



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2021

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 16 September 2021

# Legislative Assembly

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**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** took the chair at 9.00 am, acknowledged country and read prayers.

## PAPERS TABLED

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

### ANNUAL REPORTS — TABLING

#### *Statement by Treasurer*

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Treasurer)** [9.04 am]: I rise to inform the house about the late tabling of some 2020–21 annual reports. A number of agencies are unable to table their 2020–21 annual reports within the time frame required by the Financial Management Act 2006. Section 64 of the act requires ministers to table an agency's annual report and the Auditor General's opinion, if applicable, within 90 days of the financial year's end, being 28 September. When a minister is unable to table an agency's annual report within the 90-day period, they are required to inform Parliament under section 65 of the act on or before the expiry of the 90 days regarding the minister's inability to do so, the reasons for that inability and the anticipated date of tabling of the annual report.

Following precedent set in 2017, these accountability requirements can be administratively achieved by way of tabling individual ministerial notifications in Parliament through one minister—me as Treasurer in the Legislative Assembly and the minister representing the Treasurer in the Legislative Council—on behalf of other ministers. Ministers have notified me in writing of the agencies within their portfolios that are unable to table their annual report by 28 September as well as the reasons for that inability and the anticipated date on which the annual report will be tabled. Therefore, in accordance with section 65 of the act, I now table the notifications provided by affected ministers.

[See papers [578](#) to [599](#).]

### NATIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE AWARDS

#### *Statement by Minister for Health*

**MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Minister for Health)** [9.06 am]: I would like to share the wonderful news that three WA Country Health Service clinicians have been honoured at the National Palliative Care Awards, acknowledging the outstanding contributions each has made in their field. Congratulations to Robyn Ellis, regional nurse manager midwest, who received the Excellence in Palliative Care—Rural and Remote award. Robyn was recognised for her innovative, creative and collaborative approach to providing palliative care services across a vast geographic region. The winner in the Excellence in Generalist Palliative Care category was Dr Ramachenderan, who is a general practitioner from the great southern. Dr Paula Moffat took home the top honour for Excellence in Palliative Care—Community Based Care. Dr Moffat is a palliative care consultant employed at Bethesda Health Care palliative care unit and also provides important end-of-life care in the Pilbara.

These awards highlight the quality of care and support available to regional Western Australians. Providing compassionate care to our country communities is central to the WA Country Health Service's mission, which the McGowan government proudly supports. WACHS provides palliative care services across Western Australia's seven regions and is committed to delivering exceptional care for WA communities both on country and close to home. Palliative care consultants are available in every region and telepalliative care is now available direct to patients in their homes. In recent years, WA Country Health Service has focused on developing palliative care services to meet its patients' clinical, spiritual and social needs. WACHS has also committed to bringing the best possible palliative care services closer to home for regional families by implementing the \$39.7 million palliative care program. Importantly, we are also investing in palliative care support for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal healthcare workers are vital members of our multidisciplinary palliative care teams across regional WA, working with other specialists to connect Aboriginal people with end-of-life services that reflect their spiritual connection to country and family. In the past two years, WACHS has increased the number of Aboriginal palliative care workers to six, with further recruitment planned. Thank you to all the wonderful healthcare workers working in palliative care.

### ORD VALLEY MUSTER

#### *Statement by Minister for Tourism*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Tourism)** [9.08 am]: I am very pleased to inform the house that the twentieth Ord Valley Muster event, which took place in Kununurra earlier this year, was a huge success. Close to 2 300 people from outside the Kimberley region attended the Argyle Diamonds 2021 Ord Valley Muster, injecting around \$6 million into the local economy. The event recorded its highest ever turnout, with 11 400 people attending the East Kimberley's biggest festival over nine days. Held from 21 to 29 May, the Ord Valley Muster's program featured music, food, art, comedy and cultural experiences. Almost all events sold out for the first time

in its 20-year history, with ticket sales reaching nearly 5 800. That represented a 64 per cent increase in ticket sales on the 2019 event, which is the last time the Muster was held. Independent economic impact research commissioned by Tourism Western Australia showed that 2 296 people attended from outside the region, generating close to 24 000 visitor nights. The new money injected into the East Kimberley economy was no doubt welcomed by local businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19.

A strong focus of the 2021 Ord Valley Muster was Aboriginal performers and cultural experiences, with a program that incorporated specific Aboriginal events and saw Aboriginal culture weaved throughout the festival. This was reflected in an entirely Aboriginal line-up at the Aviair HeliSpirit Kimberley Moon Experience, a welcome to country at all events, and a strong representation of Aboriginal artists at the inaugural Art in the Park event.

The Ord Valley Muster is proudly supported by the state government, with funding from Tourism Western Australia and the royalties for regions' regional events program since 2012. The 2021 event was the first year of a new three-year funding agreement through to 2023. I am very proud of the results achieved this year and the impact the event has had on the local community of Kununurra. The Ord Valley Muster will celebrate its twenty-first anniversary in 2022, which is a huge milestone for an event that has evolved from a simple outback concert to an award-winning festival. I encourage anyone who has not travelled to the magical East Kimberley region of our beautiful state to consider a trip to experience this premier event next year.

### CINEFESTOZ FILM FESTIVAL

*Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts)** [9.11 am]: I am pleased to update the house on the 2021 CinefestOZ Film Festival. CinefestOZ is proudly supported by the state government through Tourism Western Australia and Screenwest. CinefestOZ has become one of Australia's most well-regarded film festivals. Its growth has paralleled the growth of the Western Australian film industry and it has hosted many outstanding Australian filmmakers. With 270 films and events over five days across the south west, it has delivered significant economic benefits to the region. This year's program featured national and international speakers and provided important networking opportunities through its two-day industry program. Hollywood heavyweight Isla Fisher was named the 2021 Screen Legend, recognising the star for her valuable role in supporting excellence in Australian filmmaking. Orana Cinemas in Busselton was transformed as filmmakers and festival attendees walked the red carpet before the Film Prize winner was announced. The \$100 000 CinefestOZ Film Prize is the largest film prize in Australia. The 2021 Film Prize was awarded to Justin Kurzel's compelling drama-thriller *Nitram*. It is remarkable that despite COVID-19 restrictions, Western Australia could host the 2021 CinefestOZ in person and industry representatives from interstate were able to join in online from their homes.

The film industry is a significant growth area and in recognition we have committed to our own \$105 million film studio. This is the first film studio in the state and it will compete for national and international productions with existing major studios in Australia. The Western Australian screen sector has grown considerably over the last five years due to the \$16 million investment through the Western Australian screen fund, attracting productions in regional Western Australia and providing creative employment and regional economic benefits. In addition, the state will continue to attract national and international filmmakers through the recently announced production attraction fund. The \$20 million fund will not only increase the level of production in the state, but also ultimately create a steady pipeline of productions for the studio that will create jobs, boost local business activity and provide training and skills development opportunities.

I would like to thank Hon Don Punch and my parliamentary secretary Jessica Shaw who attended this year's CinefestOZ and who have informed me of what a great event it was. It will be another great event next year.

### CORONAVIRUS — RELIEF FUND — INDIA

*Statement by Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests*

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests)** [9.13 am]: I would like to update the house on the status of the India COVID-19 crisis relief fund. The fund was announced in response to the terrible second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India and was aimed at supporting those who have been directly affected. The \$2 million India COVID-19 crisis relief fund was announced by the McGowan government in May this year and has been administered as a grant program by the Office of Multicultural Interests within the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. This fund recognises the importance of our economic, cultural and person-to-person links with India and its people, and supports the excellent work of registered charities that are delivering aid in the areas that are most in need. The second wave has infected tens of millions of people across India and resulted in the deaths of over 400 000 people.

The impact of this crisis is heavily felt by our local Indian communities here in Western Australia. Throughout the pandemic, Western Australians from Indian backgrounds have been an important part of our response to COVID-19. They have been working on the front lines in our hospitals, in primary health, in hotel quarantine and in essential services and other fields to keep our state healthy and safe. At the same time, they have also supported relief initiatives in India. This relief funding is being delivered through Western Australian Indian community associations that

are partnered with registered Australian charity organisations already working in India, or with affiliate charity organisations in India. While grants were allocated to 12 Western Australian Indian community associations partnered with charities on the ground in India, all WA Indian community associations have been part of this important initiative as joint applicants. This funding has enabled the distribution of medical equipment and consumables such as oxygen concentrators, nebulisers and medication to hospitals, COVID-19 care centres and community outreach programs across India. It has also allowed for a COVID-19 vaccination program in some areas. The funding is also being used to supply emergency relief and COVID-19 survival kits to residents in regional or remote areas of India.

I am also proud to advise that the McGowan government is in the final stages of the grant process for the allocation of \$2 million to assist the mounting crisis in Indonesia, our closest international neighbour, as it manages its second wave of the pandemic.

### **FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES CONFERENCE**

*Statement by Minister for Emergency Services*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Emergency Services)** [9.16 am]: I would like to take this opportunity to inform the house about the Western Australian Fire and Emergency Services conference and awards that took place on the weekend. The two-day event saw more than 900 Department of Fire and Emergency Services volunteers from the volunteer marine rescue services, the State Emergency Service, the volunteer fire and rescue service, the volunteer fire and emergency services and the bush fire brigades, as well as career fire and rescue service and DFES personnel, come together to build their knowledge, and network and celebrate the achievements of the past 12 months.

The theme of this year's WAFES conference was recovery and resilience, an appropriate theme given the significant events of the Wooroloo bushfire and tropical cyclone Seroja. Delegates at the conference had the opportunity to take part in a range of tours and go behind the scenes at facilities such as the State Operations Centre, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence and the new Koolinup Emergency Services Centre in Collie. Delegates also engaged with a rich program of speakers including an online presentation from Shane Fitzsimmons, Commissioner of Resilience NSW, who provided valuable insight into the Black Summer bushfires. I had the privilege of attending the events over the weekend and met many of the dedicated and committed volunteers who work tirelessly in their communities. I also led my first ministerial volunteer advisory forum where I was able to speak and listen to about 50 volunteers.

