

Ms Eleni Evangel; Mr Rob Johnson; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Terry Redman;  
Dr Graham Jacobs; Mr David Templeman; Mr Brendon Grylls

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## **PREMIER'S STATEMENT**

### *Consideration*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MS E. EVANGEL (Perth)** [2.45 pm]: I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement, in which he outlined the extraordinary investments by this Liberal–National government during the past few years of its term. It is pleasing that a lot of these investments have been made in the capital city electorate of Perth that I represent.

This has been a very eventful summer period, with many events featuring on our stage. One of those events is the Fringe World Festival, which, over the past five years, has grown to extraordinary heights. As part of this year's Fringe Festival, more than 700 events were held across 150 venues in the City of Perth and in the metropolitan area, with around 3 000 artists and performers. That is one way in which this government is showing the people of Western Australia that it values culture and the arts and is investing in providing opportunities for our local artists and performers to showcase their talents.

The figures for the Fringe Festival are quite interesting. It has had quite extraordinary growth. In 2015, 680 000 people attended Fringe Festival events. I do not have the final figures for this year's Fringe Festival because there are still a few more days to go—the final figures will be coming out shortly—but, as of one week ago, over 800 000 Western Australians had taken up the opportunity to enjoy the free and paid Fringe Festival events across the city and across the regions. That is a massive increase in attendance.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Girrawheen, I have got you on three calls. Thank you. I think you should listen intently to things that are going on at the Fringe.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** That is not to be laughed at. The Fringe Festival is making a fantastic contribution to this state.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mirrabooka, I call you to order for the second time.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** The Western Australian Fringe World Festival is now recognised as the third largest Fringe Festival in the world. That is a great achievement in the five years that it has been in operation. As I have said, it provides many opportunities for local artists. I was proud to find out the other day that my godson had performed at Elizabeth Quay as part of the festival. That was very good to hear. The Fringe Festival gives young people an opportunity that they otherwise might not have, and that is what it is all about for the state government—it is about investing in opportunities for our youth.

The state government supports the Fringe Festival through Lotterywest. That is a very wise investment. For every dollar that this state invests in the Fringe Festival, it gets \$51.73 in return. According to the Fringe Festival impact report, the 2105 Fringe Festival generated \$709.9 million. That is a massive gross economic benefit for our state. I think that a return of \$51.73 for every dollar spent is a very good investment for our money.

I would like to thank the event organisers. The festival director is Ms Amber Hasler. She has been in Western Australia for just a couple of years and has put on some great shows. She well deserves a thankyou. I would also like to make reference to Marcus Canning, who has been involved in the Fringe Festival for a few years now, as you would be aware, Mr Speaker, and who is a great backup support to Amber, although Amber is the face of the festival these days, and she has been fabulous.

The multicultural communities have been alive and well and very active in the Perth electorate. We all know that it is Chinese New Year at the moment, and a lot of events are taking place. On 14 February, we had the massive Chinese New Year Fair. As in other years, the fair was extremely successful, with tens of thousands of people battling the heat and flocking to Northbridge. It was a fabulous show with many performances. It was nice to welcome quite a few of my colleagues to the electorate. The member for Carine, the Treasurer and the member for Balcatta popped down to say hello, as did Hon Liz Behjat from the other place, who came to show her support for our Chinese community. Coincidentally, she has just popped into the chamber. There was a very strong show of support from the Liberal Party for our Chinese community. They hosted a fantastic cocktail reception, followed by a magnificent concert that featured acts from the different communities. It shows that the Chinese community contributes in many ways; it is very inclusive and has good relations, with all Western Australians performing and participating. It is the Year of the Monkey and I wish my Chinese community and everyone all the very best for this Year of the Monkey. It was nice to see at the concert one of

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my former colleagues, Councillor Lily Chen, representing the Lord Mayor, which she did quite beautifully in her lovely, traditional costume. It was good to see that support from this side of the house.

I attended also the Vietnamese festival. Our Vietnamese community is very prominent and does great things in the Perth electorate. It was very nice to participate in its festival, which was held in Wanneroo. I enjoy being invited to participate in the children's concert that it holds every year. It is lovely to see the kids getting involved in the little talent quest. My colleague from Wanneroo also attended and we co-judged it.

**Mr P.T. Miles** interjected.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** Yes; it was nice. I would like to thank the president of the Vietnamese community, Anh Nguyen, and his committee. They do a great job and are very passionate about their work and we on this side of the house certainly value greatly our multicultural community's contributions. I think one of Western Australia's greatest assets is our cultural diversity.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** I will not throw you out, but you have made your point; so carry on, member for Perth.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** I was saying that one of our greatest assets in the state is our multiculturally diverse community and we value all that they bring to the fabric of Western Australian life. Dr Anh is a great man, who puts in a lot of work. I also acknowledge the good work of the brand-new president of the Chung Wah Association, Mr Shaoping Ding, who was elected last year. He has hit the ground running and delivered a fabulous festival as though he had been doing it for quite a few years. We farewelled our loyal friend Sammy Yap just over a year ago, and Mr Shaoping Ding and his fantastic committee have been doing a great job. They deserve a massive pat on the back for a fabulous Chung Wah festival.

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** Well done.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** This morning, with you, Mr Speaker, I had a cup of tea with Dr Huang Qinguo, the Chinese Consulate General of the People's Republic of China. It is very sad to hear that he will be leaving us to take up other opportunities. I want to acknowledge him in this place and thank him for all the work he did within the Chinese community. What was wonderful was that he engaged with the Western Australian community; he was a lovely and pleasant man and I think we will all miss him. We wish him well in his future post, and congratulations to them all.

I would like to move on to education. It is pleasing to say that the schools in the Perth electorate have got off to a flying start in this 2016 school year. I am very proud of this Liberal-National government's investment in education throughout the term. An increase of \$2 billion has been spent, a 69 per cent increase alongside a 15 per cent increase in the student population. Let it not be said in any place that this Liberal-National government is not committed to the absolute best, and excellence in education. I certainly see that in my electorate as I like to spend a lot of time with my schools. It gives me tremendous pleasure and satisfaction to see and hear that the schools are doing really well. I had the pleasure of attending the North Perth Primary School P&C annual general meeting the other night. I must admit that I am always in awe of the extraordinary commitment and talent of the parents within our school bodies. This is an example of what our minister Hon Peter Collier's independent public school system has achieved. I am very pleased that my schools have taken it up and now North Perth Primary School is the latest to adopt it. IP schools provide a fantastic forum for parents to become involved and take leadership of the direction in which their school goes—it is absolutely brilliant. I was really pleased to attend the North Primary School P&C meeting. I would like to acknowledge Miss Andrea King, the school P&C chairperson. She is familiar to our police minister, who has visited the school on a number of occasions. Andrea championed the campaign to appoint a crosswalk man on View Street. That is an example of the kind of work our parents put in. It was a big effort and it was nice for the Deputy Premier, our police and road safety minister, to attend the View Street crossing and see for herself the school community needs. The minister saw that it was a rat run, and where the road links Charles and Fitzgerald Streets there is a bit of a hill. The community lobbied quite hard and, thankfully, the crosswalk man now attends there and our children can safely cross View Street and get to school safely. That is one example of the kind of commitment and good work that the parents at North Perth Primary School put in; the results are there on show.

Another example of the school community's good work that I would like to congratulate it on is its raising of \$40 000 through crowd fundraising for the dome equipment. It was very pleasing that the state government also came up with a \$20 000 grant. Our school can have a wonderful shaded shelter covering the dome play equipment. It is a good combination of the state government working with the school community to achieve the best results possible for the students of Western Australia, particularly in the electorate that I represent.

I acknowledge the new school principals in my electorate. Mr Stephen Ivey is the brand-new principal at Highgate Primary School. He has settled in as though he has been there for quite a while and is doing a great job.

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He has come in at a very exciting time in Highgate's history. The government has committed \$5.5 million for the expansion of Highgate Primary School. It will include two new two-storey builds to provide extra classrooms, toilets and an early childhood centre. Congratulations to Mr Ivey; you have come in at a very exciting time and I have full faith in your ability to work with the community to guide the progress of this new build.

I also welcome Ms Nicole Hanna into the Perth electorate, who has come across from Kalgoorlie. She has taken up the post at Kyilla Primary School. She was the winner of the WA Primary School Education Award 2015. It is fantastic to have Nicole and we welcome her and wish her all the very best as principal at Kyilla Primary School. Carol Selley is the former principal of Kyilla primary. She was absolutely extraordinary, so I am pleased to hear that she has gone to Mt Hawthorn, so at least she will remain in the electorate and we do not lose a really good principal who has seen some great achievements in the area. We wish Dale Mackesey, the former principal of Mt Hawthorn, all the very best in his new post with the education department. I think it is very safe to say that my Perth electorate primary schools are in very good, safe hands and I am absolutely certain we will have a fabulous 2016 school year.

A lot has been said in this place about the city's key projects. I am completely blown away by the success of the opening of Elizabeth Quay. As we all know, Elizabeth Quay is our flagship riverfront project. It has been talked about, been protested against, been talked about again and been a topic of discussion for a very long time. It was incredible to see—not the finished product—the project opened. I think 29 January is a day this state will remember for a very long time because it was a successful opening. I was one of the tens of thousands of people at the event. To say that it was a success does not do the event justice. It was absolutely incredible. What I found more incredible than anything else about the event was the diversity of Western Australian people who were there with their families; grandparents, parents, children, aunts and uncles all came together to enjoy the opening of this flagship project. I was with my young daughter and we mingled through the crowds. It was hair-raising to stand on the bridge that has been so proudly put together by Phillips Total Solutions Pty Ltd and look out at the quay and at the mass of people who had come down to rejoice in this flagship project, supported and built by this Liberal–National government. It is an experience that I will remember for years to come.

It was interesting, because people came from afar. I have said many times in this place that a dollar invested in our capital city is a dollar invested for all Western Australians. They came from everywhere. There were people from Wanneroo and there were people from the country. There were people from different cultures. They were all walking around enjoying —

**Mr J.M. Francis** interjected.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** No, they certainly were not. They were Western Australian families who were proud of this government's flagship project.

**Dr A.D. Buti** interjected.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange:** Weren't you there?

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** Exactly. It really was an outstanding event.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** It was open to everybody. There were thousands of people there.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker):** Members, this feels like *deja vu*. We do not want to be going back there again today. Member, go ahead.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** Elizabeth Quay is a place for everybody. Members do not need a special invitation to attend. It is open to everybody.

I want to move on to one of the other major projects underway at the moment—the Riverside Waterbank project. I was pleased to be at the official turning of the sod ceremony late last year with our Premier and the Minister for Planning, alongside Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority representatives and many others. That is a magnificent project that will create over 440 jobs during construction, as well as provide 1 000 residential dwellings for about 1 500 residents and 35 500 square metres of commercial and retail space. This will be a fantastic eastern entry into the city. There will also be a little beach there so that people can go for a swim, or a walk or ride their bicycles. There will be some lovely recreational facilities for everybody to enjoy.

**Mr S.K. L'Estrange** interjected.

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** That is right; exactly.

I would like to acknowledge the good work that is happening at the moment. It is progressing very fast. I am sure that every time I blink, there is a new building in the City Link project. We all know that the City Link project

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was talked about for many years. That project is extremely welcomed by the Northbridge community. I know that for a very long time the Northbridge community has felt isolated on the other side of the tracks, so this will enable the Northbridge community to link with our city community. There is great space there, and people will be living in the residential spaces and working in the retail and commercial spaces.

Last Sunday I was at the turning of the sod for the Yagan Square project. That was a very beautiful ceremony. Three Whadjuk Noongar women elders gave us a demonstration of how they used to find food. That was quite moving and a very special way to open a space that I know is very culturally significant for our Whadjuk Noongar people. It was lovely to be there. That will be a very difficult build, because, as we know, the underground rail is there and buildings are going up everywhere. I am really pleased that the Doric Group has been awarded that contract, and I have full faith that it will be able to deliver on time a project that Western Australia will be truly proud of. As members know, it will showcase a lot of Western Australia's produce and there will be lots of references to the Western Australian way of life and our history and culture. We very much look forward to the construction of that project.

This Liberal–National government has shown on many occasions its commitment to arts and culture in this state. The new Western Australian Museum is probably one of the most exciting additions in this space. Construction will commence in 2016, so I very much look forward to the commencement of the construction of our \$428 million new Museum, which will be a centre for scientific research.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** The end of 2016 will definitely be a very exciting time, with the new \$428 million Museum commencing construction. We are in very safe hands, because we are being guided by the magnificent, fantastic Mr Alec Coles, who has performed incredibly. I know that he is very passionate about the project and is very keen to see it commence. As members are aware, the new Museum will sit in the Perth Cultural Centre. We have already seen tremendous investment by the Liberal–National government. Again, it is another example of the commitment that we have to not just city infrastructure, city events and cultural events, but also science and innovation. I have heard a little whisper that Scitech may be housed in that area. I do not know; it is just a whisper.

A government member: Hopefully, you haven't let the cat out of the bag!

**Ms E. EVANGEL:** I am just saying that I have heard some talk. I do not know whether it is true, but if that were the case, it would be a very welcome and, I think, very appropriate addition to the Perth Cultural Centre.

I am extremely proud of the investment in our capital city by this Liberal–National government. We know that a few years ago we were probably in a place that we should not have been in, with money not being invested in the city. But this Liberal–National government understands that a thriving capital city equates to a thriving state and a thriving economy. I am really proud of the fact that we have come ahead in leaps and bounds. Perth is now a capital city that we can be proud of on a local, national and international basis. I congratulate the Premier and our ministers. I look forward to the progress and to updating the house in the future on the development of all these fantastic capital city infrastructure projects.

**MR R.F. JOHNSON (Hillarys)** [3.07 pm]: In responding to what I believe will be the last Premier's Statement from the current Premier, I will yet again remind members of what a disastrous financial position he has put this state in, so much so that a number of government backbenchers are so concerned at their election prospects that they are now exploring the possibility of changing the leadership. They must now see that the emperor definitely does not have any clothes on and that he is running around naked. Not only that, but also he is leaving the cupboard bare, except for a pile of IOUs that he feels our future generations should pick up. When the Premier leaves Parliament, the debt will be no smaller than it is today; in fact, it will be a lot higher. Some individuals have said that he has built a lot of infrastructure. I say that anyone can build a lot of infrastructure if they have a credit card with no limit and when there is no settlement date attached to it. It takes a much more clever and responsible person to manage their finances and to live within their means.

The interest that will be paid during this financial year and in each of the next few years will be over \$1 billion. My updated prediction for this financial year's budget deficit is that it will end up nearer \$4 billion, and we have seen today the expenditure on the information technology system in our health system that was not reckoned on. I assure members that there will be other things. I also predict that, by this time next year, state debt will be nearer \$40 billion. I also predict more credit rating downgrades. These are things that I am very unhappy about and I am not proud of.

