroner to hold an inquest?
- (3) At what point will it be too late for the Attorney General to direct an inquest?
- (4) Will the Attorney General direct the coroner to hold an inquest; and, if so, when will he do so?
- (5) If the Attorney General will not direct the coroner to hold an inquest, why will he not do so?
- (6) Is it the Attorney General's intention to leave it to Aishwarya's bereaved parents to apply to the Supreme Court for a coroner's inquest to be held, if they can afford the cost, time and uncertainty of doing so?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(6) The Attorney General is seeking advice and will answer the questions when Parliament reconvenes next week.

LOTTERYWEST GRANTS — VICTORY LIFE CENTRE

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

I refer to document 71 contained in Lotterywest freedom of information document reference 20/1862, "4.2 Victory Life Community Services Grant Request" where it states, according to my notes —

Not supported on this agenda is a request from Victory Life Community Services towards a refrigerated vehicle to collect and transport donated goods. The request is not recommended due to challenges to Lotterywest policy and concerns raised by referees.

- (1) Did any referees for the Margaret Court Community Outreach grant object to the proposal; and, if yes, how many?
- (2) If yes to (1), why were copies of these references not included in the FOI documents, along with the numerous references in support of the grant which were included?
- (3) Was the board of Lotterywest informed that references opposed to the grant proposal existed; and, if yes, were they provided with copies of these references?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) Yes, three.
- (2) A decision was made to exempt pursuant to clause 8(2) of schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information Act.
- (3) Yes, and no.

BLACK COCKATOOS — SWAN COASTAL PLAIN

64. Hon ALISON XAMON to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to the expected starvation of black cockatoos on the Swan coastal plain due to the harvest of the remaining pines in the Gngangara pine plantation.

- (1) Will the government commit to refusing to harvest these pines until such time as a sufficient amount of native cockatoo feed has been planted and reached maturity to support the cockatoo population currently relying on the Gngangara pines?

(2) If not, why not?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The following information has been provided by the Minister for Forestry.

- (1) Harvesting operations are managed under the provisions of the *Forest management plan 2014–2023* and various subsidiary documents produced in accordance with the Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. This includes an extensive approval process through the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to ensure all harvesting is carried out in accordance with applicable environmental standards. Harvesting of pines occurs within a broader context of meeting obligations under state agreement acts, water catchment management and conservation of threatened species. Details on the management activities in place for Carnaby's black cockatoos on the Swan coastal plain should be referred to the Minister for Environment.
- (2) Not applicable.

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING ACT — PRACTITIONER TRAINING

65. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the voluntary assisted dying scheme due to commence in Western Australia from 1 July 2021.

- (1) Has pre-registration for voluntary assisted dying scheme training opened; and, if so, on what date did it open?
- (2) How many health practitioners have registered to participate in training to date?
- (3) Of those identified in (2), how many are regional practitioners?
- (4) Who will be conducting the training, and what will be the cost and duration of the training required?
- (5) What remedy has been found to ensure equity in access in regional WA, in light of prohibitions on using a carriage service to communicate in relation to the scheme?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the Minister for Mental Health.

- (1) No.
- (2)–(3) Not applicable.
- (4) The Western Australia voluntary assisted dying approved training has been developed by academic staff from the Australian Centre for Health Law Research at Queensland University of Technology. The WA VAD approved training includes multiple online modules with interactive learning exercises. It should take approximately six hours to complete and can be completed over multiple sittings. There is no cost to practitioners.
- (5) The regional access support scheme has been developed to enable or support access for a person in regional WA—for example, in situations where there is no suitable practitioner based locally and telehealth is not appropriate or allowable. This support may include: travel and, if required, accommodation, for the person accessing the voluntary assisted dying process, including an escort where required; practitioner travel to a person accessing voluntary assisted dying; and/or interpreter travel where there is no local interpreter available and telehealth or telephone interpretation cannot be effectively undertaken, or is not appropriate to be undertaken, and is not able to be accessed under another provider scheme.

ELECTORAL REFORM

66. Hon ROBIN SCOTT to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the Premier's repeated comments, both before and after the election, that electoral reform to impact regional voter representation was "not on the agenda".

- (1) Has the Premier's position since changed, and is electoral reform now on the agenda?
- (2) Will the government commit to not impacting on regional voters' representation in this parliamentary term?
- (3) What is the government's response to the concerns of the community of regional WA who are fearful that their representation in future Parliaments might be impacted by electoral reform?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(3) Anomalous outcomes at the March 2021 state election demonstrated that the current system is not operating in the best interests of democracy. A ministerial expert committee on electoral reform, led by former Governor Malcolm McCusker, has been established to review ways to bring electoral equality to Western Australia. Interested community members and stakeholders are able to provide submissions to the ministerial expert committee.