I would especially like to congratulate the 16 award winners at the 2021 WAFES Awards on Saturday night. They include: Marine Rescue Albany; Marine Rescue Jurien Bay; Marine Rescue East Kimberley; Kalbarri Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service; the Communications Support Unit; Alex Williams, Marine Rescue Walpole; Zac Berglund, Marine Rescue Dampier; James Taylor, Broome Regional Bush Fire Brigade; Rik Fennell, Joondalup Fire and Rescue Service; Simone Conklin, Eucla Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services; Sheree Lowe, Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service; Jay Dwyer, Quinns Rocks Bush Fire Brigade; Connie Eikelboom, Armadale State Emergency Service; James Cotter, Carnarvon State Emergency Service; Nicola O'Callaghan, Marine Services officer; and area officer Andy Thompson, Lower South West Regional Office. I am sure that all members of the house will join me in acknowledging these winners and thanking the thousands of DFES volunteer and career emergency service workers who work day in, day out to keep our state safe. Thank you.

**The SPEAKER:** Hear, hear! They do a marvellous job.

### **ALCOHOL ONSELLING — PROHIBITION REGULATIONS — KIMBERLEY**

*Statement by Minister for Racing and Gaming*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Racing and Gaming)** [9.19 am]: I inform the house that this Saturday, 18 September, new regulations will begin that address the deplorable practice of sly grogging in the Kimberley. For those members who are not aware, the term "sly grogging" refers to the practice of purchasing large quantities of alcohol and then onselling that product at highly inflated prices to vulnerable people and communities. Reports of beer being sold for up to \$250 a carton to the vulnerable is not uncommon in certain parts of the state's north. Not only is selling alcohol without a licence illegal, selling alcohol to vulnerable people and communities is immoral and these regulations seek to curb the business model of individuals who would prey on those most at risk. Alcohol harm minimisation is not easy and there is never a silver bullet. These sly grogging regulations will build on the work the McGowan Labor government has already done in tackling alcohol related harm, and I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Police in his previous role. I know he is a very strong advocate for these new measures.

The regulations will be directly tied to the current restrictions in the Kimberley under the Emergency Management Act 2005 and include one carton of beer, or three bottles of wine, or one litre of spirits—or a combination of two products, but not two of the same, per day. Vehicles will be able to carry only one daily limit for each adult person travelling in the vehicle, up to a maximum of five quantities per vehicle. This will mean if there is one person in the car, they can have one daily limit in the car; four people in a car can have four daily limits. Six people in a minivan can still have only five daily limits in the vehicle. Western Australia police will enforce these regulations and will have the power to seize and destroy any alcohol found to be above the allowable limit. Offenders face fines up to \$10 000. The regulations will apply in the towns of Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham, and within 20 kilometres of those towns and within five kilometres of a dry community. Exemptions

apply for freight providers, licensees carrying out lawful deliveries, pastoralists, remote camp site operators and tourists. Exemptions are available also for local residents who have applied for a 72-hour exemption to purchase the alcohol. I am proud to be part of a government that is working to put a stop to sly grogging in the Kimberley.

### GRIEVANCES

#### *Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [9.21 am]: Members, I understand there has been agreement that grievances will not be taken today, so I will not call for any grievances.

### PROCEDURE AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

*First Report — Report on a person adversely referred to in the Legislative Assembly—Hon Simon O'Brien — Tabling*

**MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield — Deputy Speaker)** [9.22 am]: I present for tabling the first report of the Procedure and Privileges Committee of the forty-first Parliament titled *Report on a person adversely referred to in the Legislative Assembly—Hon Simon O'Brien*.

[See paper [600](#).]

**Mr S.J. PRICE:** The Chair of the Procedure and Privileges Committee received a letter from Hon Simon O'Brien seeking to respond to comments made in the Legislative Assembly on 4 December 2020 and 16 June 2021 by the Attorney General, Hon John Quigley, MLA. The committee has agreed to recommend the incorporation in *Hansard* of the response by Hon Simon O'Brien, and the response is appended to the report just tabled. I advise that in accordance with standing order 114, the committee has not considered or judged the truth of any statements made in the report or in the submission.

#### *Adoption of Report — Motion*

On motion by **Mr S.J. Price (Deputy Speaker)**, resolved —

That the report be adopted.

The following response was incorporated, pursuant to standing order 114 —

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#### **Response Pursuant to Legislative Assembly Standing Order 114**

I write to seek an opportunity to respond to false and damaging claims made on several occasions by Hon J.R. Quigley MLA in his capacity as Attorney General, notably during Question Time on 4 December 2020 and during debate on the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Amendment Bill 2021 on 16 June 2021.

The remarks which I challenge as false and damaging are contained in these passages:

LA Hansard 4 December 2020 page 8406 during Question Time (in answer to QWN 984)

... in the Legislative Council on 5 September 2019, Hon Simon O'Brien said —

I might add that I feel some empathy for anyone caught in the situation that Mr Edman and his family seem to be caught in at the moment.

He was expressing support publicly in the Parliament for Mr Edman, who we know is corrupt on the findings of the report. (1A)

And

Only two days before Hon Simon O'Brien telephoned support for Mr Edman, on 14 August, the procedure and privileges committee tabled the report.

... [Point of Order, interjections and responses omitted]

The whole procedure of the committee has been corrupted by someone within that committee ringing up a former Liberal colleague who was a target of the CCC to offer support for them whilst they were sitting on that privileges committee. (1B)

And

It is up to the new Leader of the Opposition now to go out and ask Mr O'Brien whether it was he who sent this text or voicemail message to Mr Edman, and, if it is, he should ask Mr O'Brien to resign from the privileges committee and the Liberal Party should throw him out of the Liberal Party room before Christmas. Otherwise, there is no room for the new leader of the Liberal Party to say, "We are against corruption at all levels." You will go into this election with a stinking mess hanging around your neck like a dead albatross if you do not deal with this corruption at this stage. This state cannot afford to return to a party that tolerates this sort of corruption and this sort of cover-up, Leader of the Opposition. (1C)

And

LA Hansard 16 June 2021 page 1590 during debate on the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Amendment Bill 2021

... the most senior person then in the Liberal Party, the longest-serving member of the Liberal Party and a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges of the upper house, Mr Simon O'Brien, rang the corrupt Mr Edman to say, "I support you, mate, and I'll support you all the way." (2A)

And

Someone in the Liberal Party, the longest serving member of the Liberal Party, at the time also a member of one of the most senior committees of this Parliament, the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges of the Legislative Council, was ringing up the corrupt Mr Edman offering him his ongoing support. (2B)

And

[Referring to me] One of the "Black Hand Gang" was embedded in the committee and was able to cut off the inquirer at the knees. Mr Deputy Speaker, I rest our case. I say no more. I commend the bill to the house. (2C)

The one aspect of these remarks which is accurate is that I was indeed at the material time the longest serving member of the Liberal Party and a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges (PPC). I was also Father of the House, Deputy President and Chairman of Committees. For one in such a position to be accused of corrupting the workings of a Standing Committee and using membership of a Standing Committee to attempt to interfere in an inquiry for the benefit of a suspect are allegations of extraordinary gravity. The Parliament needs to be reassured that these claims are false.

#### Background

This mischief appears to derive from paragraph 437 of the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) Report dated 26 November 2020: *Report on electorate allowances and management of electorate offices*.

Paragraph 437 stated:

On 16 August 2019, Mr Edman received a text message from a member of the Procedure and Privileges Committee (not the Hon Ricky Mazza MLC) offering support.

The paragraph refers to a text message sent to Mr Phil Edman; the footnote refers to a telephone call. I understand the CCC subsequently clarified this ambiguity by letter to the Speaker dated 3 December 2020 advising that the communication was in fact a voice message.

The relevant background is as follows:

In August 2019 I had for some months been aware (through the PPC) of a covert investigation by the CCC into Mr Edman. Throughout this period, the PPC interest in the matter was not publicly known. Mr Edman attempted to telephone me during this time – possibly two or three calls. I neither answered nor returned those calls, specifically to avoid being placed, or being seen to be placed, in a conflicted position. (As it happens, I had not communicated with Mr Edman for years anyway – probably not since he left Parliament in May 2017, or shortly thereafter.) I reported these attempts to contact me to the PPC contemporaneously.

On 14 August 2019 the CCC investigation became public knowledge, with raids and media attention and so on. It was reported among other things that Mrs Edman, rather than expose herself and her children to the distress and humiliation of that event, had refused to remain at the Edman residence during the search of the property. Given the degree of public infamy that had been visited on Mr Edman since the earlier revelations about him in the Craig Peacock case, the ongoing pressure of CCC actions, the likely reactions of family and associates to these disclosures (regardless of whether he had brought it upon himself or not), one might understandably be concerned for Mr Edman’s state of mind. (WA Police apparently were, I am told, visiting to take possession of his licensed firearms.) That also occurred to me when I saw he tried to call me at 10.14 am on 16 August 2019. My dilemma then was to maintain a prudent separation, whilst being mindful that seeming to reject contact completely might be a factor that could lead Mr Edman to self-harm.

I have requested of the CCC a copy of the transcript of the message referred to in paragraph 437, specifically for the purpose of giving it to the Legislative Assembly Procedure and Privileges Committee; that request has been declined.

Nonetheless, I have an independent recollection of leaving a voice message on Mr Edman’s telephone about this time and generally recall the content of the message and the demeanour in which it was given.

My message to Mr Edman was to this effect:

Phil, I am glad this call has gone through to message bank, because the reason I am ringing is to say it is not possible for us to talk, given the respective positions we find ourselves in. I understand you are doing it tough right now; try not to let it get you down too much, but as I say it is not possible to have a discussion.

Clearly, this was not a message of support in anything like the way it has been portrayed. Motivated by decent concerns, it was a polite way of saying “don’t call me – I won’t be talking to you”.