I say these things because we still have to add to state debt expenditure on projects that have been agreed to but have not yet been funded. There is still money to be spent on Elizabeth Quay, and we are still going to spend a fortune on Perth Stadium. The Museum will cost nearly a half-billion dollars. The Forrestfield–Airport Link

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will also add debt. I do not blame the member for Forrestfield for desperately wanting that rail link. If I was him, I would go out there and advocate for it. However, I am responsible to my electorate and the people who live in my electorate, and for the money that they will have to find to fund this extravagance. This parlous situation could have been avoided if the Premier had only listened to some sound financial advice. Many political and financial commentators have been critical of his management, including me, and I seek the house's indulgence to reiterate some of these comments. To do this, I will refer to the many speeches that I have made over the last three years. It would be so easy to say now, "I told you so." My speech on the budget of 14 August 2013 quite clearly lays out the concerns and predictions that I made when I first spoke of the spiralling debt and its consequences. One political commentator said at the time —

"If Colin had listened to Robbie J, we'd still have our triple A!"

That is very flattering, and because it is, I will paraphrase what he quoted me as saying. Fees, taxes and charges would increase substantially and there would be widespread redundancies, both voluntary and forced. I also stated that that year's budget would be the most austere in recent times. I went on to state that state debt would spiral out of control, ending up in the not-too-distant future at around \$35 billion. I said that if we did not take appropriate action, we would lose our AAA credit rating. I said this three years ago and I have repeated it every year since.

I ask members what has been learnt? Absolutely nothing! Even one of Western Australia's richest and most astute businessmen, Nigel Satterley, has now acknowledged the true financial situation and he has warned that this government risks being dumped at the next election because of its economic record. I ask why it has taken three years for these extremely bad financial decisions to have been recognised by people such as Mr Satterley, when I could see it three years ago?

A couple of years ago, the Premier offered to go to Tasmania to show it how to run its economy. In view of the dire financial situation that WA faces, he would be as welcome as an acute attack of flatulence in a space suit. We need some really urgent action to address this financial disaster, but what do we see? Instead of fixing the massive hole in the ship, all the Premier is doing is moving the deckchairs around, hoping for a miracle while the band plays on. With all this financial mismanagement, what are we told is the answer? We will need to sell some assets to pay off some debt. I do not have a problem with selling off assets such as land and buildings that are not income-bearing. I have a problem with selling assets that are income bearing. When the Premier states that we are replacing them with assets, yes, we are, but the assets that we are replacing them with become liabilities because they do not give us an income. They will need subsidies for years to come. We do not know the true situation with Perth Stadium, but I can guarantee members that we will be subsidising that stadium for decades to come. There will be ongoing costs for Elizabeth Quay. The Forrestfield railway is a lovely railway and I have just said that the member for Forrestfield is doing the right thing by advocating to his constituents that he wants it out there. But I think that will be one of the most subsidised railways in Australia because the patronage is just not there yet. That is what the experts have said. It is great! I am not opposed to all these things. I think they are all great. We would love to have these things.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** It is not just me saying this; it is not just "Robbie J", as one commentator said. Look at today's paper. The headline states quite clearly that former Treasurer "Ripper tipped financial demise". That is what he did; I have spoken to him many times and he is acutely aware of what is happening. He tipped it. Another headline is "Counting the cost of Barnett's binge" by Joseph Poprzeczny, a very well known political reporter. "Joe Pop" states —

The Barnett years will be remembered for many things, but economic responsibility is not among them.

It will not be because the economic responsibility has just gone out the window. Gareth Parker, the political editor of *The West Australian*, on two or three occasions has written about the debt and the chronic situation we find ourselves in in quite substantial opinion pieces. There have been so many others. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia is also coming out and criticising the government because it is saying that income is not the problem; it is our expenditure. We are spending money that we simply do not have. I will quote what it says here because I think it is quite important. Once again, this is from *The West Australian* of 17 February 2016, titled "Business tells States to end spending splurge", and it states —

"The real issue is not revenue but rather that Government expenditure has been increasing at a greater rate than revenue growth and at a proportion that CCIWA considers to be unsustainable," the submission says.

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 18 February 2016]

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It noted that revenue had grown on average 7.3 per cent —

We have not had a problem with revenue; we have had a massive income from royalties. Our GST is not what it should be—we have always said that—but even if we had got the whole of our GST over the last few years, it would not have matched the money that came in from the iron ore royalties. That has gone down; we are getting virtually nothing now. Things are getting much, much worse.

We have a very serious problem and when we sell assets that derive an income, there is something wrong. Apart from the fact that a responsible government would want essential income-bearing assets to be part of the legacy that should be left to future generations, our children and our children's children deserve some future assets. The cupboard will be bare, apart from the IOUs that the Premier wants them to pick up. Let us look at some of the assets that produce income that the government will consider selling. This information has been collected from *The West Australian's* business section. I will state the agency and the dividend that it is paying: Water Corporation, \$562 million; WA ports in total, \$264.2 million; Western Power, \$131.9 million; Synergy, \$83.6 million, Horizon Power, \$53.1 million; the Insurance Commission of WA, \$35.1 million; LandCorp, \$32.4 million; the Gold Corporation, \$12.9 million; the Treasury Corporation, \$9.4 million; and Landgate, \$5.6 million. They are just some of our agencies that give us an income. Many others derive an income. The total of what I have mentioned so far is \$1.2 billion. That is the equivalent of running our police force for a year. It is the annual revenue income from these government agencies. If all these were to be sold, that amount would be lost as income to the Western Australian people. We have just heard that the Canning Vale market has been sold for \$135 million. Considering that the sale will simply cancel out one week's increase in the state's overall debt, which is around \$35 billion at present, it barely scratches the surface. We know that the debt is increasing by over \$100 million every week. The debt is going up \$100 million every week; normally members never hear that—except when I say it. The budget papers and midyear reviews show quite clearly that it is going up over \$100 million every single week. The Canning Vale market sale will merely scratch the surface. We need to sell \$1 billion worth of assets every 10 weeks just to tread water in the oceans of debt—to simply stand still. I do not think some people realise how dire this situation is. We have seen what happened in Queensland over the years. I feel sorry for Campbell Newman. He went in there when the debt was \$70 billion. Unfortunately, he was there for three years and it went up to \$90 billion. He had no option. I felt sorry for the federal government when it took over from the previous Labor government because it took over a massive debt. The situation is reversed here. We are a Liberal government—a conservative government—and we are running up the debt. If we lose the election next year, the Labor government will have to pick up the pieces. That is what will happen. That has not normally happened in the past.

Many people argue that the government should not be selling off income-bearing assets. I agree with that. I thought I had found one area of fiscal agreement with the Premier, and that was that Western Power should not be sold. However, that was before it became clear to the Premier that there was a lot of unrest from not just his Treasurer but also enough of the backbenchers to possibly cause his leadership to come under challenge. It looks like self-preservation won the day, because the Premier now wants to sell Western Power. Another asset that is due for the garage sale is Fremantle port. I can accept that maybe some ports up on the north west coast could be sold if they are used purely for exporting commodities, but such a special and strategic port as Fremantle, which actually delivers a financial return to the people, should never be sold. I am interested to know what the Nationals think of that particular proposal, but they are not in the chamber.

As I have said, many people also believe that the problem is caused by not reining in expenditure. There has been very little effort by the government in addressing this area. There have been some foolish decisions, such as wasting \$200 000 on political advertising to promote the opening of Elizabeth Quay. That came just after every television and radio station, together with newsprint, covered the opening in full. We have to ask who is responsible for that blatant waste of public money. Is it the same person who we are told is supposed to be saving us millions of dollars in advertising? I suggest that it is. The government is yet again wasting public money—just under half a million dollars—on one spin doctor to try to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear in relation to the budget and the midyear review. That is disgraceful, quite frankly. This is just as bad as public funds being used for political purposes, such as with the Bigger Picture campaign. I reiterate: if we were on that side of the house and a Labor government were doing what we are doing in using public funds for political advertising, we would be shouting from the rooftops. I would be.

If the Premier is really serious about selling assets, I suggest that he start with the new stadium. If it is such a great asset, let him sell it. We have built that new stadium for 20 000 people; that is, the 20 000 people who cannot get into Subiaco Oval. That is who we are doing it for—20 000 people. I am told that there are going to be about 2 000 television screens in the stadium. Someone can look at a TV screen in the toilets to see what is happening on the field. The stadium will have 2 000 TV screens, yet if someone goes into one of our public

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hospitals, they have to pay to have a TV in their room. Sick people have to pay to watch the telly, but go to the new stadium and people can watch whatever they like. They will probably be able to watch *Days of Our Lives*.

**Mr P. Abetz:** But you've got to pay to get into the stadium.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** People pay to get into hospital through their taxes. We are paying for people to watch telly in the stadium, member for Southern River.

**Mr N.W. Morton** interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I have made many points at the cabinet table but I would not tell the member for Forrestfield what they were; I will let my former colleagues tell him what they were. Only two people stood up to the Premier in cabinet, and that was me and Hon Norman Moore. I will tell the member that much! I will not tell him about secret cabinet conversations because that is not appropriate, but there were two people who stood up to the Premier. A one-man band is running this show; a one-man band runs cabinet. If the member for Forrestfield ever gets to be a minister, he will find that out. I hope that he does become a minister, because I think he could take over Health straightaway. I think we should dump the present Minister for Health and put the member for Forrestfield in as health minister. It is a tough job but I am sure the member is capable of doing it. He is more capable than the bloke next to him. I would put the member for Forrestfield in there, but he would not want it. Madam Acting Speaker (Ms L.L. Baker) I am sorry; I am digressing. I should not do that because I know the member for Kimberley wants to speak.

As I said, we could sell the stadium. Apart from that problem facing the government, there are issues with law and order. When crime increases by around 20 per cent in a year, some urgent action needs to be taken. Anyone who says that we have enough police officers has to be living in cloud cuckoo land. The problem is being able to fund more police without taxing Western Australians more. I have already put forward an answer. Anybody who reads the newspapers or sometimes listens to the radio would know what it is. I put forward that we could have an extra 400 police officers patrolling our streets and highways. It is very simple; I will tell members how it could be done. At the moment \$80 million is sitting idle in the road trauma trust account. We could easily employ 400 police officers for that money. That is more than enough money to employ them and fit them out with equipment. With the extra cameras that are promised, an extra \$100 million will be going into the trust account every year, which would leave approximately \$220 million for other road initiatives.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Just ask anyone what is the biggest deterrent to people hooning, drink-driving and speeding and they will say, "More cops on the road". If more police were visible on our roads, they would not only deter people from committing traffic offences and deter other criminal behaviour but also catch the criminals who are committing these crimes. How many times have we heard that a person has been stopped by police traffic officers for committing a road traffic offence and the police have found drugs, weapons and cash in those vehicles? These people would be police officers. They would be dedicated strategic traffic enforcement officers, so they would be out there catching people doing those things on the roads, but they could also be first responders if they were the nearest unit to a crime. They could get to a crime quicker and try to protect innocent people from these nasty people and then hand over to the general duties officers. It is easy. Anybody with a brain can work these things out. That is a policy we should have introduced ages ago. There is \$80 million sitting there and doing nothing while people are dying or being critically injured on our roads or are being bashed in their homes and all sorts of things, and what is happening? Absolutely nothing! As I said, it would not only save lives on our roads but also reduce crime. I sincerely hope that if the government does not take up this initiative, the opposition will if it wins the election. The money is there and that is what is needed. That is what the people want. We are here to represent the people in our constituencies and I intend to do that.

I am unpopular with some of my colleagues here.

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Believe it or not, I am very unpopular with some of them, but I will not be deterred from speaking on behalf of —

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, not everyone. There are one or two who like me—one or two have guts.

Several members interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, I will not name them. I know you're not, I know you're not, I know you're not, I know you're not and I know you're not, but that is fine. I am very choosy about whom I call my friend and the member for Forrestfield is certainly not one of them. I wish the member luck in becoming a minister, I really do; I hope he gets the opportunity. I doubt that he will, but he should.

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I hope members will not regard my speech today as being just another attack on the Premier and his cabinet.

**Mr N.W. Morton** interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Why don't you just be quiet for five minutes? Do I interject on you?

**Mr N.W. Morton:** Yes.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** No, I do not, actually; I let the member ramble on.

*Point of Order*

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** I wonder whether the inane and incessant interjections from the member for Joondalup and the member for Forrestfield are going to be tolerated any longer.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms L.L. Baker):** That is not a point of order but it is a good point. Member, are you comfortable with managing this or would you like me to tell them to be quiet?

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** I am more than happy to deal with this.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** At the end of the day I am simply making a plea for sanity on behalf of future generations. That is what I am doing in my speech today. I do not read speeches that are prepared down in the Premier's department by his spin doctors; I do not do that and I have never done it. I do my own speeches.

**Mr N.W. Morton:** And then you read them.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** So do you, sunshine.

**Mr N.W. Morton** interjected.

**Mr R.F. JOHNSON:** Yes, you do—many times. I will point it out the next time the member for Forrestfield does it. He would have a job getting into this place without a written speech, but he gets them from the spin doctors in the emperor's office.

I will stop highlighting the debt the Premier has created when he starts behaving like a good Liberal leader should and stops incurring a massive liability for our children and our children's children.

**MS J. FARRER (Kimberley)** [3.28 pm]: I would like to start by acknowledging the Aboriginal people of this land, the Noongar people, and all first nation people of Western Australia.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Excuse me, members! A member is on her feet and I doubt whether Hansard can hear her. Can you please not chatter in the background.

**Ms J. FARRER:** Over a year ago, I wrote to the Premier requesting that the Aboriginal flag be flown each day alongside the state and Australian flags at Parliament House. He wrote back and, in short, said no, but I continued to ask. I am very pleased that my lobbying was not in vain and that I can announce that the Aboriginal flag is now, in fact, permanently flying proudly with the other flags in front of Parliament House.

Opposition members: Hear, hear!

**Ms J. FARRER:** Like my bill to recognise Aboriginal people in our Constitution, it is another symbolic step in the right direction towards reconciliation and solidarity as a state and a nation. Last year I asked the Premier about violence and antisocial behaviour in Broome. Although I am pleased to learn that funding has finally been allocated to build a short-stay hostel in Broome, the issue of homelessness will not be solved only by constructing a hostel; a multiagency approach is needed. I understand that the Shire of Broome has submitted a proposal for a campground in addition to the short-stay hostel, which at this stage has not received support from the state. The government seems all too ready to dismiss ideas and suggestions to combat these serious issues but has not offered any assistance in developing alternative solutions. I have raised a number of times the need for urban revitalisation throughout the Kimberley and, again, I have been ignored. Revitalisation is an essential component in improving social problems and that is definitely needed on a large scale in the notorious Bronx area of Broome. Residents of Broome feel ignored by the Premier and his government. I have not seen any action from the government to help. I urge the Premier to invest immediately in the stability, capacity building and leadership of struggling communities and neighbourhoods. The Premier boasts that since 2008 this government's royalty for regions program has allocated \$6.18 billion for more than 3 600 projects to support growth and economic opportunities outside Perth. He has also boasted that the government's bold infrastructure plan has not only rebuilt the state, but also created thousands of jobs. Why is it then that the Liberal-National government has not delivered in the Kimberley? Broome has not received the promised \$10 million it was allocated in the state budget for the Chinatown renewal project. The government quickly snatched the promised \$50 million away from Kimberley residents for the construction of safe boating facilities. I could go on and on

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 18 February 2016]

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Ms Eleni Evangel; Mr Rob Johnson; Ms Josie Farrer; Mr Fran Logan; Ms Janine Freeman; Mr Terry Redman;  
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about this government's many broken promises and the way in which its spending has crippled towns in the region. The unemployment rate in my electorate is sky-high, yet the Premier stands there and claims to have created thousands of jobs. That is a blatant fallacy! There is a huge migration of skilled workers leaving Western Australia because they simply cannot obtain employment. The mining boom has died and the government has no backup plan, leaving families stranded in hopelessness and struggling to pay for basic living expenses. If this government is serious about supporting families, it must act now and invest in a wider range of industries and alleviate the extreme and unfair costs of living in the regions.