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — WAIT TIMES

67. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Health:

I assume that I will get the same answer to this question that I got to a previous question.

Hon Sue Ellery: You will.

Hon DONNA FARAGHER: I will ask it anyway.

I refer to child development services provided by the WA Country Health Service. Will the minister advise the current median wait times for children in the primary years of schooling to access speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy in each of the following health regions: Kimberley, Pilbara, the midwest, the goldfields, the wheatbelt, the south west and the great southern?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

On behalf of the minister representing the Minister for Health, I have been advised that further time is required to answer the question. The information will be provided to the member by 11 May, 2021.

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES — REGULATIONS

68. Hon ROBIN CHAPPLE to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to Aboriginal remote communities.

- (1) Are Aboriginal communities permitted to pass local regulations through the *Government Gazette* to curb alcohol abuse or other antisocial behaviour?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) If yes to (1), by what mechanism?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Through by-laws under the Aboriginal Communities Act 1979.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Motion

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Colin de Grussa**.

NUMBAT HABITATS — PRESCRIBED BURNING PROGRAM

Statement

HON DIANE EVERS (South West) [5.02 pm]: Even though I had a bit of time to speak today, I want to give a little more attention to forests. This will probably be the last time I will speak about forests, and I find them to be very, very valuable. That leads me to a question that Hon Tjorn Sibma asked earlier this week about the Perup fire and the rationale for why a habitat for dibblers was found to be marked out with tapes to be avoided yet a fire was ignited by incendiaries from the sky, causing a fierce, intense fire. The tapes where the dibblers lived were burnt, the logs were burnt—everything was burnt. The answer to the question was that the soil was dryer than the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions thought. It said that it had gone there and raked some of the material away from the logs and wet the area with a hose before dropping fire from the sky to light up the forest, but that the preventive measures did not work. The DBCA said that the conditions were a bit dryer than it thought: “Oops. We’ll learn from that and try not to do it again.” That happened after I raised the point last year that one of these so-called controlled burns had burnt a thousand-year-old peat swamp. I acknowledge that people might not think that a swamp would burn, but after the droughts that we have had and the decrease in rainfall, that is what is happening. The swamps are getting dryer; therefore, when there is fire near them, they burn, and when peat burns, it keeps burning. It smoulders underground and could still be smouldering. It is just dreadful. That is why I have to speak one more time. When we do our prescribed burns, we need to look at the more recent science.

Hon Lynn MacLaren asked a question on 13 May 2015 about the 200-hectare prescribed burn target. The details given in an answer by Hon Helen Morton stated that the figure of 200 000 hectares was developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by departmental fire managers. We are still burning forests based on a rationale from more than

40 or 50 years ago. The forests are no longer like the forests that existed then and there is not as much forest as there was in 1970. It just does not make sense. It begs the question: why are we refusing to consider current science and research when we are determining how and where to burn?

The question that we asked about the Perup fire was not about just the numbats. That fire affected an extensive range of flora and fauna, some of which may not have been counted yet. But the fire has gone through and we have lost that forest. The frequency of prescribed burning sometimes makes it impossible for some species of flora to survive because we burn the forests at a faster rate than it takes for plants to grow and produce new seed. We could not plan an extinction any better than that. We just keep killing off seed before it gets a chance to grow another plant to grow more seed. I am really asking the government to please review the prescribed burn plans during this term. Do not base it on emotion and fear, but base it on science. It has to be done, because the severity of these burns is ridiculous. It is too late to say that we are going to learn from our mistakes. We have to stop making mistakes around our fires.

It is interesting that the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Forest Products Commission have started talking about Indigenous burning as though they know what they are talking about. From what I hear, the Noongar people down there who are watching what is happening and seeing the land destroyed are saying that that is not what they meant. They did not say to go out and burn every year everywhere. There is more to it than that. To just take that on and say, “Yes, we know what we are doing. We have talked to a few Indigenous elders and what we are doing is fine” is not it. They have to look at how it is done, what has been done since then and what is happening now when we burn. We have to make it better.

They also say that they are doing mosaic burning. If we wanted to look at the size and scale of some of the burns, we would have to be up in a satellite to see the mosaic nature across the landscape. There are large patches. They are not just a checkerboard image or a quilting image of patchwork-type stuff. That is not it. It is not a mosaic in the way that the word is usually used. It is very large scale burning and that does not allow the fauna in those areas a chance to escape. As I said, this is planned extinction—nothing else. Unless we change how we do it, we are going to lose a lot of biodiversity. We already know biodiversity is being threatened by so many different things, yet we are doing an even worse job.

We have been told that fire exclusion zones have been set up. Last year I asked a number of questions and was told that fire exclusion zones have been changed every couple of years. The government decides to exclude different areas every couple of years and that is where it burns now. That is not what a fire exclusion zone is. A fire exclusion zone is a place where we do not put fire so that we can look at that area and see how it changes over five, 10 or 20 years and actually see the impact of not burning. We have a big landscape. We can do it. We do not have to worry that it might become a wildfire and get too close to towns because we have areas that are not located close to towns that can be managed to make sure that the fire does not get in there.