#### My response to the comments made

Mr Quigley’s remarks on 4 December 2020 were clearly for political consumption, being premeditated and intended to reflect adversely on my character and my role in an ongoing PPC inquiry related to the privileges of the Parliament. My objection is they were also false, as well as injurious to my reputation.

(1A) ... in the Legislative Council on 5 September 2019, Hon Simon O’Brien said—

I might add that I feel some empathy for anyone caught in the situation that Mr Edman and his family seem to be caught in at the moment.

He was expressing support publicly in the Parliament for Mr Edman, who we know is corrupt on the findings of the report.

I did not express “support publicly in the Parliament for Mr Edman, who we know is corrupt”. The context in which I used the word empathy clearly meant I could understand the nature of the difficult circumstances facing anyone caught in the situation that Mr Edman and his family were in.

(1B) Only two days before Hon Simon O’Brien telephoned support for Mr Edman, on 14 August, the procedure and privileges committee tabled the report.

... [Point of Order, interjections and responses omitted]

The whole procedure of the committee has been corrupted by someone within that committee ringing up a former Liberal colleague who was a target of the CCC to offer support for them whilst they were sitting on that privileges committee.

It has been my experience over many years that the integrity of Parliamentary Standing Committees is sacrosanct, an integrity that is further protected by the professional guidance of Parliamentary staff. It is preposterous to allege that the “whole procedure” of the PPC was corrupted and I reject the allegation. In fact, the PPC steadfastly resisted outside pressures to abandon its duty to the Parliament throughout the period May 2019 to December 2020.

(1C) It is up to the new Leader of the Opposition now to go out and ask Mr O’Brien whether it was he who sent this text or voicemail message to Mr Edman, and, if it is, he should ask Mr O’Brien to resign from the privileges committee and the Liberal Party should throw him out of the Liberal Party room before Christmas. Otherwise, there is no room for the new leader of the Liberal Party to say, “We are against corruption at all levels.” You will go into this election with a stinking mess hanging around your neck like a dead albatross if you do not deal with this corruption at this stage. This state cannot afford to return to a party that tolerates this sort of corruption and this sort of cover-up, Leader of the Opposition.

Putting to one side the political hyperbole, this is a direct charge of corruption against me and was obviously intended to cause reputational damage. My advice to the Parliament in response is there was never any malfeasance, nor any “cover-up”. I had reported the fact of the rejected telephone call and my response to it to the President and the PPC members at the time. I self-identified publicly in response to questions from the media following the Question.

(2A) ... the most senior person then in the Liberal Party, the longest-serving member of the Liberal Party and a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges of the upper house, Mr Simon O’Brien, rang the corrupt Mr Edman to say, “I support you, mate, and I’ll support you all the way.”

Whether this assertion is an invention of Mr Quigley, or based on erroneous advice provided to him, or a combination of both, it is completely untrue.

(2B) Someone in the Liberal Party, the longest serving member of the Liberal Party, at the time also a member of one of the most senior committees of this Parliament, the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges of the Legislative Council, was ringing up the corrupt Mr Edman offering him his ongoing support.

Again, whether this assertion is an invention of Mr Quigley, or based on erroneous advice provided to him, or a combination of both, it is completely untrue.

(2C) [Referring to me] One of the “Black Hand Gang” was embedded in the committee and was able to cut off the inquirer at the knees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I rest our case. I say no more. I commend the bill to the house.

This is the most serious and disturbing allegation, for two reasons.

Firstly, the suggestion that an inquiry was sabotaged (by me or the PPC) is a fiction.

Secondly, the narrative seems to suggest that this falsehood was the final vocal flourish to decide argument on a controversial Bill then before the House. If the House did give weight to this argument, then the House may have been misled. It is this final point which compels me to bring my submission; that is, knowing the truth I am obliged to bring it to your attention.

It is necessary that a firm rebuttal of this allegation and an enunciation of the facts be placed on the record, which I offer in these terms:

The allegation is baseless and false. The PPC was not involved in the Edman investigation except for safeguarding the privileges of the Parliament. This is made clear in the several published reports of the PPC relating to these matters. My comments to the Legislative Council on 5 September 2019 (see *Hansard* p. 6515) detailed what the PPC’s actions were about. I later summarised the key point in these terms:

As I said earlier, this is not about a former member, whether they be called Edman or anything else. It is about the privileges of the house. (*Hansard* p. 6536, 5 September 2019.)

Never to my knowledge has any person (within the PPC or without) suggested that the outcomes for a person under investigation should be mitigated. The PPC and all its members went to great efforts to facilitate the inquiries of the CCC and WA Police, whilst ensuring to the greatest extent possible that the privileges of the Parliament were safeguarded.

The PPC has consistently asserted that questions of parliamentary privilege were not matters for the Director General of the DPC, the State Solicitor’s Office, the Attorney General or the Solicitor General (see for example PPC Report 55, p. 95). The recent findings of the Supreme Court on this subject are also worthy of Members’ attention (see [2021] WASC 223).

The foregoing is my response to allegations raised in the House which adversely affect my reputation. In accordance with Standing Order 114, I now respectfully request my response be recorded in *Hansard*.

**Simon O’Brien**

**9 September 2021**

## ECONOMICS AND INDUSTRY STANDING COMMITTEE

### *Second Report — Annual report 2020–2021 — Tabling*

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee)** [9.23 am]: I present for tabling the second report of the Economics and Industry Standing Committee titled *Annual report 2020–2021*.

[See paper [601](#).]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** I have some very short comments on a very short report. Simply, this report at best meets its requirements in terms of the act, but also signifies the transition from the fortieth Parliament to the forty-first Parliament of the previous committee. I commend the work of the previous committee: the chair, member for Swan Hills; the deputy chair, Hon Terry Redman, former member for Warren–Blackwood, who is no longer in this place; Dr David Honey, member for Cottesloe; Mr Yaz Mubarakai, member for Jandakot; and Mr Stephen Price, member for Forrestfield. The committee was moved, particularly in its initial stages, to ensure that one of the three reports did not go unnoticed; that is, the tenth report, *Turning to India: Investing in our future*. That report is a very good indicator of what is possible in our diversified economy and by diversifying our trading partners. The India report was re-tabled by this committee to ensure that we saw from government a detailed response to each of the recommendations in the report, which are not insignificant. I commend this report to the house.

## JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### *First Report — Annual report 2020–2021 — Tabling*

**MRS R.M.J. CLARKE (Murray–Wellington)** [9.25 am]: I present for tabling the first report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled *Annual report 2020–2021*.

[See paper [602](#).]

**Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE:** As the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, I am pleased to present the *Annual report 2020–2021*. This annual reporting period spans the end of the previous Parliament, the fortieth, and the start of the current Parliament, the forty-first. The JSCCCYP of the forty-first Parliament met for the first time on 2 June 2021 with four new members. With just one month of operating before the end of the financial year, there were limited activities on which to report. However, an important starting point was holding a briefing with the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit. Mr Pettit provided an overview of his role and key projects he has been working on with his staff in the past months. The committee will report on some of these in its review of the commissioner’s annual report later in the year.

Mr Pettit’s tenure will end in November and I take this opportunity to thank him for his dedicated service and for furthering the interests of children and young people in this state. In Mr Pettit’s time as commissioner he has dealt with three different JSCCCYPs, from 2015 through to 2021. Although we bid him farewell towards the end of the year, we will follow with interest the outcomes and progress of the projects and initiatives he has established. We will also look into some of the concerns that have been aired with previous committees.

In this reporting period, the previous JSCCCYP tabled the inquiry report *From words to action: Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe*. This was a comprehensive review of what is required to ensure that organisations working with children implement the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and that appropriate monitoring and oversight is in place. I thank the previous committee for its hard work on this inquiry. We will maintain a watching brief on the progress of the key recommendations.

I thank the previous committee members—the chair, Hon Dr Sally Talbot, MLC; deputy chair, Kyran O’Donnell; Hon Donna Faragher, MLC; and Jessica Stojkovski, MLA. The principal research officer was Renee Gould and the research officer was Michele Chiasson. I wish to express my thanks to the current members for the interest and dedication they have shown so far. There is important work to be done and I look forward to proceeding with it with their support. I thank also the current secretariat—the principal research officer, Dr Sarah Palmer, and research officers Ms Lucy Roberts and Ms Catie Parsons.

#### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

##### *First Report — Annual report 2020–21 — Tabling*

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party)** [9.28 am]: I present for tabling the first report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee titled *Annual report 2020–21*.

[See paper [603](#).]

**Ms L. METTAM:** This report covers the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, representing the activity of two iterations of this committee in the fortieth and forty-first Parliaments, a period which has been extraordinary on a number of fronts. The state election process and the establishment of this committee in early May 2021 means there is little to report on for the second half of the financial year.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the work of the committee of the previous Parliament, ably led by the former member for Hillarys, Mr Peter Katsambanis, MLA. That committee tabled a report, *Opening doors to justice*, into how the management of family and domestic violence matters could be better managed in the Magistrates Court of Western Australia. The government in its response stated that the 72 recommendations aligned with what it was already considering and would be considered or implemented over the 10-year life of the current policy plan. The committee also undertook multiple agency reviews into the state government’s COVID response.

Towards the end of the fortieth Parliament, the committee was approached by the Attorney General, who was seeking consideration for a committee inquiry into matters raised by Mr Aaron Cockman about issues with the Family Court of Western Australia as they related to the tragic death of his children and former family members in Osmington in May 2018. That committee determined there was insufficient time to deal with the matter during the fortieth Parliament, but asked the future committee to consider these matters.

During the short time available to the current committee before the end of the financial year, the committee began preparing its work program. This involved considering where we might best make a difference across the 22 portfolios for which we have responsibility. This included the questions raised by the previous committee, the oversight of the election process itself, and options for a standalone inquiry. Some of these considerations and decisions have since been made and our work has certainly begun in earnest, but some will be considered as the committee and the Parliament progresses. I look forward to continuing that work with my fellow committee members in this Parliament.