The government should make TAFE fees affordable so that employees from the mining industry are able to reskill and remain in the regions. It should reduce the cost of electricity and implement all that is required for solar power. Community members are outraged that Horizon Power will not allow anyone to install solar. Broome has reached hosting capacity due to the instability of the grid. A further issue is the requirement for a battery backup system because the high costs make it an unrealistic option for many households. The government must provide incentives and subsidies to make it easier to utilise solar power as the most common method of power in the Kimberley region. Surely, this is of commonsense. Natural energy needs to be explored and made available right through the Kimberley. The government must look at resources that are readily available, such as wind power, solar power, tidal power and hydropower. The Liberal-National government should be fair to all residents throughout the state. The government should do more to encourage people to make the most of photovoltaic technology. The government must change the current regulations prohibiting people in my electorate from maximising the availability and use of solar power. Since the installation of the new system by Horizon Power in the Kimberley, my office has been swamped with calls from people about their power bills—some of them have doubled to more than \$2 000. I ask the Minister for Energy to investigate this issue. We are losing many long-term residents to the metro area due to the cost of living and lack of employment options in the Kimberley. Recently, I was approached by a number of pensioners who confirmed this. Indeed, most pensioners are already budgeting to pay their bills and some are running out of money before pension day each fortnight.

Public housing tenants have provided me with information that the Housing Authority has increased residents' rent by more than \$40 a week. Increasing the cost of living for the lowest paid people in the community is really unfair and will cause unnecessary hardship. This decision will make life much more difficult for many people in the Kimberley. I urge the government to reverse this imbalanced policy immediately.

In addition to the extreme of cost of living in the Kimberley, a lack of essential services is forcing people to relocate. It has recently come to my attention that the only midwife in Fitzroy has finished her contract and left the area and her position as midwife remains unfilled. Since the start of the year, women in Fitzroy Crossing and Fitzroy Valley have been without a dedicated midwife in their community to accompany them through a safe and healthy pregnancy and postnatal period. The plan is to have a midwife flown in from Derby once a week for an antenatal clinic, but that is in no way an adequate replacement for a midwife on the ground who is able to develop a personal connection with the women and follow up and encourage those who may not engage well with structured clinics and who are at increased risk of pregnancy complications. The absence of a full-time midwife in Fitzroy Crossing has placed a substantial strain on the already stretched maternity services at Derby as well as on medical staff. It saddens me to say that not so long ago a doctor based at Fitzroy Crossing Hospital committed suicide due to ongoing stress and a lack of support. It is also valid to mention the cost and time used inefficiently to travel back and forth on a weekly basis to and from Fitzroy. It is three hours one way. I understand that this government has authorised a recruitment freeze and will not employ hospital staff in my electorate. This is an outrage! The government is failing the health and wellbeing of women and children and their families in the Fitzroy Valley and is doing nothing to improve matters. When alcohol restrictions were placed in Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek, the government promised to support the people and ensure that additional support advocacy and education programs would be available in the towns and surrounding communities. Instead, the government continues to rip away the limited services that are still available.

Youth crime also continues to be an ongoing issue throughout my electorate. Stolen and burnt scooters, stolen and burnt cars and home break-ins are a weekly occurrence in the Kimberley. Similar to Broome, Derby and Kununurra are experiencing great difficulties with groups of unsupervised youths roaming the streets till the early hours of the morning. I continue to hear accounts of youths breaking into houses to steal food.

In September 2014 I tabled in Parliament a report that was produced by my office in response to juvenile justice matters in the Kimberley. The full report can be located on my website and includes 19 recommendations that I urged the government to implement. For the record, none of them has been implemented. Subsequently, I wrote numerous letters to the Premier and various relevant ministers urging them to act urgently and provide leadership and additional resources to attempt to resolve these complex youth matters. This is an issue I am very passionate about, and I believe the solution lies in collaboration with all levels of government, but perhaps most essential is

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serious investment by the state government to commit all the resources necessary to stop the cycle of crime and antisocial behaviour.

There is most definitely a need for youth services to be available in the evenings, through to 6.00 am. This is one of the things I have always talked about. Youth services currently start from the time school closes in the afternoon, but they do not go all the way through the night. It is a nine-to-five job. Currently, evening services are not possible due to a lack of funding and resources. The staff are passionate and willing, but this government must provide the necessary means to enable them to expand their services for youth. A venue to provide wandering youth with a safe place to sleep at night is urgently needed, along with more support programs for parents and carers.

As I outlined in the report I tabled in 2014, community members continue to express to me that they need the state to invest in an on-country placement system for the Kimberley to replace, or at minimum reduce, sending our youth so far away to Perth detention facilities.

I look forward to continuing my advocacy and working with the community, agencies, departments and governments to make the necessary changes essential to improve antisocial behaviour and reduce the number of criminal acts throughout the Kimberley. In closing, I therefore move to amend the question before the house.

*Amendment to Question*

**MS J. FARRER:** I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house condemns the unnecessary and financially crippling changes to the income eligibility assessment of Housing Authority tenants, which come into force on 28 March, and demands that this decision be immediately reversed

**MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn)** [3.43 pm]: I would like to speak to the amendment that has been moved by the member for Kimberley. The changes in the 2015–16 budget papers that were referred to by the Minister for Housing that rents for Housing Authority tenants would gradually move towards 25 per cent of income did not detail the impact of the changes or exactly how the changes would be made. The government never detailed anything. Housing Authority tenants were never consulted or properly informed, apart from the letter they received on a Friday two weeks ago. The state government is proposing the most cruel action I have ever seen a state government in Western Australia impose on vulnerable people. It is the most cruel and unnecessary action ever taken by a state government against struggling, poor people. I will run through exactly what the government is doing.

Housing Authority tenants who are pensioners, veterans or disabled will have the meagre amounts of money they receive from commonwealth allowances and benefits stolen from them. Their allowances and benefits are going to be stolen by the Western Australian government for the purpose of paying Housing Authority rent. This change will apply only to pensioners, the disabled and war veterans—people who are already struggling to make ends meet. They live in Housing Authority homes not by choice but because they have to; they are already struggling. As Housing Authority tenants, they have been struggling for the last eight years with increases to electricity, water and gas accounts and other cost increases imposed by the state government, such as for public transport. They are already struggling.

The commonwealth government provides a series of benefits to these people because of the situation they find themselves in. Those benefits are not defined as income by the Australian Taxation Office and are not taxed, yet for some reason Hon Colin Holt, the Minister for Housing, the Treasurer and this Liberal–National government have unilaterally decided to change the rules on how those benefits are assessed. I will go through those allowances.

The letter that the Housing Authority tenants received two weeks ago tomorrow indicated to them that they are now required to pay 25 per cent of their household income in rent and that income types that were not considered assessable or were assessed at lower than 25 per cent are now going to be assessed at 25 per cent. The cap that was always in place under Housing Authority policy that no-one would pay more than 25 per cent of their income has now become a minimum; that is how the rules have changed. Whereas before the cap meant that Housing Authority tenants would pay a range of different types of rent depending on their illness, disability or other circumstances that they found themselves in, the rules have now been changed by this heartless minister, and everyone will now pay 25 per cent of their income, which includes all commonwealth benefits and allowances. The 25 per cent is no longer a cap, it is a minimum. That is how the rules have changed.

The types of benefits that are now included as income by the Western Australian government include the carer allowance and carer supplement; the bereavement allowance; the clean energy supplement; the family tax benefit supplements; language, literacy and numeracy supplements; the large family supplement; the mobility

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allowance; the multiple birth allowance; the pension supplement; the pharmaceutical allowance; the remote area allowance; and work-for-the-dole payments. The service pension for veterans—people who have been in the Australian military and have served their country—will now be treated as income, along with allowances such as their clothing allowance. The special rate disability pension for veterans will also be treated as income. I want to go to that point. The special rate disability pension has been in place since 1922. It is compensation paid by the commonwealth to veterans—soldiers, sailors and airmen—who have served our country and have been injured in the line of duty. Since 1922, that pension has not been deemed as income and has been tax free. However, for reasons that I will come to later, the Nationals Minister for Housing, Hon Colin Holt, has unilaterally declared that the special rate disability pension for veterans will be deemed as income. That is despite the fact that the commonwealth government and the Australian Taxation Office do not deem it as income.

The pharmaceutical benefits allowance is paid to pensioners, veterans and the disabled to help provide medicine and drugs for the illnesses that they have. That money is paid by the commonwealth for a specific purpose. It is not paid so that these people can have 25 per cent of that allowance stolen by the Western Australian government in the form of rent payments if they happen to be a Housing Authority tenant. That is not what it is paid for. The carer allowance is paid to people who virtually spend their whole life voluntarily looking after either their kin or people around them. That very small allowance is paid by the commonwealth as compensation for what is effectively the voluntary work that they do. The tax office does not define that as income, yet Hon Colin Holt, the Nationals Minister for Housing, has determined that the carer allowance will be deemed as income. That means that people who are getting paid a pittance for caring for another person, often on a 24-hour basis, will now lose 25 per cent of that allowance in the payment of rent. This is unprecedented in Western Australia.

**Mr W.R. Marmion** interjected.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I will go through that, minister, because that is more lies that have been said. We will go through it, state by state, and work out exactly who taxes these allowances and who does not. This is cruel and unnecessary. It is kicking the poor. That is what it is. I have never seen anything like it by any Western Australian government.

I want to go now to the reasons this measure has been brought in. The Minister for Housing has indicated that all he is doing is trying to find an equitable way of ensuring that Housing Authority tenants pay a level of rent. That is not true. That is not what the minister is doing. The minister is defining as income allowances that are paid by the commonwealth and that are not defined as income by the commonwealth. The reason Homeswest and Housing Authority tenants pay different levels of rent is that they have different disabilities and needs. That is why the rent payable by a person who is in a wheelchair is different from the rent payable by a person who does some part-time work. The commonwealth recognises that. That is why it provides those allowances tax free. We now have a government in Western Australia that is basically saying it does not care what any other government or the commonwealth says; it will take 25 per cent of that money. That means that the 25 per cent cap that was in place is now a minimum. The government will take 25 per cent of these tenants' income, regardless of what they do and what they are earning, and regardless of the situation that they find themselves in. That includes veterans who have served their country and were injured in the line of duty; they will pay it as well. It is unbelievable that a government would do this.

The minister has not put up an economic argument in support of this measure. This money will not be going back into consolidated revenue to help pay off the debt—even though many tenants think it is. The minister's only reasoning is that this will make it equal for everybody. The minister said also that the money that will be raised will go towards building more social housing. The government expects to raise \$59 million from this measure. How much new social housing will we get out of that, and how much of that will be public housing? How many of the people who are on the waiting list for public housing are going to get a house?

**Mr D.T. Redman:** A lot more people are on better circumstances.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Does the minister reckon? The minister should go and do it then—smarty pants! The minister should go and live on that income. The minister should go and look after a disabled person and have 25 per cent of his income taken away. The minister is smart, sitting there on a salary of a quarter of a million dollars and all his investments! Go and see what it is like—walk a mile in their shoes, pal! It is just disgraceful. That is an example of the uncaring attitude by the National Party to people who live in Housing Authority homes. They do not care. They regard them as scum. They do not care what suffering they put them through. That is the attitude shown by the supposed leader of a political party in this state. That is absolutely disgraceful. He does not care.

This measure will raise \$59 million, out of a Department of Housing budget of \$1.7 billion. The department makes a \$56 million profit out of Keystart. It makes a profit of over \$80 million out of Government Regional Officer Housing. Why does that money not go back into public housing and social housing? I did not hear the

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minister say that. The argument that that \$59 million will go back into social housing is nothing but rubbish. It is an excuse. The reality is that the impact of this measure on these tenants will be traumatic. Remember, they are on fixed incomes. It is not as though they can work longer hours and get more overtime, or do some part-time work. They cannot do that. They are on fixed incomes. Any money that is taken away from their fixed income will have a dramatic effect on their quality of life. That is something that the Leader of the National Party cannot get through his head. He has never had to live like that. It is cruel and unnecessary and its impact will be enormous. I will take members to some of the hundreds of emails and letters I am getting at the moment.

[Leave denied for the member's time to be extended.]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Remember, these changes will apply to 28 000 of the 36 000 Homeswest tenants—28 000 tenants will be affected by this change. Let us look at how it will impact on people. John Hannah from Holland Street in Fremantle is a former captain in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Regiment who was blown up in an armoured personnel carrier in Vietnam while driving over a mine. He has 12 injuries in his back. His rent will go up by more than \$100 a week—a week!—which is 25 per cent of his disability pension. He thinks that he may not even be able to live there anymore. He is in only a one-bedroom unit and he thinks he cannot afford to live there. What are we doing when a constituent cannot afford to live in public housing? That will be the impact of this impost. It is unbelievable.

Judith Murray, down in the cold stores in Fremantle, looks after her son, a paranoid schizophrenic, who needs nearly 24-hour care. Her carer's allowance amounts to probably \$4 an hour, and she will lose 25 per cent of it. As she explains, it means that every time she goes shopping she will have to look carefully at every single thing she buys because she knows that she cannot afford certain things. She cannot afford them now. When she loses 25 per cent of her carer's allowance, she knows it will be even worse. I looked in her fridge and there was hardly anything in it. That is an example of the impact of these changes. It is absolutely disgraceful and I call on the Premier to not let this happen. It is kicking the most vulnerable people in our society. They cannot cope. He is tipping people into absolute poverty—pensioners, the disabled and people who served this country. He cannot allow this stupid, unnecessary, cruel decision to go ahead and allow this stealing of commonwealth allowances.

**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [4.02 pm]: I, too, rise to speak on this very important amendment because I, too, want to highlight the human face of these changes. Over the past couple of weeks, many people have come into my Mirrabooka electorate office since they have received the letter. Today one of my staff said that someone came into the office in tears, exasperated about how they will be able to afford it. It is not enough to say, "Well, it's the Liberals; they do this. They don't have your wellbeing at heart." That is not what they want to hear. They do not want to hear the issue being made political. They want to know that a Centrelink supplementary payment is exactly what it should be—a payment to cover costs that apply to their special needs, such as pharmaceutical benefits, multiple birth allowance, mobility allowance or bereavement allowance. The member for Cockburn went through the whole list. It is outrageous that the government should call these Centrelink benefits income when that is not what they are. They are supplementary allowances to pay for costs that these people incur. What is worse is that it applies to the carer's allowance, of all things. Some people in this community do the hard task of caring so that we as taxpayers can rely on them to care for people with disabilities. It is inconceivable that the government is seeking to include their allowance as income in assessing their rent. It is further galling that this was introduced when their rental guidance notes still indicated that their supplementary payments would not be included as income. The federal minister, Hon Christian Porter, who oversees Centrelink, was a member of this Parliament and Treasurer. Has anyone asked him whether it is appropriate to take federal supplementary payments into account as income? It amounts to robbing the federal system to pay for poor planning and poor management of this government's finances.