A lot of people working in the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions understand this, but it does not seem to me and to others that they are being listened to. The people on the ground are much more sensitive to what is happening, so why can we not hear their voice? Earlier I was talking about speaking up for people who do not have a voice. Some of those people without a voice are the ones who are working in our own departments. I have met with those people a number of times and they often say, “Don’t tell anybody that I have been talking to you about this, but here is some information you might want to know.” It should not be that way. Why can we not talk to people who work in the department? Why can they not come forward and speak to their managers or even people several up the hierarchy and say, “This is what is going on.” That is knowledge; it is information. If we work with integrity, honesty and respect, that is what we could expect. That is what I would like to see so that we can find the best practice for south-west Western Australia. We need the best practice for jarrah forests, karri forests, mixed forests and woodlands, because the practice of burning in each of those will be different and it will be based on current information and Indigenous information and everything in between. We can do it better.

I also want to say a few other words about forest bees, as I mentioned in my valedictory speech. I do not know how many people here know that we export live bees—I think they are kept very cold—to Canada, and possibly other places, because bees around the world are being lost. We could keep raising more and more. It is easy to do. We have 3 800 registered beekeepers, and I know there are many more who are not registered. It is another industry, but we need the forests and the flowers on those trees to feed the bees. It is not that difficult to understand, yet we are still stuck in the old ways of thinking that trees are something we cut down, even when we do not have a market for them and even when we have to chip them up or sell them as firewood because that is the best use for them. It just does not make sense at all.

Ecotourism is another thing we can do within our forests. People are getting down there. We are seeing so many city dwellers getting out into the country, especially if we have a shutdown. They flock down there. To show them the value of our natural landscape, our natural heritage, is fantastic. They bring back that knowledge and they tell people here how wonderful it is. Hopefully, they learn that we need to protect it, then.

As we said earlier, we are cutting down native timber way too fast. We do not need to cut down any of it. We can develop our plantations now so that they will support us into the future. We keep cutting down our native forests.

Those big old trees—they are so big that it would take five or six people to reach their arms around them—are still being cut because they are not in an old-growth forest; they are just very old trees. We still cut them down, chip them up and send them overseas so that we can buy toilet paper. Wonderful! What an absolute waste. What we are doing down there is criminal. We continue to allow it to happen and try to justify it because of the timber industry, which has fewer than 500 people working in it. Many of those workers are truck drivers whom we need to drive trucks for other purposes around the state. These truck drivers could be doing something else. They could be driving our trains and then we would not need so many of them. They could be carrying out those small haul transport jobs so that they would not have to be away for long periods of time. We could have fewer trucks on our roads so that we would not have as many accidents and we would not have all the road widening that we are seeing.

In my last few minutes, I wish to say that if anybody is interested in fire and would like to find out more and would love a trip down to Margaret River, a fire and biodiversity forum will be held on 4 June. I advise everyone who has any interest in fire, forests or our future to show up.

CYCLONE SEROJA AND WOOROLOO BUSHFIRES

Statement

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.13 pm]: I want to make a brief contribution as I was unable to earlier in the day due to some urgent parliamentary business. I wish to express my thanks, respect and gratitude to all our volunteers and emergency services personnel who put themselves in the line of danger during the preparation, recovery and response to the Wooroloo bushfires and cyclone Seroja. I want to express my disappointment that we were all unable to give lengthier and worthwhile contributions about those wonderful people who give their time. Every time there is an emergency, they stand up for us, they protect us and they help us. I was most disappointed by the events that occurred earlier this week and the decision of the house, which I will not reflect on because that would be in breach of the standing orders.

The PRESIDENT: Just as well, member.

Hon DARREN WEST: Today we had 80 minutes to talk about these wonderful people and the fantastic contributions they make to our communities, rather than a lengthier debate. I think that was a very disrespectful act by the members of the opposition. A division was called, the names were recorded and my name is proudly listed as voting against the changes that were made earlier this week.

I want our volunteers to understand how appreciated they are by the government. I want them to understand how much we respect their work and how much we are here for them. I want them to keep working with us, because we need them and they are wonderful. I am disappointed at the reflection that was made for them this week, and I have made that point to their organisations. I want them to keep up the great work. To members of the opposition, I want you to keep up the great work too, because I think the people of Western Australia would have much preferred our version of events this week.

Statement

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [5.15 pm]: Just in response, can I make this observation that if 80 minutes of debate this afternoon was inadequate for anybody to recognise it, the couple of minutes now presented by Hon Darren West will obviously be completely meaningless.

House adjourned at 5.15 pm