I would also like to acknowledge for the record the committee members in the fortieth Parliament, namely Peter Katsambanis, the former chair of the committee and member for Hillarys; Mark Folkard, the deputy chair and member for Burns Beach; Sean L’Estrange, the former member for Churchlands; and Don Punch, the member for Bunbury. The current members of the committee are the members for Burns Beach, Bateman, Kimberley and Collie–Preston. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the committee staff. All of us in this place share a great deal of respect for the work and support that we receive from the committee staff in the good work that our parliamentary

committees undertake. The committee staff of the fortieth Parliament were the principal research officer, Alison Sharpe, and research officers Catie Parsons, and Alice Jones, who was part of that committee until November 2020. I would also like to acknowledge Dr Alan Charlton, the current principal research officer of the committee of the forty-first Parliament, and the research officer, Dr Sam Hutchinson. They are doing an outstanding job supporting the current committee in its deliberations going forward. Thank you.

### EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

#### *First Report — Annual report 2020–21 — Tabling*

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie)** [9.33 am]: I present for tabling the first report of the Education and Health Standing Committee titled *Annual report 2020–21*.

[See paper [604](#).]

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** Since the formation of the committee on 12 May this year, we have established our working principles. The portfolio areas of the committee include two of the largest areas of state government expenditure, namely health and education, and, as such, we recognise the responsibilities that have been given to our committee. Indeed, for a Labor government, those two areas of expenditure, which involve keeping our citizens healthy, and ensuring that they receive the best possible educational opportunities to enable them to flourish, are major priorities, because they provide for the betterment of Western Australians and our state. We will seek to use the procedures, the scrutiny and the lawmaking functions, and our ability to hold complex inquiries, when looking into these sometimes difficult issues.

The report that has just been tabled highlights the work that was principally done by the Education and Health Standing Committee that was in formation during the final year of the fortieth Parliament. At this point, I want to acknowledge the work done by that committee, and especially by the former chair of the committee, Ms Janine Freeman, whose chairing went over several terms of parliamentary duty, and the outstanding work that she was able to lead.

The committee's reporting period covers the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the Department of Health over this period. I think it is fair to say that both the previous committee and our current committee are mindful of the draw that we could impose on that agency at a time when it is managing a health crisis—in fact, managing it extremely well. Therefore, we will seek the advice of the Department of Health when necessary, but we will not seek to impose an unnecessary burden on its time.

It is interesting to look at some of the issues that arose in our initial agency briefings. One of the highlights for me from our briefing with the Department of Health officers was the expenditure of this state government on COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. Information was provided that the cost to July 2021 of COVID-19 testing was \$43.5 million, and the cost of contact tracing was \$17.3 million. That is a total of \$60.8 million. That is a good investment in keeping Western Australians safe. I contrast that with another jurisdiction, the United Kingdom. The work of the Public Accounts Committee in the United Kingdom Parliament has revealed that the expenditure on what the UK calls the test, track and trace system was \$70 billion. That \$70 billion can be contrasted with the \$60.8 million in this state. On a per person basis, we have kept Western Australians safe for \$21 per person, whereas the UK has expended \$1 028 per person. That is a huge disparity. I believe that the UK Public Accounts Committee is looking into the cronyism and problems with the privatisation and contract-letting that have caused that huge cost. It has to be said also that even with that massive expenditure of \$70 billion, the UK has faced a COVID death rate of 130 000 people, one of the highest rates in the world on a per capita basis, higher than the COVID death rate in the United States, and that the number of positive COVID-19 cases is still averaging 30 000 a day. That is testament to the quality of our expenditure and the quality of the work that has been done in this state to keep Western Australians safe. We have been able to do that incredibly efficiently and have delivered great results for this state. May we continue to achieve such a high success rate.

During the reporting period, we had a briefing with the Department of Education. We discussed many issues and were able to get a good sense of all the good work the department is doing for our school system. The one issue that I particularly want to focus on is tertiary education. There is no doubt that our university sector is facing many challenges. I was provided with supplementary information to the agency briefing held on 23 June, which states —

State legislation establishing universities and the Commonwealth's *Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011* ... serve different functions and are best seen as complementary. Whereas State legislation mainly refers to governance of universities, the Act focuses on quality, standards and regulation of the higher education sector nationally.

That is interesting information because it establishes that we as a state Parliament have responsibility for the governance of the university sector. We know that our university sector is facing many challenges. We have absolutely magnificent campuses. They are beautiful places with fabulous learning facilities, but there are some challenges, especially with the trend towards more and more online learning as well as the challenges that have come about with the COVID-19 pandemic and how the university sector has adapted to that. They are some of the challenges the university sector is facing, and we need to look at how we can adapt to them.

We had the Chief Scientist, Professor Peter Klinken, in for a hearing. Professor Klinken was very candid in his comments to us about how he sees the future of our university sector in Western Australia, especially relating to the governance of the sector. The points that he raised with us on the actual structure and the number of universities in Western Australia were most interesting. I will quote some of Professor Klinken's evidence to us. He said —

There are four public universities. They are all established under state acts of Parliament. I think there should be a single university of Western Australia or a university of Perth that brings all four universities into one. Each one of them has a burning financial platform right now. Australia has 43 universities for a country of 25 million people. That is extraordinary and not viable. We will see, in the not too distant future, some of these universities closing.

In further evidence, Professor Klinken mentioned to us —

Preliminary analyses that I have seen suggest that if you combine them all into one university, it would go into the top 40 or 50 in the world and that would then provide you with great marketing tool: "Come to WA. We're a top 40 or top 50 university in the world." It would take us close to being the highest ranked university in the country and it would provide serious scale.

Bear in mind that Professor Klinken comes from a medical research background and is very keen to attract people to Western Australia and continue to see WA be an absolute leader in medical research. This capability that could be achieved is not liked by people in the vice-chancelleries at the various universities, but the very hardworking academics who do the teaching and all the research can see that this would be a real golden opportunity.

Professor Klinken also said —

We are at a point where, I think, we have to look seriously at amalgamating our universities, bringing them together, presenting a cohesive view of WA and saying, "You know what? We should be seen as University City."

We asked Professor Klinken about previous amalgamation attempts. He went on to say —

Yes, the first one, Murdoch and UWA, my recollection of the time is it failed by a single vote in the upper house.

That is a matter of parliamentary record. I believe that was in December 1989. There was also a second merger attempt. Professor Klinken said —

The second merger really came down to personalities and the vice chancellors and who was going to run the combined university, so that did not go ahead. I think now is the time for a much more mature conversation. I think the universities here in Perth have been so focused on internecine warfare that they feel the competition is local, not global.

That was in specific reference to the proposed merger between Murdoch University and Curtin University in October 2005. This is all very well documented in the book *Murdoch voices: the first 40 years at Murdoch University*. Professor Klinken's evidence represents a very interesting case for us.

I am really honoured to be the Chair of the Education and Health Standing Committee, building on the work and traditions of the committee in the past. I am honoured to have with me on the committee my deputy chair, the member for Maylands; the member for Dawesville, who brings her paramedical training and psychologist background to the committee; I am very pleased to have the member for Hillarys, who, as a professional educator, adds her background to the committee's expertise; and the member for Pilbara, who has a deep-rooted connection with regional Western Australia and brings that to the committee's deliberations. We have a really exciting task ahead of us looking at all kinds of issues in the education and health sector. Thanks to the wonderful support staff. We began with principal research officer Renee Gould and we now have Mrs Catie Parsons as our principal research officer, research officer Rachel Wells and Ms Franchesca Walker, who may be rejoining us. It is a very exciting time to be working in this area in the forty-first Parliament and I commend this annual report to the house.

**MS C.M. COLLINS (Hillarys)** [9.46 am]: I, too, would like to make a contribution to the consideration of the Education and Health Standing Committee's *Annual report 2020–21*. It is a privilege to be on the committee. Prior to being elected to this place, just over a year ago, I was teaching year 11 politics and law and was telling students how integral committees are to our Westminster system and our democracy. I will take very seriously this opportunity to analyse and investigate current and topical issues as well as make recommendations alongside my colleagues. I am very passionate about health and education. As the member for Thornlie mentioned, they are the two most important sectors in our state government activity and are often given priority in the budget.

As leaders, we all have a responsibility to understand the challenges and opportunities within government departments and maintain a constant awareness of what our health workers and teachers are doing in the schools and in the workplace. Our committee has already held a number of public hearings and it has had an incredible opportunity to hear from specialists, experts in their fields and academics about their key areas. It is not a surprise that COVID came up again and again in various hearings. We know that the mental health needs of our community need to be addressed by both the education and health departments.

We asked representatives from the Department of Education to outline some of the specific impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the wellbeing of children and their participation in school. It was certainly noted that here in Western Australia we have been very fortunate to not have the large number of school closures that other states have had to face. It was recognised that a number of issues have arisen around online and remote learning. Particular mention was made of resistance by some families who had been used to having their children learn with hardcopy-style texts to suddenly switch to online learning. It was a confronting situation to be told that everything was now online, but people managed really well. There was also a struggle to get students back to schools, particularly in rural and regional areas.

We got the opportunity to hear from the Mental Health Commissioner, who talked about how telehealth had led safer service delivery during the COVID-19 lockdowns. She also mentioned issues that arose during the lockdown periods from the ease of alcohol delivery, alcohol advertising and problem drinking, and the services that were needed to attend to those situations. It was announced that \$129 million has been allocated in the state budget to youth mental health services. The committee got the opportunity to learn how the commission was able to offer a child, adolescent and youth forensic outreach service. Of particular concern when we were discussing the rise of anxiety as a symptom of the COVID-19 pandemic was talk of an increase in racism reported by young people in schools, and particularly young people with Asian backgrounds. This was noted as making quite a large contribution to the increase in anxiety levels.