The member for Cockburn was right: it will not raise considerable sums of money. It will disadvantage people, so it is galling. How can the Premier say in his statement that his government has supported the most vulnerable?

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** We have.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The Premier cannot say that when his minister is applying that rent increase to 75 per cent of Department of Housing residents. If those people do not qualify as being vulnerable in this community, who does? Twenty-five per cent of their Centrelink supplementary payments is being assessed as part of their income? That does not reflect what the Premier said in his statement.

I tabled a petition about this on Tuesday because I had been to visit John McKinlay, one of the people affected by these increases. He lives in a group of 10 or 12 units. Not one of the residents there said that this seems a reasonable thing to do. Every one of them said, "This seems outrageous and I don't know how I'll be able to afford the additional medications that I need or the additional caring I need"—not one. One woman said that she had not received a letter. On investigation, it appears, member for Cockburn, that in the time between everyone

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getting the letter and the increase in March, she had shifted into the units from a larger home in Balga. She has now freed up the larger home in Balga and the department has just taken that 25 per cent from her supplementary payments and told her what her new rent would be, without any explanation. Mr McKinlay wrote to *The West Australian* and his letter was published on 20 January 2016. It reads —

Homeswest rents

Once again the Barnett government hits the vulnerable and disadvantaged with considerable rent hikes on Homeswest tenancies. Rents have increased 23 to 25 per cent, plus they are charging this increase on the concession section of the pension. These will increase every six months, where in the past the increase adjustment took place yearly. This government is making a vulnerable section of the community the target of unfair policies when rents in Perth are dropping.

What is interesting about Mr McKinlay is that he is not a natural ally of the Labor Party. In fact, he was previously a successful businessman who fell on very hard times, which you will appreciate, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P. Abetz), because he became a franchisee, and as a result of being completely exploited he suffered massive financial loss. He has gone from being a successful businessman, who saw himself as having very similar principles to those of the people sitting opposite me, to being vulnerable and needing assistance. He sought that assistance from the department and was provided with housing, and he was pleased about that. Now he feels that at every turn he cannot make it good again because his pension supplements will be taken and he just cannot get ahead. He was one of those people. These are the vulnerable people the government is attacking. They are good people who have worked and contributed and paid taxes, and they need assistance. They receive an age pension, a disability pension or a veteran's or carer's pension, and they are being attacked.

I want to talk about Maureen Grierson. Members in this place might know Maureen Grierson. Maureen Grierson contacted me because her pension supplement and clean energy supplement will now be taken into account in the 25 per cent rental calculation. She is outraged. She is absolutely struggling. She has had poor health and multiple situations. She is struggling to pay the bills that go with that and now she gets this. I thought she was an elder of the people opposite. Do members opposite think that vulnerable people only support us? I can tell them that they are attacking vulnerable people, no matter where they come from.

I also want to talk about the Smith family. The Smiths have a daughter who was on a disability support pension, but she recently turned 21 years of age. Her disability support pension increased, but their disability carer's allowance decreased on that basis. They ended up with quite a substantial increase in their rent. Their rent went from \$161.20 to \$259.10. Of course, we looked into that and a number of circumstances came into play. One of those circumstances was that their daughter, who was on a disability support pension but was then under the age of 21, did not get the full benefit. What is really interesting is that when we drilled down into it, we found that Mr Smith gets a pension supplement and a clean energy supplement and Mrs Smith gets a carer's allowance, a pension supplement and a clean energy supplement, and their daughter Kylie gets a pension supplement and a clean energy supplement. The amount that will now be included in the 25 per cent rental calculation but was not previously included has been capped at \$12, although it should be \$39.83. My question to the minister is: will it be only \$12 or will he come after that extra money? It has been capped at \$12 this financial year, but the minister needs to come clean to the Smiths. At present, they pay an additional \$12, but the question I have for the minister is: after 30 June 2016, will they pay an additional \$39.83? That is the thing. Everyone is saying that it is only \$12, because it has been capped. It will not be capped forever. The government will come after that money. If a single pensioner gets a pension supplement and a clean energy supplement —

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Do you think that 25 per cent of income is a sound principle for what we should be charging rent on?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I do not think supplementary payments are income.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Even though you can use that income for general household expenses?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** But people do not, do they? They receive those supplements because of their additional costs. The pension supplement was introduced because the previous federal government found that those people needed additional funds to meet the cost of living. I think the government should do it the way that Foundation Housing does it, because it does it the way the government used to do it. A 25 per cent rental calculation is good enough for the community housing sector. I know that the sector gets the rental subsidy from the federal government, but the Department of Housing owns land and assets; it has a massive amount of property. It also gets consolidated revenue funds occasionally. Foundation Housing does not get that. The minister might say that it gets rental assistance and that is what gives it the added incentive to do that, but the fact of the matter is that its operating costs and opportunity costs are much higher than those of the Department of Housing, because it has a smaller operation with which to deliver housing.

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**Mr F.M. Logan:** Minister, don't say, "We're bringing it into line with everyone else in the country." That's not true. The only state that does it is Queensland, and they did it under the Campbell Newman government in 2014 and the current government is reversing it. WA is the only state that's doing this. Thirty per cent is housing stress and it includes rent, plus all the other things they pay. You are putting them in that housing stress.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** Are they under 30 per cent?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The minister is taking into account something that is not their income. Effectively, he is taking that 25 per cent up to 30 per cent. Previously, their age pension was \$391.10 and their rent was \$97.80; now their age pension is \$394.20 and their rent is \$108.40. This means that more than 25 per cent of their income will be spent on rent, because their income is their age pension. Centrelink supplementary payments are not for the purpose of income. That was in the Department of Housing's guidance and program notes. It actually stated that they are not to be included as income, and that is what the community housing sector does; it does not include them as income. The minister has started to include them as income.

**Mr D.T. Redman:** I think you have to be very careful about drawing parallels between community housing and public housing. There's a whole model of other stuff that sits in there as well.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I am just drawing comparisons between what is fair and what is unfair, and what the minister is doing is unfair. It is not done in any other state except for Queensland, and it will be reversed. My comparison shows that what the minister is doing to pensioners and to people on a disability pension or a veteran's pension is unfair and should be reversed. It is not as though it is a lot of money. The government has an obsession with counting paperclips while it is wasting money in other areas. That is what gets me. The government is saying that they are austerity measures and that people have to pay these things. Meanwhile, there are people on the other side in other operations and other sections. If the Department of Housing needs money, I know of some land it could sell in Mirrabooka! It has sold some of it and it could sell some more, because, frankly, it has shown itself to be unfit to manage it.

I want to finish off with the Goodiers. Mr and Mrs Goodier are both on an age pension. With their pension supplement and the clean energy supplement, their deemed income from assets and their foreign pension, their rent will now increase from \$168.30 to \$182.80. That is an increase of \$14.80, but, of course, it has been capped at \$12. My question to the minister from the Goodiers and the Smiths is: how long will the cap be in place for? Is the government coming after the rest of the money? Is it going to be completely unfair? Clearly, it has been capped because it thinks that maybe people can afford it. One hopes that the Department of Housing has some idea of housing affordability and of the cost of living and the social consequences of putting people into housing stress, and maybe that is why the government has been kind enough to cap the rent—if that is kindness at all.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** Campbell Newman capped it at \$7.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** And how long did he leave it capped at \$7—forever?

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** No; he increased it! It is a slow drift toward taking money from the most vulnerable. It is priceless really, but the Premier stood in this place and said in the Premier's Statement —

We have also made decisions to increase funding to support the most vulnerable in our community:

I have to tell members that the people I doorknocked on Sunday did not think that. The people in those Department of Housing houses do not think that. I have to tell the Premier that even though he might feel warm and fuzzy inside, his actions mean something completely different.

**MR D.T. REDMAN (Warren–Blackwood — Minister for Regional Development)** [4.20 pm]: I am waiting for a text to come through to clarify a point that was raised. I am pretty sure that I know the answer, but I wanted a confirmation of my answer to a couple of the points raised by members.

I want to run through a couple of facts. I asked the question by interjection whether members think it is a fair thing to have a policy setting of 25 per cent of income as the benchmark for someone who resides in government-provided public housing. As a matter of principle, I think it is a fair thing.

I say also, from the start, that I am very aware of those people who are in significant need. All members in this house would be aware of people in their electorates who are facing income and living challenges. The member for Kimberley will know this all too well. I have been up to a lot of communities in her electorate and I would think that they face the greatest challenges with income, standard of living and access to what we see as normal services. I make the point that the government has a conscience on this front and is doing everything it can to

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assist those groups. The Premier is right, and I can recall a cabinet meeting not long after we came into government in 2008 in which \$600 million went to the not-for-profit sector, supporting services and a whole range of groups that support the vulnerable in our community.

**Ms J.M. Freeman** interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** The point is that we made that decision soon after coming in after a Labor government, so the Liberal–National government’s record stands strong on that front.

I also make the point that if we start with the principle of rent for public housing being calculated at 25 per cent of income, including other sources of income from the commonwealth and the like, then we finish up with what we have now, which is a handful of people paying 25 per cent and some paying as low as 18 per cent of their income towards their rent. The other income that applies to, particularly commonwealth payments, must be regular and ongoing. It is not based on one-off payments, but on regular and ongoing income. Secondly, it must be income that can be used for general living expenses; that is, there is some choice in how that money can be spent, so it is not money that is hypothecated to a particular purpose. It is considered regular and ongoing income and can be used for general living expenses.

**Mr F.M. Logan** interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** This is the advice I have. I argue that the fairest approach is the 25 per cent principle, and if members opposite are going to depart from that, they should say so. The government considers that 25 per cent is a fair thing to apply to the income of all people in public housing, and that it should be applied to all income that is regular and ongoing and can be used for general living expenses. Members opposite have run the argument that those people in our community who are in public housing are stressed. Absolutely, and I do not disagree, which is why we have public housing; it is a safety net for those people. I would also argue that those who are not in public housing are in a significantly worse situation than those who are in public housing.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** They have to pay market rents. People who are sitting on a waiting list for public housing have to pay market rent, and they are probably paying rent that is equivalent to 40 per cent of their income.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** Member for Cockburn, just hold it.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Those people who are on a waiting list to get into public housing are far worse off than the people members opposite are talking about, even though they are in a very difficult situation. As a matter of government policy, the challenge is to get as many people who are in that situation, and who are eligible, into public housing. To his credit, the Minister for Housing put forward a \$560 million package in the last budget to provide another 1 000 social houses. That is targeted to halve the priority wait list. The more people we can get into that program, the better. It means that by applying some standardised principles to income assessment on eligibility and payments received by those who are in public housing we will get the resources to get more public housing in place. I do not know what the numbers are, but the member for Cockburn said the figure was \$59 million. I have no idea whether that figure is right or wrong, but if it is right that is \$59 million we can spend on social housing to provide houses for people who are probably paying 40 per cent of their income in the private rental market.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** I am making the point that as a matter of government policy it is our job to be fair and it is also our job to get as many people who are eligible for public housing into public housing; therefore, I believe that policy is appropriate.

In response to the question about the \$12 cap, I make the point that it was a one-off. We certainly want to target the rental figure of 25 per cent of income over time. It might take a number of years to get to 25 per cent, so another \$12 cap might be applied in another year, but these decisions are made in the budget process. The answer is that it is not just \$12; the target is to reach 25 per cent of income at some point in time. I guess in last year’s budget we could have applied it in one tranche to get it all right there, but that would have been unacceptable; we have to have glide plane to that point. The government has made the policy decision that it is fair to apply a figure of 25 per cent of all income that is considered to be regular and ongoing and can be used for general living expenses. That will make resources available to the government to provide more public housing for those who are, in my view, in greatest need.

Several members interjected.

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**Mr D.T. REDMAN:** Whether members opposite like it or not there was a housing waiting list when Labor was in government, and whether we like it or not, there is one now. That means that there will always be people who can benefit from resources that the government can make available for public housing. The government has taken this decision to support a significant public housing policy and to support getting more people, who in our opinion are in a worse situation than those people members opposite have described in this place, because they are paying market rent. That is a difficult situation to be in. I do not support this amendment because this government is doing everything it can for the most vulnerable people in the community.

*Division*

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr P. Abetz) casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (19)

Ms L.L. Baker	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr F.M. Logan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr P.C. Tinley
Ms J. Farrer	Mr M. McGowan	Ms M.M. Quirk	Mr B.S. Wyatt
Ms J.M. Freeman	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mrs M.H. Roberts	Mr D.A. Templeman ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr M.P. Murray	Ms R. Saffioti	

Noes (34)

Mr P. Abetz	Mr J.H.D. Day	Mr A.P. Jacob	Mr D.C. Nalder
Mr F.A. Alban	Ms W.M. Duncan	Dr G.G. Jacobs	Mr J. Norberger
Mr C.J. Barnett	Ms E. Evangel	Mr S.K. L'Estrange	Mr D.T. Redman
Mr I.C. Blayney	Mr J.M. Francis	Mr R.S. Love	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr I.M. Britza	Mrs G.J. Godfrey	Mr W.R. Marmion	Mr M.H. Taylor
Mr G.M. Castrilli	Mr B.J. Grylls	Mr J.E. McGrath	Mr T.K. Waldron
Mr V.A. Catania	Dr K.D. Hames	Ms L. Mettam	Mr A. Krsticevic ( <i>Teller</i> )
Mr M.J. Cowper	Mrs L.M. Harvey	Ms A.R. Mitchell	
Ms M.J. Davies	Mr C.D. Hatton	Mr N.W. Morton	

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Pairs

Mr P.B. Watson	Mr P.T. Miles
Dr A.D. Buti	Dr M.D. Nahan

Amendment thus negatived.

*Consideration Resumed*

**DR G.G. JACOBS (Eyre)** [4.33 pm]: After waiting all day, it is indeed good to rise to say a few things in response to the Premier's Statement. In my home town of Esperance in the electorate of Eyre, much energy has been spent and much emotion has been expressed —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, can we keep our voices down or take our conversations outside, please, and give the member for Eyre the floor.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** Indeed, tears have been shed. I am referring to the tragedy of the bushfires in Esperance on 17 November 2015. The fires were on three fronts around my home town of Esperance in the electorate of Eyre. One was in the Cape Arid National Park, one was closer to town in the area of Merivale, and the other was north west of Esperance in the area of Cascade. On that torrid Tuesday, those fires came through the area of Scaddan. There was an unfortunate and tearful loss of four lives—Freddy, Anna, Julia and Thomas—who were caught up in the inferno. We lost 70 000 hectares of bumper crop land; 250 000 hectares of land, including remnant vegetation; 4 500 livestock; hundreds of kilometres of fencing; and much infrastructure—sheds, homes and farm equipment. We had not only that loss, there will also be a loss into the future because the land has been degraded. The heat of the fire was to such an extent that it destroyed every blade of vegetation. As can be the case in the south east, we now face significant winds that will remove the topsoil. There is a loss not only this year, but into future years because of this loss of topsoil and the degradation of the land. The remediation response was significant, and I would like to congratulate Horizon Power for its work in the three weeks following the fire to re-establish power to every user. It replaced 400 poles with steel poles to fireproof into the

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future. I would like to congratulate Layton Baker and his team at Horizon Power for the enormous work that they did to restore power to the region.