The public servants who spoke to us told us a lot about the Western Australian health system and how we do not rely upon the commonwealth for assistance. We learnt how the department's leadership had heeded the lesson from overseas that going hard and going early is the most effective method to deal with this virus, and how department staff had planned for the worst-case scenarios had a vaccine been difficult to make. We discussed how quickly, fortunately, vaccines were produced across the world. The leadership of the department mentioned their frustrations with the anti-vax movement. They are thinking ahead now to how Australian hospitals will look in 2022 and how we can ensure that they are prepared. We also spoke about the contribution of the state's health system to the international research community during the first few months of COVID-19, particularly around the application of the drug dexamethasone.

As the member for Thornlie mentioned in his speech, Chief Scientist Peter Klinken came in for a hearing. He was a whirlwind of positive and interesting ideas for this state. He discussed how to empower schools with the ability to transfer twenty-first century learning skills, given that we are moving to a time of increased automation in industries. We discussed how sometimes the statistics that are used to measure schools are not conducive to creating schools that do exciting work behind closed doors and prepare students for the workplace today and tomorrow. We discussed the idea that schools can have excellent pastoral care, wellbeing programs and extracurricular programs, but there is always a focus on a ladder of statistics. He shared his concerns about the growing dissociation between the haves and have-nots in the Western Australian education system. He also talked about the challenge that is exacerbating this, which is the changes to workplaces and industries through automation. Students who do not have access to 3D printers, robotic machines and other sorts of tech at school will slowly fall behind those who do have access to those things. Professor Klinken also identified the risks of an exam-focused education system and talked about the need to create intelligent and creative workers who really understand design, code, navigation and creation.

I will briefly mention another key person whom we had the opportunity to speak to. I was not present for the public hearing with Dr Weeramanthri, but he came and spoke to the committee about his climate health WA inquiry. He said that the WA health sector, like any sector, is a contributor to emissions. His report outlined the desire to bring this industry to a place where it will be able to mitigate some of these issues.

In finishing, I want to thank all the members of the committee—the members for Thornlie, Maylands, Dawesville and Pilbara—as well as the wonderful research officers, Catie Parsons and Rachel Wells. I have enjoyed every minute of the committee so far and am looking forward to what we will find out next.

**MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville)** [9.55 am]: I also rise in support of the first report of the Education and Health Standing Committee, *Annual report 2020–21*. Our committee has been formed for only four months as part of the forty-first Parliament, so I will spend a couple of minutes talking about who makes up the standing committee and where our focus lies. The member for Thornlie is very passionate about education and training. He has an agricultural business degree. Before being elected to Parliament, he was a chair and director of the Conservation Council of Western Australia, where he led the council's environmental campaigning, policy development and community engagement. He is the perfect person to chair the Education and Health Standing Committee. Our deputy chair is the member for Maylands, Lisa Baker, who is an avid supporter of our LGBTIQ+ contingency and is really big on social justice. Our deputy chair is a very rich and dynamic member. The member for Pilbara has lived in that region for nearly 20 years and has a great understanding of the needs of regional areas. When it comes to the health issues and educational needs of our regional people, he is passionate about speaking up for the social, emotional and financial needs of regional constituents. He speaks from experience. On the subject of experience, both the member for Pilbara and I can offer the special insights that can come only from those who live in the regions. My fellow 2021 colleague and newbie of the forty-first Parliament is the member for Hillarys, who has an extensive background

in teaching. Her areas of study included history, politics and international relations. She has taught internationally, through India, Colombia and Vietnam, and completed a parliamentary internship, so she will provide some exceptional insight into the needs of students, teachers and lecturers in our education system. Finally, I bring to the team valuable experience in the pre-hospital and hospital systems and emergency services. After a nearly 20-year career as an ambulance paramedic, I also offer the opportunity for me to speak on the reports as we go. Together, we form a very passionate team that is focused on working towards a better WA for every person in the community, with particular regard to education and health. We all brought our subject-matter expertise to the committee, and we have lots of ideas on where we could focus our work.

The Department of Education and the Department of Health gave us incredible accounts about their work and where they are taking us across all demographics and regions in Western Australia, which I found extremely insightful for someone who is new to politics. However, I think the hearing with Dr Tarun Weeramanthri, who spoke about his final report from the climate health WA inquiry, which was published in November last year, had a profound impact not just on me personally but also all of us. It became very obvious that before we tackle individual speciality areas, we need to highlight an area that is impacting everyone not just in WA but also globally. I will outline in a minute some of the sobering statistics that Dr Weeramanthri explained to us about our effect on the world and what it means for us, as well as the attributions of climate change. His inquiry arose from a recommendation from the WA sustainable health review initiated by the Minister for Health and commissioned by the Chief Health Officer. I urge everyone to take the opportunity to read this report as it highlights the challenges we now face, which will only amp up here in WA. There is overwhelming evidence from climate science and climate health links that our health sector really needs to increase its efforts for change. To offer a bit of world context, the Paris Agreement, which has been ratified by 187 countries, has selected a collective goal of limiting the global temperature rise to below two degrees and to pursue efforts to limit it to a 1.5-degree increase. The report concludes that unless some hard work is done in these areas, all average and extreme temperatures will continue to increase.

It is predicted that the hottest days in mid-latitude regions will be up to three degrees hotter at a global warming of 1.5 degrees, and about four degrees hotter at two degrees of global warming. At an increase of 1.5 degrees, eight per cent of all plants will lose half their habitable area, while at an increase of two degrees, 16 per cent of plants will lose half their habitable area. At an increase of 1.5 degrees, six per cent of insects will lose half their habitable area, while at two degrees, the figure is 18 per cent. A 1.5-degree increase will also result in a 70 to 90 per cent decline in coral reefs, while a two-degree increase will see a 99 per cent decline.

In better news, in December 2018 the Western Australian government announced the development of a state climate policy to help guide the state's transition to a low-carbon future, and in 2019 we stated our commitment to achieve net zero emissions for Western Australia by 2050. Before we met with Dr Weeramanthri, I thought, "That's awesome—zero emissions by 2050", but Dr Weeramanthri said that unless we start making some big changes now, before the end of the term of the forty-first Parliament, we will still be sadly lacking.

Specific to health and our vulnerable community, more people have died because of extreme heat events in Australia than from all other naturally occurring hazards combined, including floods, cyclones and bushfires. It is expected that climate change will lead to a doubling of heat-related deaths over the next 40 years because of an increase in the frequency, duration and intensity of heatwaves.

Although we have an ageing population, and heat has a lot of consequences for the elderly, our first report will look at our young people and how we can help them. The Commissioner for Children and Young People told the inquiry that children place a high value on their physical environment, and a report prepared for the commissioner outlined a clear relationship between exposure to nature and green spaces, and improved mental health in children.

I certainly do not want to stand here and be the voice of doom; I very much agree with Dr Weeramanthri when he states that his report is one of hope, and I want to quote directly from it. It states —

... this Inquiry has been to 'Make hope practical, not despair convincing'. Action dispels pessimism and creates a sense of agency and possibility, but it is well to remember that change is not painless and will require a shift in power and culture within the sector.

So, all things being equal, our committee has accepted this call to action, and I know that the value of hope is an actionable quality. I look forward to being able to table a report for Western Australians that shows the ingenuity, resourcefulness and imagination of our young people in respect of working to combat greenhouse gases, with a view to being able to share our findings with every other school in WA.

Finally, I would like to have it on record that everything this committee does is well supported by our principal research officer, Catie Parsons, and our other research officer, Rachel Wells. This committee is already grateful for their commitment to the task of our first report on climate change. Thank you.

**MR K.J.J. MICHEL (Pilbara)** [10.02 am]: I would like to briefly talk on the Education and Health Standing Committee's *Annual report 2020–21*. As the member for Pilbara, it is an honour and privilege to join my committee colleagues Mr Chris Tallentire, chair and member for Thornlie; Ms Lisa Baker, deputy chair and member for Maylands; Mrs Lisa Munday, member for Dawesville; and Ms Caitlin Collins, member for Hillarys. I also thank

them for their contributions and speeches today. I would also like to acknowledge Ms Catherine Parsons, principal research officer, and Ms Rachel Wells, research officer, who are passionate, energetic and hardworking staff. They provided us with all the knowledge and help we needed to make sure we got the best outcomes in the interests of the committee.

On 5 May 2021, the Speaker tabled a schedule showing portfolio responsibilities for each of the standing committees appointed by the Legislative Assembly at the commencement of the forty-first Parliament. The portfolio responsibilities that fall under the Education and Health Standing Committee include education and training, health, mental health and medical research. The functions of the committee are to review and report to the Assembly on: the outcomes and administration of the departments within the committee's portfolio responsibilities; annual reports of government departments laid on the table of the house; the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and any matters referred to it by the Assembly, including bills, motions, petitions, votes on expenditure, other financial matters, reports and papers. These are a few of the points on which we, as a committee, have held hearings.

The WA Department of Health is large and complex. In recognition of these factors, system-wide reforms commenced in 2015 to spread authority and accountability across the system, rather than having it resting exclusively with the director general of the Department of Health. Providing health care in regional and remote WA is very important to my community in the Pilbara, including all Aboriginal communities. The GP shortfalls have been noted as a challenge for supporting and retaining skilled medical and allied health professionals, and this is something that I would like the committee to address, and to look for changes and recommendations, so that we can have sustainable health services in the regions and in remote WA that will help to build better communities in these areas.

Mental health services is another topic that we regional communities struggle to deal with, when we take into consideration the harsh conditions we must work and live in, and being away from family and friends. There is a lack of good quality clothing shops for the community to shop at; the same goes for fast-food outlets. People in Perth take these things for granted, while we must deal with issues and struggles that impact on our mental health. I know that the government is moving in the right direction with step-up, step-down centres allocated to be built soon in Karratha and Port Hedland, and other outreach services, including drug and alcohol services and youth mental health services. I am also aware that there are more effective and efficient systems in place in the fields of prevention, community support and community accommodation.

Education and training is another topic that is close to my heart, because we regional communities struggle to get good quality teachers and retain them. We also need the delivery of education strategies to encourage children in regional WA, and to attract kids from poor socio-economic groups to come to school and find it fun and easy to learn how to read and write.

As can be seen in our annual report, as per Legislative Assembly standing order 264, the committee has the power to send for persons, papers and records. From 12 May 2021 to 30 June 2021, the committee conducted four deliberative meetings, a formal evidence hearing and heard evidence from nine witnesses. Based on this, the committee has decided to start our first inquiry into the response of Western Australian schools to climate change. The committee will consider various questions within its terms of reference, including the co-benefits of climate action in schools; climate change mitigation and adaptation actions currently being undertaken in schools; the benefits they are achieving; and the barriers that schools encounter in undertaking climate action, and how these can be addressed.

The last question I would like to ask is: what more can be done to support schools to respond to climate change? I want to thank my committee colleagues and staff for their hard work, and I look forward to the submissions.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ELECTORAL EQUALITY) BILL 2021**

### *Introduction and First Reading*

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr J.R. Quigley (Minister for Electoral Affairs)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

### *Second Reading*

**MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Minister for Electoral Affairs)** [10.09 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

I rise to introduce the Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Bill 2021, which I will refer to as the electoral equality bill. The purpose of the bill is to establish a whole-of-state electorate, abolish group voting tickets and introduce optional preferential voting for the Western Australian Legislative Council. Each of the six existing regions will be replaced with a whole-of-state electorate for the Council. The bill will remove the reference to the metropolitan area of Perth in the Electoral Act 1907 because the metropolitan boundary will no longer be used to delineate the three contiguous regions known as North Metropolitan, South Metropolitan and East Metropolitan. The bill will amend the Electoral Act 1907, the Constitution Act 1889, the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899 and will make consequential amendments to the Local Government Act 1995 and the

Salaries and Allowances Act 1975. The bill will repeal the Electoral (Ballot Paper Forms) Regulations 1990. This bill will reform the Legislative Council, addressing well-known anomalies that have been canvassed from multiple quarters both interstate and locally over a long time.

In the words of Australia's leading electoral analyst, Antony Green, AO, in his blog in March 2021, "The WA Legislative Council's electoral system is the worst in the country." Western Australian political commentator Paul Murray wrote in 2017 that the Council "has a long and inglorious history as the most undemocratically elected parliamentary chamber in Australia". Veteran political scribe Peter Kennedy earlier this year described the Legislative Council as "the last blatant gerrymander in Australian politics". The WA Legislative Council has the most extreme malapportionment of any state or territory in Australia. It lags behind most legislatures in the developed world. A whole-of-state electorate is not a unique proposal. The South Australian and New South Wales upper houses have been elected using the state as a single electorate for many years. In South Australia, the change to become a single statewide upper house electorate was introduced in 1973 by the Dunstan government and contested for the first time in 1975. In 1977, the Wran government introduced reforms to provide for members of its Legislative Council to be elected by voters across the whole state of New South Wales. The late Neville Wran's reforms also transformed the New South Wales Council from a house indirectly elected by the members of Parliament in joint sittings, to a house directly elected by the people—a change that required a referendum at the time. The introduction of a whole-of-state electorate did not require a referendum in New South Wales, and it does not require a referendum here in WA.

As far back as 1995, the Western Australian Commission on Government concluded that there is no justification for the electoral system to be weighted on a geographical basis because proportionality will ensure a diversity of views are represented in the Legislative Council. To remind members: the Commission on Government was established by then Liberal Premier, Richard Court, as his government's response to shortcomings in governance exposed by the WA Inc royal commission.

I turn now to group voting tickets. The problem of malapportionment, or regional vote weighting, is compounded by the group voting tickets system in the Council. Groups lodge an automatic list of preferences enabling electors to simply number one box and have their preferences distributed to each of the other candidates in accordance with the wishes of the group they voted for. The system was first introduced in the Australian Senate as a solution to the chronic high rates of informal voting and designed to make voting easier while retaining full preferential voting. At the time of implementation in Western Australia, there were fewer political parties and it was not anticipated that the group voting tickets system would be the catalyst for the formation of new parties. Over time, parties learnt how to engage in preference swaps to "game" the system by what is now known as "preference harvesting". The preference arrangements, although published on the website of the Western Australian Electoral Commission and in a limited number of other places such as the ABC election pages, are neither well understood nor visible to the vast majority of WA electors. Because the system deals with preferences in an opaque manner it effectively stymies elector choice. The group voting tickets system has now been abolished in the Australian Senate and in the electoral systems for the upper houses of New South Wales and South Australia. The combined effect of malapportionment and group voting tickets resulted in the anomalous election of a Daylight Saving Party candidate with 98 primary votes or just 0.2 per cent of the vote in the Legislative Council.

Hon Wilson Tucker was elected to the Mining and Pastoral Region, a region with just 69 651 enrolled electors at the 2021 election. This compares with 449 182 electors in the South Metropolitan Region, 427 779 in the North Metropolitan Region, 423 759 in the East Metropolitan Region, 242 983 electors in the South West Region and 103 378 electors in the Agricultural Region. Each of these regions elects six members, producing the undemocratic vote weighting that Antony Green, Paul Murray and Peter Kennedy highlighted.

In April this year, I established the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform to conduct a review into the electoral system for the Legislative Council. The committee's terms of reference were to make recommendations on how electoral equality might be achieved for all citizens entitled to vote for the Council and recommendations on the distribution of preferences. The committee was chaired by eminent barrister, Mr Malcolm McCusker, QC, who was also WA's thirty-first Governor. Its other members included John Curtin Institute of Public Policy executive director, Professor John Phillimore; Law Reform Commission of WA member and University of Western Australia Law School professor, Professor Sarah Murray; and University of Notre Dame Director of Public Policy, Associate Professor Martin Drum. Submissions to the Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform from the WA public and stakeholders widely condemned the group voting tickets system.

I turn now to regional vote weighting, and pose the following questions: Why should a vote in Kalgoorlie be worth 3.5 times more than a vote in Albany? How is it fair that a vote in Kalbarri is worth 1.5 times more than a vote in Geraldton or that a vote in Broome is worth 6.2 times more than a vote in Burns Beach? Wundowie is just nine kilometres down the road from Wooroloo and yet a vote in Wundowie is worth four times more than a vote in Wooroloo. This bill will abolish both group voting tickets and malapportionment in the Legislative Council. There are widely accepted fundamental principles for a democratic parliamentary electoral system. Two of the most important democratic principles of Parliament are representation of the people and accountability to the people. The basic task of a democratic electoral system is to translate votes of the people into seats—to transform the expressed will of the voters into people who will represent it. Representation is key to designing a fair system.

Equally, it is important that the mechanisms of the electoral system be as transparent as possible and known to voters, political parties and candidates well in advance in order to avoid confusion and distrust in the results they produce at elections. An electoral system must also be inclusive. This means that not only as many citizens as possible are able to vote, but also that it does not discriminate against any one group in society, minority or otherwise. These are not controversial principles; they are widely accepted. Indeed, in 1980 Australia ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states at article 25 that every citizen has the right to vote and that vote shall be of equal value.

Let me take members through a very brief and short history of the Legislative Council. The franchise for the Legislative Council has continually evolved over the last 130 years. The Legislative Council was established in 1832, and included five official members, all of whom also constituted the Executive Council. From 1870, the Council was partially elected; that is, some members took office after being elected while others were Legislative Councillors by virtue of appointment. In 1890, Western Australia gained self-government in most domestic matters and was given a constitution establishing a system of parliamentary responsible government. The Legislative Council was reconstituted as the upper house of the new Parliament. It was not until the Constitution Act Amendment Act 1893 that the Legislative Council became fully elected; however, that franchise remained limited to landowners and those of a prescribed level of income. The initial changes during the 1890s were to reflect an increase in metropolitan population.

During the period 1894 to 1962, voting for the Legislative Council remained voluntary. The franchise for the Legislative Council underwent change, particularly in its first twenty years. In 1899, it was altered to permit joint owners of property to vote, adding a new category of voter to the Legislative Council's enrolment rolls. The vote was also given to women who met the property qualifications during this year, ending the Council's history as a house elected solely by males with property. Women were not permitted to stand as candidates until 1920. The restrictive property qualifications that maintained the Legislative Council's position as a house representing wealth and property were relaxed in 1911. There were, however, no other major changes to the franchise until 1962, when Indigenous Australians and the spouses of property owners were acknowledged as qualifying to vote.

Universal suffrage was finally introduced in 1963, with the Constitution Acts Amendment Act (No. 2) 1963, and the Council consisted of a series of two-member electorates, called provinces, with half the members being elected at each election for a six-year term. Since 1989, members have been elected via a form of proportional representation by single transferrable vote. Under this system, multiple members from a given region are elected by a combination of quotas and preferences. Following amendments contained in the Electoral Amendment and Repeal Act 2005, the number of members was increased to 36. The 2005 reforms, however, increased the previous level of regional vote weighting in the Legislative Council. The Council now comprises six regions and, as previously mentioned, each returns six members. Members can appreciate that between 1890 and 2005, there has been a complete revolution of the franchise. It is not a static franchise; it is evolving with societal changes.

It is important to understand the role of the Legislative Council. The primary role of the Legislative Council is to be a house of review. It is not the role of the Legislative Council to mirror the Assembly in terms of its form and function. The Council reviews legislation brought from the Assembly and initiates bills that are not money bills and those with non-controversial subjects. The Council also has a role to scrutinise and review public appropriation and expenditure. The government is formed in the Assembly, regardless of the composition of the Council. The Legislative Assembly is the house of Parliament where the party or coalition that can maintain majority support on the floor of the Assembly puts forward its policies and major legislative initiatives.