Like a lot of tragedies that communities face, first there was shock, then there was grief and there is now a bit of anger. However, the community rallied, the state government rallied and the federal government supported us through the Western Australian natural disaster relief and recovery arrangements. The Lord Mayor's Distress Relief Fund raised about \$1.3 million. I thank the parliamentarians who contributed to the parliamentary Esperance fire fund. That money was able to support people in the area of mental health and provide mental health forums for providers of mental health and support in the field.

The course the fire went through involved a significant number of firefighters. Around 280 local brigades came from almost anywhere and everywhere in Western Australia, and, of course, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services' units were there as well. I bring to the house a quote from the chief fire control officer during this period. Of the fire consciousness in the whole community, he states —

*"This event will leave a scar of fire awareness in the region that will last a whole generation."*

The death of 4 people is an extreme price for this consciousness and it is hoped that this new level of awareness can be maintained to ensure a proactive fire control approach for the region as a whole.

I think it is really important to recognise that this is not in the area of going through shock and grief. It is now into the period of debrief and analysis, but this should not be a blame game. None of these comments are about the blame game. However, it is about stepping back and looking at—I used this word earlier today in relation to health—the “systemic” nature of firefighting, the systemic nature of early intervention, the systemic nature of fire mitigation and, lastly, communication during a fire.

I thank the organisations in Esperance and particularly the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association, which has filed a report into the fire and has allowed me to not only quote from this very important paper but also present it and later table it in the Parliament. A lot of excellent things happened in and around the fighting of the fire. I will start with those excellent things, those positive things and the contributions that people have made. The report noted —

There have been some comments in the community that land access and machinery mobilisation was restricted to the Cascade fire and that a trigger should be available to “pull” to remove these limitations in the future.

According to the report, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services did note that the Bush Fires Act 1954 does have precedence over any environmental act and —

allows any fire control officer or the brigade to enter any land to control a fire under direction of the incident controller or local brigade. Fire Control Offices and fire fighters under brigade actions can also commandeer any equipment to suppress wild fire activity. Equipment must meet the minimum requirements of a cab and two-way, and this can be as simple as a local fire control person to check the machine.

...

There have been some comments that the resource deployment was inadequate on the Tuesday given the pending forecast of hot northerly winds. While the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) information from Perth indicated the hot winds, they were not present in any on-ground observation on Tuesday morning.

Local fire control officers were on alert and readings of weather stations north west of the Cascade fire (Holt Rock and Lake King) were being monitored in anticipation of the forecasted winds. As per protocol, as soon as the fire was reported DFES was notified and the technical support for the forecast weather is sought from the BOM.

The Monday and Tuesday (16th and 17th of November 2015) preparations by local fire control officers appear to have been well planned and proactive in repose to the forecast winds. A harvest ban was implemented in the western zone despite the weather conditions not being above ban conditions, this was in expectation of the forecast winds. This was also done to ensure maximum labour was available to deal with the potential threat to north Cascade.

Fire units were mobilised to north Cascade as well as special exemptions given for the harvesting of crops on the northern edge as a pre-emptive measure ...

Not enough recognition has been made of these proactive actions of the fire control officers as this has been overshadowed by the tragedy that followed ...

The other comment to note is that —

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All fire control officers directly mentioned that no chained break would have stopped the fire when it exited the bush at Tuesday lunch time.

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There has been expression from the fire control officers that had local air support been available it may have altered the planned deployment to the fire front ...

I suppose there are some specific issues around the method of firefighting and what we are really faced with in the south east agricultural area as distinct from the south west and south west forest. The loss of life and property in this fire has highlighted the need for fire control vigilance by all members of the community, but it also highlighted the significant difference in the firefighting and ground approaches by different landholders. In particular, there is a contrast between the management practices of neighbouring farmland and that for a fire in remnant vegetation. The report states —

The remnant vegetation area is remotely managed in a vertical hierarchy style by government —

This is generally unallocated crown land, national parks or reserves. This hierarchical style by government sets out regulations and procedures. In contrast, when a fire gets into farmland, the tenured farmland has a flat management structure with on-ground personnel and decision-makers. This makes for rapid responses with multiple resources quickly adapted to the task at hand. The report states —

This contrast of management structures could not be more different in their delivery one tends to ‘manage’ a fire while the other ‘responds’ to the fire with action to put it out.

It was really interesting that there were some concerns about local brigades fighting fires around tenured farmland by going out and fighting the fire directly, whereas when it comes to DFES fighting a fire, they tend to manage it; they will tend to sit back and wait for the fire to come to the break or the road and will fight the fire on that basis. That was one thing that was highlighted in the way in which fires are fought by the two management structures.

There are some experiences that I can recount in and around those three areas of early intervention, fire mitigation and communications. In relation to early intervention and particularly in relation to air support and water bombing for fires, there seems to be a policy within DFES that water bombers are not engaged until a fire gets to a certain level. I experienced this when I was in Parliament House on the Tuesday of the fire. When a fire gets to level 3, water bombers are activated. It seems to me and to people in and around the agricultural area—this is reflected in some of this report—that early intervention, wherever it is, is often the best intervention before the development of a wildfire. I agree with the Premier when he said that once the wildfire was coming on to Yarloop, no-one was going to stop it. When the north west Cascade fire became a wildfire after lunch on Tuesday, no-one could stop that fire. During that fire I saw the fear in the eyes of the local fire brigade guys and fire control officers, who have an enormous amount of experience. I have never seen such fear in their eyes. They were going with the fire and trying to outrun the fire. In fact, a lot of them got to Scaddan—in fact, one picked up a schoolteacher—and then they kept going east. They could not fight that fire. It is not about dealing with a fire once it is a raging wildfire; we need to look at some early intervention measures.

In jurisdictions in other states there is what we call predetermined dispatch; unlike this state, where we wait for the fire to become level 3. I have experience of this because I was actually involved in some of the discussions around trying to mobilise the water bombers on Tuesday. They were saying that the fire had not got to level 3 and therefore the water bombers were not engaged. After lunch it was a level 3 fire and in fact we had a raging wildfire, and that was the fire that caught up with those poor, unfortunate people—Freddy, Anna, Julia and Thomas.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** In relation to water bombing, I discovered in the small amount of research I did that in our area Dunn Aviation has, if you like, the air operator contract and has an air operator’s certificate. Dunn Aviation has 10 AT-802 water bombers, which carry 3 000 litres, and two smaller water bombers, 600s, that have a 2 400-litre capacity. They are the two aircraft listed on the contract, but they are very rarely mobilised and very rarely used. One of these planes is listed in the contract and sits in a hangar at the Esperance airstrip, and no call came to that operator at any time from early Tuesday through the whole course of the fire. The question has been asked whether, if we had predetermined dispatch, this certified air operator and pilot—it is actually a crop-spraying plane but can be mobilised as a water bomber with a small conversion over half an hour—could have been mobilised at the early signs of the fire in North Cascade, even if it were an interim measure while the substantive water bombers came from Albany. It usually takes around four hours before they are actually on the fire field.

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One of the things we could learn, and one of the things I would like the minister and the department to take on, is whether we can look at some of those early intervention formulae in the issue of predetermined dispatch, and really discount some of the finance and funding issues. In fact, the early spend is often the cheapest and early intervention is often the most effective.

In and around fire mitigation—that means, if you like, firebreaks and barriers to fires—I recognise that, as both local fire brigades and professionals have said, once a raging wildfire has started, you will not stop them; but in the early phases of a fire, breaks can make a difference. In fact, I had an experience that told me perhaps we could do things a little better in and around fire mitigation. I will just talk about the fire at Cape Arid, which was 100-odd kilometres away from Esperance but was potentially moving west into farmlands. Very sensibly, it was then that we cut a chain break in Department of Parks and Wildlife land. It was accredited by the Department of Parks and Wildlife with the appropriate Aboriginal heritage surveys to cut an 80-metre chain break at the interface between the vegetation, the unallocated crown land and the farming land. This was a process involving two bulldozers with a very big chain, chaining a barrier—a firebreak. This process was going on while the fire was raging. The minute the fire was downgraded, the bulldozers stopped. I had enormous difficulty trying to deal with all the agencies about finishing the job of continuing the barrier throughout the whole extent of the interface between unallocated crown land and the farming land, if not for today, for tomorrow. The policy I was given was they do not do fire mitigation. When a fire is raging, they will do a barrier, a break, but the minute the fire is not seen to be a hazard or a danger or is downscaled, then they will not do any more breaks.

I had a lot of trouble negotiating between the different agencies—DPaW, DFES, the local shire and the contractor. Eventually we resolved the issue and the break continued to be cut. The barrier has been cut through the whole eastern border between the unallocated crown land and the tenured farmland, but it was at the cost of both the contractor and the shire. The only people who would pick up the tab were the contractor and the shire. The contractor said, “I’m accredited and approved to do it. We’ll do it; I’m going to do it anyway because it’s my community contribution to do that.” The contractor said to me, “I want to do it anyway; I’ve got to do it anyway for the community. I’ve started the job; we’ve got the bulldozers there.” The bulldozers came from the south west; I think it was Nash Bros bulldozers. It cost \$25 000 to get the bulldozers on site to do this work. They were already there, they had done half the job, and the local contractor from McD Contracting Pty Ltd, Brett McDonald, said, “If the shire will go halves with the fuel, I’ll do the rest.” I rang the shire and spoke to the shire president, Victoria Brown, and the chief executive officer, Matthew Scott, and went to an emergency meeting and they said, “Yeah, we’ll fund it.”

I make the point to the Parliament and the government of which I am part that there seems something a little wrong with cost shifting when it is said, “Well, this is unallocated crown land”, and generally one would consider that that is a state responsibility and its jurisdiction. We have neighbouring farmland and is it not the state’s responsibility to endorse and maintain some form of fire mitigation as a responsibility? Whether it be wild dogs in the Cape Arid National Park or other ferals, or weeds, if it is on unallocated crown land there is some responsibility, surely, to the neighbour. The state government is saying, “We will cut a break.”

I just got a nasty look from the Whip as he went past; maybe I am talking for too long, but I have another five minutes!

**Mr A. Krsticevic** interjected.

**Dr G.G. JACOBS:** I do not think so!

This is a matter that was taken up by the local contractor and the shire, and the responsibility probably should have lain with the state. For me that is another message that we need to look at as far as fire breaks and barrier implementation are concerned, and there is a lot more to be said about that in and around what we do on unallocated crown land and national parks and reserves in fire mitigation.

I must finish with communication because I mentioned communication as an important tool in fighting fire, and it was a difficulty. I understand that when tragedies occur, sometimes these events will cause a breakdown in infrastructure. That was certainly the case with the Esperance fire when there was a loss of power to the phone exchanges and to the 21 mobile phone towers. Those mobile phone towers have a limited battery reserve, and of course we could not go into the fire ground to replace the batteries. All those 21 phone towers went down, and that created problems with communications. I understand that ultra-high-frequency radios are used for local fire ground communications, and that fire control vehicles have bushfire very-high-frequency radios that run via repeater units across the shire. The design of VHF radios is such that they provide a more robust performance for overall fire control communications. However, by the Tuesday evening, all communications modes had failed or were experiencing difficulties. The mobile phone and landline network had run down the battery backup, and the Cascade VHF repeater for fire control radios was not working properly. This made coordination of resources very difficult for fire control officers and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

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Work is being done by the state government to improve the telecommunications network in the region. The federal government is also providing funding for the region through its black spot program. We have done very well in getting 11 towers assigned to the region. Those towers will be rolled out in the next two or three years, and that will provide a better communications network. However, it is still not perfect. We are still faced with the issue of how we can sustain mobile phone communications during bushfires and avoid tragedies. If the new national broadband network satellite performs at the level claimed by government, there will be a number of hybrid solutions that can be used for data, voice and machinery tracking. Therefore, there is some possibility of improved communications into the future. I thank the Minister for Emergency Services for coming to Esperance with the Premier. I also thank the Prime Minister. He has made a note of the fact that the mobile phone towers had a very short battery life and that we need to look at whether we can improve that so that we can maintain communications during tragedies such as this.

It is important, minister, that we undertake an inventory of fire units to ensure that every possible unit in the region is made available during a fire. I mentioned to the minister the problem of units that have been decommissioned and taken out of the region. These fires are a good example of how we could have used every unit available to us. The units that have been decommissioned are not units that have broken down. They are still very good units, and they could be used in the regions by responsible and knowledgeable farmers in fighting fires. A parliamentary inquiry may be able to shed further light on this tragedy and enable the community to bring some of these systemic issues to light.

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah)** [5.03 pm]: I would like to make a contribution to the Premier's Statement, which has, of course, dominated the Parliament's program in our first week back for 2016. In doing so, I will talk first about the communities of the Peel and the south west and the devastating fires that occurred at the beginning of this year. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work of the volunteer bush fire brigades, the career firefighters, the State Emergency Service personnel, and the police. I also acknowledge the local governments of the Peel and the south west, which responded valiantly to the challenges that these tragic fires presented. I also want to acknowledge the member for Murray-Wellington for the leadership that he showed in his electorate, in which the fires were particularly focused, and for the work that he did as a member of this place and his advocacy for his community.

I want to highlight the tremendous way in which the communities of the Peel and the south west responded to the challenges of the fires that occurred earlier this year, and also in the last couple of weeks when there were some flare-ups. I acknowledge the responses from people like Donna Cocking at the Mandurah Caravan and Tourist Park on Pinjarra Road in the Shire of Murray, who opened up the park for people who were required to evacuate fire-affected areas, and people like Dee and her team at Halo Unisex Salon in Mandurah, who coordinated a call for goods and other services that were required by volunteers and evacuees. Many other people and organisations in the Shire of Murray, the Shire of Waroona and the City of Mandurah donated goods and money. It was amazing to see the response on social media. It was also amazing to see the response from our local radio stations, 6MM and 97.3 Coast FM. Squinty from Coast FM did some 12-hour and sometimes 15-hour stints to keep the local communities up to date with the latest information.

**Mr M.J. Cowper:** And also Electrical Distributors and Harvey Norman for coming out after hours and enabling equipment that was urgently needed to be sent to the front; so well done to those people in your electorate.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Absolutely. Many businesses, individuals and community service organisations responded. The response was remarkable. That highlights to me very clearly that when communities are challenged, they respond valiantly, whether they are in my region of the south west, in other regions, or in the metropolitan area. That was very much the experience in the recent bushfires.

We have heard from the member for Eyre about the response and the efforts of many people in Esperance. I commend them all. I also pay thanks to the local governments in my region and in the south west, particularly those that were directly affected by the fires. That includes the Shire of Harvey, and also the Shire of Murray, which was not affected by the fire emergency in Yarloop but responded tremendously by setting up an evacuation centre in Pinjarra. I also congratulate the volunteer bush fire brigades that came from other regions, including some metropolitan brigades, for a magnificent effort. I hope that the inquiry, which will be report to the Parliament at some stage in the future, will have a very broad scope and take feedback from all stakeholders.