Now may I return to quote from former Liberal Premier Richard Court's Commission on Government, which reported in 1995 —

Rather than merely duplicating the function of members of the lower house who are constituency representatives as well as members of the governing or opposition political parties, members of the upper house need to be encouraged to take a larger perspective of the governance of the State. Instead of focussing on their constituency and party concerns, the goal of any effective house of review should be to encourage those members to represent interests and ideas and thus think and act for the entire State rather than a particular constituency or political party. Only then can members effectively function as reviewers of government activities.

Members, this bill is steeped in equality, and democratic values. Malapportionment that benefits a select minority is a grievous and oppressive injustice to all other voters. Every voter, wherever they are, can claim to have unique circumstances that ought to be considered. Far from entrenching the major parties, in a whole-of-state electorate with 37 members the quota of the vote for a candidate to be elected will be just 2.63 per cent. This virtually guarantees that a range of diverse interests can access seats in Parliament. All interests will be able to compete on an equal basis for a share of parliamentary power.

At its heart, this bill seeks to restore the franchise of the individual over particular sectional interests. The basic unit of the community is the citizen. It is the citizen to whom the franchise should attach. Even this basic premise has proved controversial in our community over time. Voting rights have varied according to ethnicity, nationality,

property ownership, marital status, sex, age, capacity and criminal history. Fundamental to our decency as a community should be a principled commitment to recognising and respecting the individual dignity of every citizen and to do so from the operating presumption of equality.

This bill, the electoral equality bill, is based on the recommendations of the final report by the independent Ministerial Expert Committee on Electoral Reform. I say “independent” in the following context. The government set the policy question—how to best achieve electoral equality in the Legislative Council. It then asked a panel of leading experts in electoral and constitutional law to turn their independent minds to providing me as Minister for Electoral Affairs with the best way to achieve reform, drawing from their extensive expertise in the complex fields of constitutional law and psephology. It was called a ministerial expert committee because its purpose was to inform the minister. However, the question put to it was resolved using the independent exercise of the members’ collective intellect. The committee called for public submissions and published a discussion paper to elicit responses from the community. A total of 184 submissions were received, the vast majority of which were published online.

I turn now to the main features of the bill, starting with the whole-of-state electorate. Proposed section 16C in the bill provides —

The State is a single electorate (the *whole of State electorate*) for the purposes of the election of the members of the Council.

Under a whole-of-state electorate, the vast majority of seats will be filled by groups or candidates reaching quota, maximising the choices available to voters. The quota will be drastically reduced from 14.28 per cent in the current regions to 2.63 per cent of the whole-of-state electorate. Clause 19 will delete section 16H(1) from the Electoral Act 1907. This will remove the reference to the three contiguous regions, known as the North Metropolitan Region, being a region that is generally to the north of the Swan River; the South Metropolitan Region, being a region that is generally to the south of the Swan River; and the East Metropolitan Region, being a region that includes the hills and foothills of the Darling escarpment.

Clause 19 also will delete section 16H(2), which provides for the metropolitan area of Perth. There will no longer be regions and the metropolitan boundary will no longer be used to delineate the three contiguous metropolitan regions. Minority viewpoints will be proportionately represented and it will permanently remove the need for both the drawing and, following demographic shifts, the redrawing of electoral boundaries. One statewide electorate puts the level and range of diversity that we have in this Parliament into the hands of electors.

Group voting tickets will be abolished in the Western Australian Legislative Council. In Australia, there are two types of divided ballots for upper houses. The first is divided ballots with group voting tickets—the current system in WA and Victoria. The second type of divided ballot incorporates voter preferences both above the line and below the line. This type of ballot is used in New South Wales, South Australia and the Australian Senate. All three of these jurisdictions have abolished group voting tickets. The ministerial expert committee recommended that a whole-of-state electorate should be established in conjunction with the abolition of group voting tickets and the introduction of optional preferential voting, to give voters greater control over their preferences.

Voting will become an easier task, enhancing participation in elections. Under the existing system, all candidates had to be preferenced for a vote to be formal, subject to minor errors. At the last election, for some regions this meant numbering as many as 64 squares below the dividing line on the ballot paper. This is akin to a wholly inappropriate numeracy test to earn the privilege of voting. Clauses 10, 63, 65, 68 and 73 of the bill will remove references to group voting tickets and voting ticket squares and introduce optional preferential voting. Candidates will no longer be able to lodge a voting ticket with the Western Australian Electoral Commission that preferences all candidates in an election. This puts an end to a system that is, as I have noted, neither well understood nor visible to the vast majority of WA electors.

Electors will no longer be constrained by a compulsory preferential voting system but will be able to choose candidates under an optional or semi-optional preferential system. If they choose to vote above the line, they can number as many squares as they wish for the groups in their preferred order. If they choose to vote below the line, where there are more than 20 candidates, they must number one through 20 and can choose to preference all candidates but are not required to do so. In the rare event that there are fewer than 20 candidates, they must number all candidates when voting below the line.

In another significant consequence, this bill will increase the Legislative Council from 36 to 37 members. The bill will amend section 5 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899 to provide that the Council is to consist of 37 elected members. With an even number of seats, the vote by the community required to secure a majority of seats is above 50 per cent, often significantly so. Having an odd number of Council members makes it more likely for a party that wins a majority of votes in the community to win a majority of seats, thereby reflecting the will of the people.

An odd number of seats also addresses the anomaly associated with the President’s casting vote. Currently, with 35 members entitled to a deliberative vote, there is very rarely the need for the President’s casting vote. Increasing to 37 members means that if 36 members vote and the vote is tied, the President’s casting vote will have value.

Clause 4 of the bill will amend section 47 of the Constitution Act 1889 to provide that the Council cannot continue to operate if the election fails or is declared absolutely void. Under the existing section 47, the Council may continue to operate in circumstances in which an election for a region failed or was void. Although this was appropriate in a regions-based electorate, it is not appropriate for a whole-of-state electorate. This amendment provides that the Council cannot continue to operate when the whole-of-state election fails or is declared absolutely void. An election would be deemed to have wholly failed if no candidate was nominated or no candidate was returned. This amends section 89 of the Electoral Act. In that case, a new writ will be issued for a supplementary election. In addition, prior to the amendments in clause 54 of the bill, a Council election would have always been deemed to have wholly failed if a candidate died between nomination and close of polls.

Under section 162(3) of the Electoral Act, the Court of Disputed Returns has the power to declare an election absolutely void in circumstances whereby illegal practices were committed in connection with the election. If any election is declared absolutely void, a new election is to be held pursuant to section 172(1)(c) of the Electoral Act. When a person who is not qualified is elected under sections 76A or 76B of the Electoral Act, it can be contested in the Court of Disputed Returns and, if voided by the court, a new election is held.

Clause 54 of the bill will amend the provisions relating to the death of a candidate. Under the act, a new election was required in every case when a candidate died after close of nominations but before close of polls. The bill will now provide that, when more than one seat is to be filled and a candidate who dies is then elected, the vacancy provisions continue to apply. Section 146E(7) and clause 20 of schedule 1 of the Electoral Act will now provide that in the case of a multi-member election, when a candidate dies between nomination and close of polls, the recount provisions will also apply. Although a new election is appropriate for a single region, these amendments will avoid the need for a costly and time-consuming whole-of-state election. As I mentioned, under a whole-of-state election of 37 members, the quota for election will be just 2.63 per cent or approximately 45 000 votes. The ministerial expert committee recommended that measures be taken to minimise what could result in an unwieldy or impracticable ballot paper, such as the infamous “tablecloth” ballot in the New South Wales upper house election in 1999, which contained 233 candidates.

It is important that measures do not unduly restrict the ability of members of the community to nominate as a candidate, either individually or as a group. There should be opportunities for groups or candidates who have a genuine foundation of community support. The registration requirements for parties have been tightened to manage the size of the ballot paper. Clause 34 provides that two or more parties cannot rely on the same person as a member for the purpose of qualifying or continuing to qualify as an eligible political party. South Australia requires a party to have 200 unique members to gain registration and New South Wales requires 750 unique members. The federal government has just introduced a bill requiring 1 500 unique members. In line with the recommendations of the ministerial expert committee, the bill requires that applications for registration must be accompanied by 500 unique declarations as to membership of a party.

Clause 37 provides that parties cannot contest a general election—that is, have their name on the ballot paper, nominate candidates or receive electoral funding—unless they have applied to register at least 12 months prior to the issue of the writs. The ministerial expert committee recommended a six or 12-month period prior to the election date. Parties in Western Australia will now be required to pay a \$2 000 fee on application, mirroring the arrangements in New South Wales.

Clause 39, which creates new section 62KA, provides that parties must provide annual returns for continued registration. This has been adopted from the New South Wales electoral system. It is the intention that a return will be signed by the relevant party official and only require signed declarations from members when the membership details of the 500 members change, or as required by the Western Australian Electoral Commissioner. This will allow the Electoral Commissioner to verify that each party continues to remain eligible for registration. The ministerial expert committee recommended that independent candidates must demonstrate a degree of popular support to access the ballot. The committee recommended that a significant number of electors be required to nominate an independent candidate and that these electors must not have nominated another candidate.

Clause 47 will require that independent candidates who apply for nomination are to have 250 supporting declarations from enrolled electors, thereby demonstrating community support for their nomination. This mirrors the requirement in South Australia. Currently, the nomination fee for candidates in WA is \$250. The ministerial expert committee recommended that the fee be increased given that the candidate is seeking statewide support. South Australia requires a \$3 000 nomination fee for upper house candidates. New South Wales requires \$500.

Clause 49 of the bill will increase the fee for Legislative Council candidates to \$2 000, but it will be capped at \$10 000 for five or more candidates. The \$2 000 is the same for the Senate. As per existing provisions in the Electoral Act, the nomination fee will be returned should a candidate be elected or their group achieve four per cent of the primary vote.