I also want to raise an issue that comes under the local government portfolio. The Minister for Local Government is not in the chamber, but I want to highlight my ongoing concern about the time it is taking for the Department of Local Government and Communities to respond to the report of the Corruption and Crime Commission titled "Report on an Investigation into Acceptance and Disclosure of Gift and Travel Contributions by the Lord Mayor of the City of Perth". That report was released on 5 October last year, as members would be aware. However, five months later, we still are not informed about when the report from the minister's

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department will be presented to him, and what that report will recommend, and, indeed, whether that report will be made public.

It is important for the transparency of local government, particularly the premier local government of Western Australia—that is, our capital city’s local government—that the investigation by the Minister for Local Government’s department is released in a timely way. Quite honestly, in the last five months, the City of Perth has been paralysed as we wait for this report. I feel sorry for the Lord Mayor of Perth because she has been waiting for five months for the outcomes of this report. It is not fair, quite frankly, on the Lord Mayor or indeed on the council that they have been left waiting to find out the recommendations, whether there are any criminal charges to be laid et cetera. It is not fair and in terms of natural justice for the Lord Mayor and the council. We need to have that report released in a timely way. I am very concerned that we have been waiting five months with still no word from the Minister for Local Government. The minister needs to tell Parliament what the exact status is of his department’s report, when we will see it and any actions from the Corruption and Crime Commission report, and recommendations from his department so that we can ensure that the paralysis the City of Perth is experiencing is stopped. It is very concerning. Some of the information I have received is that there are a range of issues that need to be highlighted, and they must be made public.

This government is putting through Parliament the City of Perth Bill 2015, which this opposition has supported conditionally, with a number of amendments and conditions. However, it is not good for the government with a report on the actual City of Perth, that now has a piece of important legislation before the house, and there is uncertainty and a big question mark over the position of Lord Mayor and indeed, the council in general. The Minister for Local Government has to fix this. He has to come into this place and give a brief ministerial statement next week about where the report and investigation is at because the ratepayers of the City of Perth and indeed this Parliament deserve to know where his department is on it.

Today, the *Mandurah Mail* had a headline about a war of words between me and the Mayor of Mandurah. I like the Mayor of Mandurah; I think she is doing a good job. However, we are having a bit of war of words, according to the *Mandurah Mail*, about policing. I made some comments in a press release in which I expressed my concern that the local governments of the region need to step up to the plate to the policing model that was foisted upon us by the Liberal–National government about 18 months ago. It is a model I raised grave concerns about, which included the absorption of the Peel police district, as it was known, into the south metropolitan police district, something that I have opposed for many, many years. I suppose the clash between the mayor and I was on the role of local government. Whether people like it or not, the local government has a pivotal role in the health and certainly the community safety of its residents and ratepayers. It is my view that when there are policing figures and issues regarding a failed and flawed model foisted on a community that has, unfortunately, experienced huge spikes in crimes that we do not bury our head in the sand. It is my responsibility as the state member for Mandurah, but it is also the responsibility of the local governments within the Peel region, that is policed by the south metropolitan policing region, to stand up when we know things are not going well. I do not resile from that. Tomorrow I will meet with the mayor and the CEO of the City of Mandurah and I want to say that I believe it is time that local governments stood up to the government of the day when we know that the model of policing, the experiment that was foisted on us, is not working.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** How is the district office going then?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** This is one of the problems.

My argument has always been that Peel and Mandurah as the central population centre should be a policing entity in its own right and that it should be resourced appropriately. I will be talking to the mayor and CEO about that tomorrow. It is not an attack on the local government but it is a call to arms. I admire what the Mayor of Armadale has done. The Mayor of Armadale is standing up for his community. As a local government leader he has stood up and said, “Enough is enough.” Those are his words. He has had enough of Armadale being the number one crime place. Mandurah is number two. He has had enough and we should be doing that same in Mandurah, saying, “Enough is enough.” We need to highlight to the minister and government of the day that its flawed model needs to be dispensed with, resources need to be put where they need to be put and we have to battle these huge spikes in crime. I am looking forward to the meeting tomorrow. I know we will probably have an exchange about a whole range of ideas, but I do not resile from the fact that local government plays a pivotal role in community safety. It does not deliver policing, but it is its local community that is affected by flawed models, such as we have seen foisted on us in the Peel. I am looking forward to that tomorrow.

I want to talk about a couple of other things, firstly, the new traffic bridge. Mandurah’s traffic bridge, the old traffic bridge, as it is known, is 63-years old and it will be demolished by this government. It was decided that it will be decommissioned and in being decommissioned it will be demolished. It is a significant bridge and symbol of my city. It is a symbol of the past in terms of the city’s establishment as a village. Mandurah was very

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much just a little fishing village when it was built and opened in 1953. According to the experts, it has now reached the end of its natural life and because of the population growth in the region and indeed in Mandurah, it is now unable to cope with the current and projected traffic volumes from east to west. It is also structurally unable to cater for tonnage over 17 tonnes, including of course articulated buses and trucks. The decision has been made that it will be knocked over, and my argument has always been if we are going to build a new one, it has got to be something that is magnificent, something that is spectacular. This is our once in a hundred-year opportunity. It is replacing a symbolic and historic element of our city's history. Make it magnificent; make it special. Make it have a wow factor. Make it something that not only we who live there can be proud of, but also will be an important icon that attracts people to our city and that is reflective of the optimism, enthusiasm, energy and vibrancy of the community I live in. I have to say that the designs that have been highlighted are underwhelming. The wow factor opportunity has been underwhelming. I want to tell members why. I think that there has not been someone in government who will take a direct and active interest in this, like the former Liberal Premier Court did when the Court government—congratulations to it—built the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre. The Premier of the day, Richard Court, took a specific interest in the project in Mandurah in the late Court years. I know Richard Court. I was on the council at the time. Richard Court looked at it and said that it has to be special. A lot of people do not remember this, but the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre's design was a reflection of the Mandurah traffic bridge. The architects were told by the then Premier that he wanted to see a reflection of the other iconic structure in the city—the old traffic bridge.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The Mandurah Performing Arts Centre has pylons out the front, reflecting the old traffic bridge.

**Mr W.R. Marmion:** He drew the model. The original design was just a box.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Exactly.

I am not critical of the Deputy Premier, but there was an opportunity for him to take this and put a stamp on it. I believe that we will end up with an underwhelming structure. It is not sour grapes. We are going to miss this opportunity. The design that has been proposed is functional. It will deliver four lanes of traffic. That is brilliant! I understand the traffic projections. Yes, it will deliver that. It will also deliver a pedestrian aspect, which is very important. The current bridge has a one-metre-wide pedestrian access; this one will have a five-metre-wide pedestrian access—tick. The design is a basic concrete structure, which is very similar to the Mandurah Estuary Bridge, which spans the estuary about two or three kilometres further south. It is a great functional bridge, but it is boring. I think this one will be the same, and that is sad. Congratulations; \$8 million of royalties for regions money has been allocated for some enhancements, but I know what is going to happen with this bridge. Cost overruns will see this bridge end up with just the bare basics and we will have missed an opportunity. Some skyline elements should have been added to this bridge. It is a flat thing. The only amazing thing is that it is a curved bridge; that is the only interesting aspect of this bridge.

There is a big controversy in Mandurah at the moment over the magnificent new walkway bridge over Mandurah Road that links with the rail station. Unfortunately, the City of Mandurah has had a legal wrangle with the builders and now it is costing the ratepayers over a million bucks extra. That is terrible. A lot of people say that it is a bridge to nowhere, because they claim that they have seen only two or three people on it. The design of that bridge is actually not bad. It has a wave.

**Mr G.M. Castrilli:** It's got some character.

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** It has got some character. That is the sort of thing we should have with the Mandurah traffic bridge. That is the sort of aspect that would have given us a wow factor. I fear absolutely that we have missed the boat—or the bridge. It would have been a classic opportunity for the Deputy Premier, as one of the local members, to grab it and say, "We've got to make this wow." Do members know what we are going to end up with? We are going to end up with something that is boring and does not reach its potential.

Last night I listened to the comments of the member for Cockburn, our esteemed commentator on architecture!

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** He is the Robert Hughes of the WA Parliament!

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Yes! His point can be transferred to the Mandurah traffic bridge. I am not a designer, so I did not have a design in mind, but when that bridge is built, I want people to come to Mandurah and say, "Wow! Have you seen what they've done? It's magnificent." That would also have tempered the traditionalists, the heritage lovers and the romantics who want to keep the old one—and they are there. I can understand why

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they have that love for what exists now. We could have tempered some of that if we had done something magnificent, but we have missed the opportunity.

There is talk of having fishing platforms underneath the bridge. From what I have seen of the design, they will be minuscule and insignificant. That is one of the key aspects of the old entity and that has not been enhanced in the new bridge. This bridge should have brilliant lighting so that it can be lit up at night, similar to what happens around the world. Even Council House, which is probably one of the yuckiest buildings in the state with awful architecture, lights up in purple or pink or whatever coloured lighting, and that lighting can be changed depending on the current theme. This bridge should have those elements. There are very few north-facing facades in the City of Mandurah. That element should have been enhanced. We could have had some skyline-type enhancements. We have missed our biggest chance in a hundred years and it is disappointing. I hope and wish that, even at the last hour, someone from government grabs hold of it and says that we have got to start building but let us look at the elements that we can jig a bit to give it that wow factor. Please do it. It is disappointing. If someone had understood the importance of this bridge and had taken it by the hand and recognised that this has to be special, just as Premier Richard Court did with the Mandurah Performing Arts Centre, we could have ended up with something magnificent. I think we have missed the boat absolutely, and it is sad. The old bridge will go and we will have something that delivers traffic and pedestrians but is not really special. I just think we have missed that chance.

I want to highlight a couple of other important things. I am sorry that the Minister for Health, my good friend the member for Dawesville, is not in the chamber. I discovered this afternoon that he and I have an interest in common—that is, preserving fruit. I do mine in vacola jars, but he has more modern methods than I do. I am a traditionalist. I like to use the vacola jars; he likes to use the microwave. The member for Dawesville and I do not have many things in common, but that is one of them and that is good; I like it.

I want to highlight to the Minister for Health—I have written to him about this—that a young mother from Lakelands wrote to me and stated —

My name is Kristy Sanderson and I am currently a stay at home mum living in Meadow springs. My daughter is 2 and a half years old and we are expecting our 2nd baby in March ... I'm currently on long service leave from teaching at —

A local school —

... and will start maternity leave next week.

I am writing regarding the drop in clinic run by Dena Laidler at Lakelands community house. I was extremely disappointed to arrive at Lakelands ... to find that the clinic is no longer running. As a mother with young children at home, this service was invaluable. I have gone there regularly with concerns and questions about my daughter.

It is so important to be able to drop in to speak to a Child Health nurse about problems that cannot wait the 4 or 5 weeks it takes to get a regular appointment. It is also amazing to be able to go in and monitor your child's growth and speak to someone quickly about things that may not require a long appointment. It is also an opportunity to meet other mums in the area and have a cup of tea as being at home with young children can be extremely isolating.

I realize there is a clinic on a Tuesday in town, however with young kids it is amazing to have an option for all the young families in the northern parts of mandurah. The Tuesday clinic can be extremely busy and overwhelming for a new mother. The clinic at Lakelands is run by Dena Laidler who sees all new mums and babies in Meadow springs and Lakelands, so to know that you can drop in to see your own CHN who knows your history and your child was extremely valuable.

I am not alone in this, there were 2 other mums who came to the clinic in ... 5 minutes I was there. I am hoping that the drop in clinic can be reopened as soon as possible. I am also happy to discuss this further with you ... or get further community support for the clinic if that is what is required. Thanks for your time,

Kristy, as a young mum, lives in what I call nappy valley, which is Lakelands. Lakelands has an amazing number of young families—young mums and dads with children. Kristy is just one of hundreds of them. That is why the school opened and had over 600 students in its first year of full operation and this year is its second year. This program was run locally, delivering a service locally to an area where there are lots of young families with little kids, babies and infants. Why would the Department of Health withdraw a service operating in the community where it is needed? A lot of these young mums are partners of fly in, fly out workers and they feel isolated already because of the demands of young children and also the difficulties of getting out and about when

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they have young kids. I am pleading with the Minister for Health to return that service to Lakelands, and I want to talk to him about that personally.

I also want to highlight not-for-profit organisations that are currently funded with block funding from the Disability Services Commission, and I am sure that other members have come across this situation in their communities. Many not-for-profit organisations have now been told that their block funding will not continue. In my community that includes the Mandurah Disabled Support and Recreational Respite (Inc), which is an organisation I have been patron of for over 15 years. Its block funding of over \$30 000 has been withdrawn because of the move to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the uncertainty about how MADSAR fits in and how its service can continue when its money will be withdrawn. This also affects the Riding for the Disabled Association, an organisation that would be present in many communities. RDA Murray Mandurah is in my electorate, and Belinda Brown, the president, and her team are magnificent. They have provided this service for over 20 years. I remember them from when I was teaching in Mandurah over 20 years ago. Belinda and her team provide horseriding opportunities for children with disabilities in the Peel region. Block funding of about \$30 000 has been knocked off that organisation. Why? This has created uncertainty, and if it cannot fundraise to cover that gap, that organisation is in peril. It is not good enough.

I want to finish with what I think is a blatant problem with this Parliament that concerns petitions. All members in this place table petitions, but do members know what happens to them? Absolutely nothing! We table petitions in their ones, hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands. In my view, we are fraudulent when we circulate a petition in the community, because the expectation is that something will be done about it. The reality is that it will not. I am going to write to the Procedure and Privileges Committee and say that, as in other jurisdictions, we should have a process that deals with petitions. We may not be able to deal with all of them, but some jurisdictions, such as New South Wales, deal with the four petitions that have the highest number of signatories. It is not good enough! We are fraudulent. We circulate petitions and ultimately we know that the outcome is zero. That is not good enough! As parliamentarians, we have to change this. We have to change our standing orders or our operations in this Parliament so that our petitions actually mean something and something will be done about them.

**MR B.J. GRYLLS (Pilbara)** [5.34 pm]: I rise to make some comments on the Premier's Statement, the state of the state report that sums up this year's Parliament. I had prepared a few notes for my speech, but comments from the member for Mandurah have changed my speech somewhat. The member spent a long time talking about the Mandurah traffic bridge, which after 63 years is finally being funded so that it can be improved. It has been a problematic, decaying infrastructure that is at last being funded, which is a good outcome for Mandurah. The member said that he saw it as a missed opportunity if we just build a bridge and that he wanted something significant or special that had a wow factor attached to it. He wanted an important icon that attracts people and reflects the optimism and vibrancy of the community that he represents—Mandurah. It made me think about the problem that the Liberal–National government inherited when it was elected in 2008. We inherited a state that lacked optimism and vibrancy. The infrastructure was poor. There was no vision for the future. There was no power or water. Western Australia was regarded as Dullsville, with headlines on the front page of *The West Australian* day after day. The Liberal–National government set about turning that around. As we stand here at the start of Parliament in 2016, the Liberal–National government can be very proud of the Western Australia we now preside over in this Parliament, because it has been absolutely transformed. Our population has boomed. Our industry base has boomed. Our vibrancy and liveability have boomed, not just in the metropolitan area but across the length and breadth of the state. That transformation is very difficult to achieve, by either a state or national government. That is what the Liberal–National government has done.

Some of the commentary we have heard in this debate and in the wider media debate about blowing the boom and Western Australia becoming a basket case economy is actually wrong. We have not blown the boom; we have transformed the state with the right decisions. Members opposite can criticise all they want, but the member for Mandurah just made the debate for the Liberal–National government: at a unique time in Western Australia's history when the economy and our population increased rapidly we made the important decisions to take advantage of that and to build and grow the state so that we could take our place in the nation. Sydney and Melbourne were not the only places in Australia that people talked about; Perth and Western Australia could take their place also. This government made those decisions. Coming off the end of the mining boom and the rapid drop in prices of our commodities—Western Australia is an economy that is built heavily on that—has pushed our budget into substantial deficit. That has been criticised by members opposite, media types and others, but we would still have made the decisions that we made. It is not recognised that if the GST formula worked better, we would not have been pushed into deficit. But the formula is the formula, and that is what we have; and to change it is difficult. That is why we are in this situation now.

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I do not meet anyone in the Pilbara or in Western Australia who does not want the Western Australia of 2016; they definitely do not want to go back to the Western Australia of 2008. The Premier and his ministers should be very proud of the decisions they have made to deliver that outcome.

The job of the opposition is to oppose and to be negative and to try to get *The West Australian* to write negative stories on the front page of the paper. Their job is to make people feel bad about themselves, less optimistic and not excited. I thought the Elizabeth Quay story was a really interesting one about how politics works. The opposition carped on about it and hated it day after day. *The West Australian* followed suit and carped on and hated it day after day. *The Sunday Times* did the same. But when it came time to open it and thousands of people were down there, all the stories changed and the story has turned into, “What a fantastic thing and, look, it offers a whole new perspective of Perth. We’ve matured and grown up and isn’t this outstanding!” If members looked at the coverage of the aftermath of the opening and compared it with the four or five years previous, a lot of people might just want to keep their counsel. Elizabeth Quay was an important project and it had been talked about for decades—it has finally been done. Congratulations to the Premier and Minister Day and others for driving that agenda and adding something to Western Australia.

Members opposite cannot support people like the member for Mandurah wanting the new traffic bridge to be significant and special and have the wow factor and be an icon that reflects the optimism of Mandurah, and then say that the government should not have done Elizabeth Quay, the sports stadium and all the other projects that have seen our debt push up to higher levels. Every single decision was the right decision for Western Australia when it was made, and now as a government, the Liberal–National government has to deal with the changing economy. We have to deal with the deficits that we have short term. The GST money will come back, savings will be made and Western Australia’s economy will return to the underlying strength that it has.

That is what the Premier said and that is what I believe. That is why the Liberal–National government should not take a backward step in defending the decisions that it has made. We have to stare down the critics who liked Perth and Western Australia being Dullsville. They liked that. Members opposite know that they are some of them.

I will just turn to the Pilbara, because we have our own little example that has been roundly criticised in this chamber; that is, the Finbar Pelago towers. The Finbar Pelago towers have changed the face of Karratha. They have given Karratha people the confidence to be proud of their town and to bring people to their community and take them out for a meal or a drink. It is the centrepiece that frames the town. Nickol Bay is behind it. It is iconic, significant and special. It brings a wow factor to Karratha. It is an important icon that attracts people and reflects the optimism and vibrancy of Karratha. That project was driven by the Liberal–National government against enormous criticism from those opposite, and they continue to criticise. We now have a similar project for Port Hedland—a waterfront development at Spoilbank Marina backed up by a redevelopment of the old, dilapidated hospital site into apartments. Members opposite oppose it. They do not want it to happen. They want that to stay a dry, dusty, old, sandy Spoilbank area, and they want the old hospital site, which was built in the 1960s—a transportable that is full of asbestos—to be the waterfront precinct of Port Hedland. I rail against that. Why should Port Hedland not have its waterfront development just like Elizabeth Quay so that the people of Port Hedland and that part of the Pilbara can reflect their optimism and the vibrancy of their region? Yes, the economy has turned and the market is softer—iron ore is not delivering the windfall revenues to the state—but the community of Port Hedland deserves to have its Elizabeth Quay. If the member for Mandurah and other members opposite propose to argue for a vibrancy and an excitement that can come from iconic infrastructure like a bridge in Mandurah, they should not stand up and lecture me about what we should build in Port Hedland, because that community has delivered the revenue stream that has led to Western Australia taking its place as a proud, vibrant and optimistic state in this nation. I do not think we could say that prior to 2008.

The Western Australian government has invested in power, water, sewerage, roads, schools and hospitals. We have made sure that there are teachers in front of classrooms, which was not always the case at the start of the school year when I sat on the opposition benches. We have made sure that there is power in the utility lines so that the power does not drop out, which was not always the case when I sat on the opposition benches. We have made sure that the infrastructure is there for a growing and prosperous state. They were the right decisions. If members read the commentary of today it is all about, “You shouldn’t have done it. You should have known it was a short-term boom and it was going to stop, so you should have stayed where you were.” Western Australia as a state was not going to stay where it was; we want to grow and expand. We want to become more important in the nation. We want more people to come and live here. That is what we have done and that is what we have set up. I am really proud of that. That is why this Western Australian government should be proud. Up in the Pilbara we have made significant investments to try to resolve problems caused by years of underinvestment. It has been significant, but it has been transformational. I urge those journalists who

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continue to write disgracefully incorrect stories about the Pilbara to please just come up to Karratha and Port Hedland and have a look at what they are writing about. Just this week we are doing a bulky goods project in Karratha. We have sold 40 per cent of it through LandCorp. Eleven national retailers have put up their hands to bring major investments of retail to that community. It is being put in a brand-new subdivision that was not even contemplated prior to 2008. That is exciting news that indicates to me that we have reached the bottom of the cycle and that opportunities are there and that people will continue to come and invest. It is absolutely critical that we continue to do that.

Members of the opposition and some of the people in the media are allowed to be critical and to not agree with policy decisions, but this notion of blowing the boom is wrong—it is factually incorrect. Western Australia has been transformed. The reason our debt and deficit is pushing up is because of the quirks of the GST formula. That will be resolved; the GST formula will come back. It is the states that have been relying on Western Australia's share of the GST that should be most worried. We all watched the cricket over the winter and saw Adelaide's brand-new sports stadium. The Adelaide Oval redevelopment was paid for with Western Australian GST. The notion that Western Australia should not build a new sports stadium because our revenue streams are volatile because of the mining sector but that Adelaide should build one based on the GST distribution that it gets shows the fallacy of the opposition argument that we have overinvested in our infrastructure. Western Australia should have the best stadium in the nation because it is Western Australian income over the last 10 years that has driven the nation's economy. Western Australia should have that, as well as the infrastructure and sporting upgrades that the royalties for regions program has delivered to regional communities. Let us not be so determined to be in opposition and to talk down the Western Australian economy that we ignore the very obvious realities of the Western Australian economy and how it operates. I think the Premier can be rightly proud of the government he has led. Here we are in 2016 dealing with a budget challenge, but it will be a short-term budget challenge. We will come out of that cycle and Western Australia will be forever transformed from this period of government, with developments like Fiona Stanley Hospital, the new children's hospital in the city, major infrastructure for all the sporting codes and a regional development agenda that is envied by every person who lives in regional Australia. We spend more on regional development in Western Australia than the national government spends on regional development. We have a budget of \$30 billion and it has a budget of \$360-odd billion, yet we spend more on regional development. Our program is \$1 billion a year and the federal government's program is \$1 billion over its four-year budget cycle. That is what is driving the transformation of that part of the world.

I will not seek an extension because I want everybody to be able to go home.

The next thing I want to talk about is the fly in, fly out workforce, because I think it is important that I am on the record explaining to people what I, as the local member for Pilbara, see is actually happening. The risk to the FIFO worker in Western Australia is not parliamentarians focused on regional development, but their mate down the road who may well move to the Pilbara for the great job and lifestyle that exists there and who will save the company that employs him thousands and thousands of dollars a year in the added cost per unit of labour that is involved with FIFO workers. Hundreds of workers are concerned for their jobs in the regional sector. A FIFO worker adds between \$50 000, \$60 000, \$70 000 and up to \$90 000 a year in the cost of flights, accommodation, food, support services and gym instructors—in everything that is supplied for that worker. If one of those FIFO workers decides that he —

**Ms J.M. Freeman:** Or she.

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** — or she, will move to the Pilbara with his family, they can provide the same unit of labour to that company and wash that cost straight off the bottom line. It is not going to be me, as the member for Pilbara, who changes the dynamic of how the workforce in the Pilbara is housed and where they are housed; it will be the chief financial officer of a company that is trying to deal with \$35 to \$40 a tonne iron ore who says that the company can no longer afford to employ a FIFO worker because of the cost structures. They will start to advertise on seek.com for the very same skill base that they are employing at the moment as FIFO workers, and they will attract that person. It might not be the existing FIFO worker who moves to the Pilbara—I accept that. Lots of people are well set up and do not want to move. But in a soft world labour market, with high skills readily available right across the world, the notion that working for the resource companies of Western Australia and living in the Pilbara would be so foreign to people that they would rather be unemployed and living in Perth or Mandurah is totally fanciful. It is absolutely critical for these workers to understand what is happening in their industry. Reg Howard-Smith, in the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia, has stated that he has done a survey of our workers and they do not want to live in the Pilbara, so the National Party should stop talking about it. He actually has it wrong and he is not being fair to those workers. Those workers should understand that the cost of every two workers on FIFO is the same as the full salary of a third worker. For the first time, in the last couple of weeks I am starting to hear FIFO workers and others in the

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Pilbara talking about the very generous packages that they are on, and saying that they would rather see some of their packages scaled down so that the half of the workforce who will otherwise potentially be made redundant will not lose their jobs. A massive transformation is happening in the Pilbara workforce because companies, understandably, have to rapidly decrease their cost bases, and FIFO workers add a huge cost to the per-tonne cost of bringing iron ore and other minerals out of the ground. The government has invested heavily in making the Pilbara a better place to live with new schools, new hospitals, new sporting infrastructure, and new small bars and entertainment outlets. The companies now need to save money. Rather than the constant rantings of Reg Howard-Smith, whose commentary makes no sense if you live in the Pilbara, we would like the companies to recognise that substantial savings can be made by normalising the workforce. These savings will make the companies more profitable and make their workforce more mentally healthy in a community-minded way, following this Parliament's mental health inquiry. As we speak, that is all coming down the track.

I understand why a FIFO worker might not want to hear that story. I understand that, except that is the reality. Every company that has been able to nimbly move their businesses to wash FIFOs out of their equations has already done so. Every company that is able to reduce housing subsidies and benefits to reflect the fact that there are now 500 applications for most jobs in the Pilbara has done so. For some reason, the mining sector, even though it is racing to protect its bottom line, has not indicated even a willingness to work in that space, and I think that it needs to. It is not sensible for companies to pay a 50 per cent premium on the labour unit that they need to undertake their business if they do not have to. Given that most companies have around 30 to 50 per cent of their workforce living residentially in Karratha, Port Hedland or Newman now, we would expect that that would continue and that residential workers would become a more regular way of life for the mining workforce.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr B.J. GRYLLS:** Obviously, there will still be FIFO opportunities in the remote, inland mine sites where ore is taken out of the ground. I understand that and support that; I have no problems with it. I just do not know why we continue to perpetuate that. Given that I gave the Premier such a bouquet for his vision for Western Australia over the last eight years of his premiership, I finish with his decision on the BHP Billiton Newman workers camp and the Chevron workers camp in Onslow. Those two decisions are wrong; I do not agree with the Premier. With 300 empty houses in Newman that are owned by BHP—brand-new private houses that were built to service the mining sector, the rent for which is down below \$400 a week—it makes no sense to normalise a 1 000-man worker camp behind a barbed wire fence on the edge of town. That is why the Nationals are very strongly opposed to that decision by the Premier to offer BHP a 25-year lease extension for that camp. BHP locals can recall when BHP was saying that it needed this camp. Back in 2007, it proposed to the community that the camp was needed for the construction of its expansions in and around Newman in the BHP operations. Once those constructions were finished, the camp was to be handed back to the community to be potentially converted into accommodation for a caravan park or the like. That is what BHP said to the community in 2007. It came back in 2015 and said that it had changed its mind; it now wants to normalise the FIFO workforce as the only way it can attract the skills it needs in Newman. I do not accept that. Half of BHP's workforce already lives in Newman. The notion that the other half could not live in Newman seems to be rather strange in the soft employment market that we have at the moment. I call on the Premier to reconsider his support for a 25-year extension because if that becomes the normal, we then say that FIFO is an accepted way of life into perpetuity in a community such as Newman. I do not agree with that. FIFO was necessary for the massive upgrade and expansion of the mining sector. There was no land, there was no housing, and rents were out of control; there was no infrastructure to support it. But that is now not the case. Now, off the back of the parliamentary committee's recommendations, chaired by the member for Eyre, and with my anecdotes as the local MP, it is time to normalise.

The argument for Onslow and Chevron is the same. Chevron should have a construction camp for its workers to build the Wheatstone Project. It should not have a camp for the operational workforce. They should do what Roy Krzywosinski promised me that he would do as the boss of Chevron—to build Onslow into a vibrant, special, significant, important icon of a community that reflects the optimism and vibrancy of that little community. Roy Krzywosinski promised that to the people of Onslow; he promised that to the people of the Pilbara; and he promised that to me personally. Then he reneged on that promise. That is incredibly disappointing for that community and disappointing for me personally. He convinced the Premier to allow him to renege on those promises. I ask the Premier, in accepting the bouquets of wonderful leadership in the growth of Perth and the regions over the last eight years, to look at those two issues of Chevron in Onslow and BHP in Newman and make decisions that allow the government's investments in those communities to be utilised and fulfilled by people who live and work in the community, raise their families there, and work in the very exciting Western Australian resource sector. If we could solve those two problems, I would have nothing but praise for the Premier in reply to his statement here today.

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**MS J.M. FREEMAN (Mirrabooka)** [5.57 pm]: I thank the house for the opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement. I will endeavour to make it worth members' while for staying at this late hour. However, before I begin my speech, I have been asked by the member for Eyre, who was remiss in not laying a document on the table, to do it on his behalf. I lay the report of the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association—SEPWA—into the Esperance fires on the table for the remainder of the day's sitting.

[The paper was tabled for the information of members.]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I begin by congratulating Hon Liza Harvey, now the Deputy Premier of the state. It is great to see a woman in such a leadership position. It provides a really good role model for many women in Western Australia. It is not easy to think about going into politics as a woman. Most women ask, "Why would I do that?" It is very good to see a woman in that position for no reason other than it reflects our state's diversity and the rich capacity for everyone in our community to fully participate. I also urge her, as the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Women's Interests, to join the Australian of the Year in championing changes in corporate and public sector Australia to address the gender pay gap. We have to get away from the myth that somehow because women leave the labour market, they choose certain segregated jobs, or other myths around women's work. We cannot accept a gender pay gap of 26 per cent in this state. It is interesting that *The Conversation* released an article on this subject on 27 February 2015 titled "Defending the indefensible: myths about the gender pay gap". It stated that the workplace gender equality agency recently indicated a gender pay gap as high as 45 per cent amongst managers. That is not simply because they did not lean in. It is because there are many issues and systematic and structural problems that impact on the wages and conditions of women in the workforce. I will not go through each of the myths that are outlined in that article, but they are debunked. There are four that are debunked, and I suggest that if anyone wants to look at that, it is available.

I want to respond to the member for Pilbara and some of his comments about fly in, fly out workers. I worked on a report for the Education and Health Standing Committee about FIFO workers, and the member falls into the category of people who blame FIFO workers for not choosing to live in regional areas. He said that the FIFO worker who chooses to come up there will be more cost-effective to the mining company but he finished off by saying that there are companies who have done this and placed them in FIFO camps. FIFO workers for Chevron in Onslow are in a situation in which if they choose to live in Onslow, when they are on shift they still have to go into the camp. There is no driving in to the job every day; they still want them in that camp. This is not about blaming the workers. That is the second time I have said that today. Look at the structures, look at the employers, and look at why they are choosing to have this structure, because that really is at the crux of this story about why we have seen such an increase in FIFO workers. It is about controlling workers and having them in a confined area so that as an employer, you do not get the other variables of day-to-day lives outside the workplace.

One of the absolutely important reasons I really wanted to stand up here today and put this on record—the Premier's Statement is not listed for next week—is that I need to make the house aware of an extraordinarily disturbing and distressing situation in Mirrabooka. The Leader of the Opposition was correct in his assessment that the people of WA want competence, honesty and responsibility. This time last year, around 18 March, I pointed out that unemployment in the Mirrabooka–Balga area was at a high of just over 16 per cent. I called on the government at that time to act. That was an appalling figure that needed some response. I pointed out at that time to the now Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, that the unemployment rate in the area she represents was 2.8 per cent. I pointed out what an impact a more than 16 per cent unemployment rate has on a community. I pointed out some of the issues around those sorts of inequities in terms of income and what impact that has on education, health and crime and the whole area. I went through it and called on her as the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, who goes into the federal jurisdiction, to do something; something had to be done. Despite that, it is now clear that the government did nothing in that period of time. From September 2014, with an unemployment rate of 16.4 per cent at that time, it grew to 23.1 per cent in the Mirrabooka–Balga area in September 2015. I was looking at the figures last year on 18 March and reflecting on them, and now I am looking at the September 2015 figures, and, in that year, from 1 597 unemployed people, it has now risen to 2 311. That is an increase of 714 people looking for work over the last 12 months, just in those two suburbs. One can only emphasise that this is now at crisis point, and this government needs to respond to the needs of the community for stable, ongoing and meaningful employment.

I want to contrast that with the community of Cottesloe, which has actually seen in that 12 months a decline in unemployment from 117 people to 88. That is a decline from 2.3 per cent in September 2014 to 1.9 per cent in September 2015. I recognise that Cottesloe has a labour force of 4 364 compared with Mirrabooka–Balga at 9 997, but that is no explanation for such a disparity. That is an unemployment difference of 1.9 per cent in Cottesloe in September 2015 and 23 per cent in an area that is only 25 minutes' drive away. Someone could

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leave their front door in Cottesloe, get in the car and be in the inner suburban area of Mirrabooka–Balga in 25 minutes, and it is a completely different context.

The government has already abandoned the people of Mirrabooka on the delivery of the light rail it committed to in 2012 and promised in the last election, and it has now abandoned the basic standards of living for people in the northern suburbs. It may have delivered a spanking new City Beach surf club facility to which people can go and have a lovely dinner, it may have delivered a spanking new stadium to Claremont Football Club, and it may have delivered Elizabeth Quay for people from the western suburbs to go and watch the Perth International Arts Festival events, but it has to be held to account for failing the basic needs of the people in the area I represent. This figure is damning.

While we are on the subject of Elizabeth Quay, I heard the member for Cockburn’s comments and I do not want to say anything quite so controversial, but can anybody explain this to me? If you are going to dig a big hole and fill it in, why would you not do something so that people do not get off the train at Esplanade, go up the escalator and stop all the traffic trying to cross at the traffic signals to get into the place? There were masses of people; I went there because that is where Chevron Festival Gardens are. I did not get to see Elizabeth Quay; I just went to Chevron Festival Gardens. It makes no sense to me why we do not have an underground pass into the new public space. If we say that we have planned it so well, why was something as basic as getting hundreds of people to Elizabeth Quay not considered? Was it last Thursday that Chevron Festival Gardens opened with *Nightmares on Wax*, minister? He did not stay. I stayed and danced! He had gone. It was awesome!

**Mr J.H.D. Day:** I had work to do!

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** So did I, but you cannot miss a good dance! I paid for my ticket, by the way; I just wanted to say that I did not go at the taxpayers’ expense!

When I looked up, I went, “Oh, yes; that makes no sense”.

**Mr C.D. Hatton** interjected.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Yes! Thank you, member for Balcatta! I am just saying, if you have all the equipment there, why would you not do it?

I want to get back to the important point of this whole speech. I remind members again that in Mirrabooka–Balga, out of every 10 people there are two people unemployed. In the Great Depression of the 1930s, the unemployment rate averaged around 23 per cent, and in an area of our own city we now have an unemployment rate of 23 per cent. Mirrabooka–Balga now rates higher for unemployment than the West Kimberley, on the government’s watch.

**Mr P. Abetz:** Isn’t it good that they’ve got jobs up there?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** It is probably great; I think they are around the same and we have increased. The problem is that we have increased. If members want to know where the statistics come from, they come from the “Small Area Labour Markets” publication put out by the federal Department of Employment; it is available on the website.

**Mr C.D. Hatton** interjected.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** No, and you also cannot say “Where are they coming from?” They are coming because we have lost jobs. My understanding is that the Liberal government inherited an unemployment rate of 2.7 per cent when it came into government, and it is now at around six per cent when you look at the whole figures.

**Mr C.D. Hatton** interjected.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The member wants to go home? I want to say my speech, thank you very much, member. Three hundred jobs are lost per day in Western Australia. This government has lost its way on employment. I have raised that issue in this place previously.

At the same time as the Liberal–National government has limited people’s access to technical and further education and we have a high rate of unemployment in my area, the government has made cuts to financial counselling services. I have no financial counselling services left in Mirrabooka. The government has cancelled Anglicare’s financial counselling services and it has defunded the Salvation Army’s financial counselling services. People who live in Balga and Mirrabooka, with an unemployment rate of 23 per cent, have to go to Joondalup or into Perth if they need financial counselling services. Go figure! How could that happen? The Premier told me in his Premier’s Statement that he is standing up for vulnerable people. If the Premier is standing up for vulnerable people, there is no evidence of that in Mirrabooka and Balga. As the Leader of the

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Opposition has said in this place, only Labor has a plan for jobs in Western Australia and in my electorate of Mirrabooka, and he outlined the policy recommendations that Labor has made in that area.

However, any plan for employment also needs to ensure that workers return home safely. According to WorkSafe, there have been 16 workplace deaths so far this financial year. That includes an electrical worker who died in the south west on 31 January. In 2014–15, 22 people were killed at work. Five years ago, nine people were killed at work. In 2013–14, 16 people were killed at work. There are some reports and some conjecture that the number of workplace deaths is underestimated because WorkSafe does not treat traffic accidents as workplace deaths, and certainly suicide in the workplace is not reported, which is what we found out from the report of our inquiry into fly in, fly out workers. When we have such distressing figures, with 22 per cent killed at work in 2014–15 and 15 deaths so far this financial year, it is hard to fathom the cut of \$4.1 million to the budget of WorkSafe in the 2015–16 state budget.

I also need to mention the MAX light rail that was supposed to come to Mirrabooka. I do not want to spend too much time on this, but it would be remiss of me when I am on my feet not to represent my community and say they are extremely disappointed that this promise has been broken. I remind members that this promise was made on 21 May 2013. We all know that this was promised before the election, and it was also an election promise. The Premier came to Balga in September 2012 and stood in front of Balga TAFE and said, in front of the media, “I give you the tip; go and buy property around this area.” We all know that the reason that massive buildings are being built in these areas is because of this idea that the MAX light rail is coming. On 21 May 2013, in answer to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier said adamantly, “Yes, we will build a light rail to Mirrabooka”. In February 2014, the Premier said that work will not stop on the MAX light rail project. Constantly, the Premier has said in this Parliament that that project will continue. However, it is clear from the questions that I asked last year that that is not the case. What really galls me about this is that it is a missed opportunity.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** The Premier made this promise to the people of Mirrabooka. However, the federal government then changed, and we got Malcolm Turnbull, who is more aligned to doing critical infrastructure and light rail and rail. I wrote to Jamie Briggs, the Minister for Cities and Built Environment at the time, noting that it was a promise and that the 2011 census showed clearly that the residents of the electorate of Mirrabooka overwhelmingly rely on cars—over 65 per cent—as their primary mode of transport, fewer than five per cent have the capacity to rely on trains, and fewer than 10 per cent utilise inconvenient bus services. I said to the minister, “Here is the opportunity to deliver something that has been promised to the people of Mirrabooka”. The response from Jamie Briggs was that there would be a discussion about light rail when he visited Perth. So, that was discussed when he came to Perth after the change of Prime Minister in October 2015. Yet the Minister for Transport, in his reply to me, simply dismissed it. He did not even talk about whether he had raised light rail with the federal government. It is very clear that despite the Premier’s constant claim that there would be a MAX light rail, no effort was made to go to the new federal Liberal government, which was keen on light rail and rail, to progress a promise that he had made to the people of Mirrabooka—no effort whatsoever.

I want to talk about another cut that has been made to services in my electorate. This cut is really sad. That is the cut to the Sharing Stories program, which is funded by the Department of Health and run through the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre of Western Australia. The migrant resource centre has developed a strong evidence-based project for multicultural groups to increase awareness of how blood-borne viruses and sexual health issues impact on culturally and linguistically diverse communities. These young and enthusiastic people have developed an innovative and effective approach to health promotion. It is not uncommon for me to go to a community event at which the Sharing Stories people are sharing stories and promoting their program. They did not just make a CD that some politician launched and then sit back and do nothing. They launched their CD, and they then worked with people to make changes and share the message of sexual health. As we can imagine, it can be quite difficult in CALD communities to broach issues about sexuality. However, that is a very important issue. It is, therefore, a great disappointment that their funding has not been continued, given their successes. This group attended and performed at the Twentieth International AIDS Conference in 2014 and has won 12 awards and nominations, such as the national 2015 Settlement Innovation Award in the Australian Migration and Settlement Awards.

The member for Kalgoorlie and Deputy Speaker raised the lack of funding for tenancy advice services. I would ask her to go back and look at the estimates. I would like to remind members of this house that this is not because there is less money in the bond account. It is because this government has raided that account to run the Magistrates Court and the operations of the Department of Housing. During the estimates hearing, the director of the department undertook to endeavour to reduce the demand by the department on the fund in order to increase funding for tenancy advice services. The estimates supplementary information makes it very clear that this is not

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a problem of the government seeking other sources of income to fund the department's operations, to the detriment of community services.

I thank members for their forbearance at this late hour. I also want to talk about the Fringe World Festival. The Minister for Culture and the Arts will remember that last year I raised the Fringe and the innovative model that we have around the Fringe. That innovative model is an open market joint risk model. Open market joint risk means that the government opens the market, the performers pay the government a \$300 registration fee, and they as the artists take all the risk. Two years ago, the festival doubled its registration fee. At the same time, the festival went from having around 300 acts to 700 acts, yet the registration fee was doubled. It does not make sense to me that the number of acts has increased, and the fee has also increased. The festival also increased its ticket takings from 30 per cent to 32 per cent. Every time an artist sells a ticket to their performance, the Fringe gets 32 per cent of the money. I get that the Fringe is a not-for-profit registered charity. I get that it is trying to encourage alternative ways of running arts events in this state. However, it is so important to know that when we all pat ourselves on the back and say how well the Fringe is doing, and that Lotterywest has contributed money, the point is that unless the Fringe is sustainable for the artists, it will not be sustainable for Perth. It is a great festival. My son performed in the Fringe recently. It was great.

**Mr J.M. Francis:** Was he playing the guitar?

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** Yes. He was in *The Ruby Red Fatales*. They did one joke that was really poor, but other than that it was really good. He was fantastic. Now that I have the attention of members, one of the things he had to do was a bit embarrassing—so it was great to have mum there, and I was sitting in the front row! It was great, but he made no money out of it. Members would be aware that there is a campaign to try to make it more sustainable. I have worked for a long time with a woman called Anne Sorenson. She is great. She is doing some great work in Albany now. She states in an email —

Fringe World has worked hard to get the recognition WA artists want from a festival and I think we should stand behind the work they have done.

She also states that artists are not getting equal pay and —

... no one expects the toilet cleaners, security or bar staff to work for nothing, yet artists are expected to work for the exposure, fun, networking opportunities and profit share.

There is a list of ideas about what could be done, such as providing incentives for small businesses to provide pro bono support through printing, promotion and marketing support, and providing free public transport for artists. I could go on and on but I know that people would get annoyed. We need to have a proper look at how we can make it sustainable for artists. We all love it, but we will lose it, because artists will work out that it is just not worth their time.

A young bloke put a comment on the Facebook site for the artists in which he stated that he spent three years studying performance at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, only to follow it with 20 years of paying off his higher education contribution scheme debt, and he spent 40 minutes doing an educational role-playing gig and he made \$200, but he spent five weeks on fantastic Blue Room Theatre plays that are completely sold out and made \$300—if he was lucky. People cannot go on like that. My son teaches guitar and that makes him money. He enjoys that and he enjoys the interaction, but he wants to perform. He is a great performer. The people at the Fringe World Festival want to perform.

There was an interesting article by Steve Bevis in which he stated —

Like bees to a pot of honey, big-name international acts like La Soiree and Limbo have been attracted to Fringe World, where they have been sucking up the dollars with seasons that extend weeks after the festival ends.

There are two views on this: one is a resentment view that they are taking away from the locals, and the second is that these acts bring in first-time fringers. But the really good point he makes is —

This is a wider issue of how to best support artistic endeavour long after the spiegel tents, pop-up bars and mermaid tanks have been packed up for another year.

Certainly, that is what the Fringe artists have said. We have to consider how to make it happen not just in that period. We have to look at overhauling the system so that it goes further and gives artists more opportunities at different times.

I will finish by saying what I said last year: it should not just be in the city and at Scarborough. It is great that Midlandia has it, but I want one in Mirrabooka. The member for Belmont should have one. I understand that it was fantastic in Geraldton. There are young artists from diverse backgrounds who would love the opportunity to

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perform to their communities, and the member for Bunbury would know that from his work when he was Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests.

**Mr G.M. Castrilli:** And they're brilliant too.

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** And they are brilliant, but they cannot afford a \$300 mark-up.

Before I finish, I have noticed the crime rate in my area, which goes together with the unemployment rate. Therefore, I would like to move an amendment to the question before the house.

*Amendment to Question*

**Ms J.M. FREEMAN:** I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that the Liberal–National government be condemned for failing to meet its election promise on police numbers

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr J.H.D. Day (Leader of the House)**.

*House adjourned at 6.24 pm*

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