The bill provides measures that will ensure that the size of the ballot paper is manageable. On the divided ballot paper used for Legislative Council elections in Western Australia, independent candidates are grouped below the line in the same columns to prevent the ballot paper from stretching horizontally in an unwieldy fashion. The government recognises that a new quota of 2.63 per cent could lead to an increase in candidates; therefore, it is

critical that the size of the ballot paper is managed so as not to repeat the chaotic tablecloth ballot that occurred in New South Wales. Managing the size of the ballot paper includes recognition that a square above the dividing line on the ballot paper is a privilege. Government formed the view that it is not unreasonable for groups to have a minimum number of candidates to attain a square above the dividing line on the ballot paper. Clause 63 will insert new section 113B(5)(b), which provides that groups are entitled to a square above the line when there are five or more candidates in the group.

Clause 63 also will insert new sections 113B(3)(b) and (c), which provide that in the case of an election where more than one Legislative Council seat is to be filled and where there are two or more groups, registered party groups are to be printed in columns sequentially from the left across the ballot paper, followed by other groups, and that the order within both groups will be in accordance with section 80(1). Clause 63 also will insert new section 113B(3)(d), which provides that ungrouped candidates are to be printed in one column or, if there are too many names, in two or more columns, in the order determined under section 87(6).

Previously, the death of a candidate for a region between the close of nominations and close of polls required a new election for the region. Clause 54 will amend section 88 of the act so that a new election will not be required in every instance. Section 146E(7) will be amended and new clause 20 will be inserted into schedule 1 to provide that in the case of the death of a candidate for the Council, when more than one seat is to be filled and there are more candidates than seats, the vacancy provisions will apply so that there is a recount of candidates. Without these amendments there would be the requirement and expense of holding a new election for the whole of the state following the death of any candidate for the Council between nomination and the close of polls.

The bill will insert new part 9 into the act to provide for a transition period. The act continues to apply if a vacancy arises in the Council prior to 22 May 2025 and members in the Council continue to represent regions before the commencement of the amending provisions or, in the case of a vacancy occurring in the Council, before 22 May 2025.

New section 217 provides for continued registration of parties following commencement of the act. All existing parties may apply for continued registration within 12 months after commencement of the act. If they do not apply, their registration will be cancelled. If they do apply, their application will be considered under the new registration provisions in new sections 217(1) and (3).

New section 217(3) provides that the Electoral Commissioner must cancel a party's registration if the party does not make an application within 12 months of commencement of the act or if satisfied that the application would have been refused under section 62J.

Before I commend the bill to the house, there are several things I would like to emphasise. First, this bill will achieve electoral equality for all electors in Western Australia. Second, this bill will not reduce regional representation, as any citizen can nominate to run as a candidate and would require only 2.63 per cent of the vote to be elected, rather than the 14.28 per cent as is the case now in the regions. It retains proportional representation in the electoral system for the Legislative Council. The bill will provide for an electoral system that will reflect the expressed will of the voters. All Western Australians want a system that is fair. This new model will mean that the percentage of votes a political party receives determines the percentage of seats they will win. It cannot be fairer than that. It does not discriminate against any one group in society. It provides every voter in Western Australia, regardless of their postcode, with 38 representatives—their local lower house member and 37 upper house members. The group voting tickets system, which has been roundly criticised by the public and stakeholders, will be abolished. Preferences will now be transferred according to the voter's will and not from party to party without their consent. Sensible measures will be introduced to manage the size and design of the ballot paper.

Geared as it is towards advancing the interests of all Western Australian voters, it is fitting that the last word on this bill to go to a member of our community. I quote Gerald Hitchcock, who wrote to the ministerial expert committee —

Your vote must count the same whether you live in Esperance or Success, in Hall's Creek or Margaret River. Whether you feature in the Rich List or on Centrelink records. Whether you are dynamic and innovative or phlegmatic and compliant. Whatever kind of person you are, and wherever you live, you are equally subject to the laws, and so should have an equal say in determining who makes those laws.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle**.

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2021–22) BILL 2021**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2021–22) BILL 2021**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from 15 September.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [10.53 am]: I rise to make a contribution on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021. However, before I do, I should make mention of what we have just heard read into the house by the Minister for Electoral Affairs, the second reading speech for the Constitutional and Electoral Legislation Amendment (Electoral Equality) Bill 2021. It

is a bill at a time when regional Western Australians can legitimately claim it to be the culmination of a great deceit by this government. It was a great deceit when it went to the last election and said that it did not have electoral reform on its agenda, yet we saw today the culmination of a long-held ambition, a 120-year ambition according to the Attorney General, that has culminated in the presentation of that legislation to the house. I am sure he must have started penning the speech he just read out about three months before the election because it is probably one of the longest second reading speeches I have ever heard. It was very in-depth and well researched and contained a great history of all sorts of matters in electoral affairs in this state, but I doubt very much that he did not have it on his mind when he went to the last election.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk):** Members!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The minister says in one of the concluding paragraphs —

Before I commend the bill to the house, there are several things I would like to emphasise. First, this bill will achieve electoral equality for all electors in Western Australia. Second, this bill will not reduce regional representation ...

He says that it will not reduce regional representation. It takes regions out of the Electoral Act. How could it not reduce regional representation? Not only does it reduce regional representation —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Moore, sit down for a moment. You are provoking the other side of the house, but members, I think you can listen to the member in silence, or perhaps leave the chamber if that is a problem for you.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you very much. I do not care if they stay or go because I am not going to stop and I do not care if they interject.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** There you go! That is an open invitation.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** They have been antagonising me greatly over this whole period.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, I think we need to be mindful of Hansard's job, so thanks very much.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Okay; well, you blokes keep quiet over on that side—and ladies.

**Ms J.J. Shaw:** Us blokes?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** And women—men and women on that side of the chamber, please keep quiet.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I note that there is a very strong presence of female members in this chamber and I welcome that. In fact, I am one of those who believe there should actually be equality. I retract my particular gender-based remark and assure all members that I value all members of the house, male or female.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Let me get back to what I was saying. The Attorney General has gone into great detail in the second reading speech about changes to the Electoral Act that he says will not affect regional representation. I say they will greatly affect regional representation. It will be very difficult for regionally based members to base themselves in an election process in which they will be up against people located in the city.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Water.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The Minister for Water can have his say in a while. This will also have an effect on the Legislative Assembly seats. The minister has not mentioned that anywhere in this speech; however, the removal of regional delineation will also mean that the containment of the districts within regions, as is required in the act at the moment, will disappear. We will see seats, as they are in the federal electorate, coming into both metropolitan and country areas based on a purely mathematical division of the state into divisions equally based in number—59 into the population plus the large district allowance, which will still exist, but we will see a reduction in those purely regional seats, such as those I represent. Most likely they will move into a hybrid situation, a bit like the old seat of Pearce and the seat of Canning in the federal electorate at the moment. That is guaranteed now because the government is seeking to remove the regions from the act, and that will be the consequence. Nowhere in this speech does the minister mention the effect on the Legislative Assembly, but there will be a substantial effect on regional representation in the Legislative Assembly as a result of this legislation.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** How?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Just think it through, member.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** I have thought it through, but I do not understand your logic.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** The member should consider what is happening in Durack at the moment. There is a seat that extends from Wyndham all the way into the metropolitan area, picking up Bullsbrook and other places within the Perth metropolitan area. The reason that has not happened in the state before is that the requirement of the act is that all those districts have to be contained within discrete regions. The government is seeking to take the metropolitan regional boundary, and all the other regional boundaries, out of the act. That will change the way those seats will be composed and it will eventually lead to a reduction of representation for regional Western Australians. That is something that no doubt the member will be very happy about. It is a long-held ambition of the Minister for Transport to do just that, I am sure.

I will now return to the actual appropriation bills and the matter at hand, which is to discuss the budget that has been read into this place. In doing so, I will point out a few areas of particular interest to me, being the portfolios that I represent. The first is the mines and petroleum portfolio. We know that the mining and gas industries have had a period of strong growth. Until recently, there have been some exceptionally high prices for iron ore, which have seen royalties flowing into this state in huge sums. Those royalties have played a huge part in enabling the state government to record a \$5.6 billion surplus last year and a forecast surplus of \$2.8 billion in the year to come.

The resource sector contributed sales of \$174.4 billion in the calendar year 2020, up from \$168.6 billion in the previous calendar year. The strength of the mining sector and the ongoing development of new capacity have been a strong contributor to the growth of payroll tax, which is forecast to increase by 8.4 per cent in 2021–22, with growth of 2.9 per cent in the following year.

Royalty flows for 2020–21 grew to \$12.147 billion, up from \$8.45 billion the year before, in 2019–20, but due to price volatility in iron ore, royalty flows are forecast to fall to \$10.145 billion in 2021–22 and further south in subsequent years, reflecting the dominance of iron ore in the mix. The expected iron ore price will go down to around \$US66 a tonne from the \$US154 a tonne booked in the budget in 2020–21 and the expected \$US121.30 a tonne this year. Royalty income from other commodities, excluding iron ore, is expected to rise by \$137 million to \$952 million in 2021–22, largely due to higher lithium and nickel royalties, reflecting an expected increase in price.

The Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia has shown me some evidence from a survey that it did a year or so ago. That showed that one in six jobs in WA were supported by the resource sector. At that time, \$10 billion in wages was paid to 69 000 full-time workers and 24 665 contractors. It showed also that supply chain spending accounted for a further nearly 215 000 jobs. The budget forecasts that total employment across all sectors will increase by 34 000 jobs in 2021–22. The mining and resource sector is saying that it will probably need that many people just in its own sector. Therefore, there is a need for a long-term training and skills development strategy. The \$140 billion of projects that was in the pipeline in March 2021 will be constrained by these labour shortages, which as we know have been exacerbated by border closures and the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that future projects are provided with improved pathways to enable approvals to be considered, not shortcuts that may lead to bad outcomes, but sensible measures that will help remove duplication and unnecessary delays. I note the \$19.8 million allocated in the budget to fast-track approvals. We will be seeking further information on this in the budget estimates, and if any supporting legislation will be introduced, we will be keen to look at that.

For many Western Australian people, the mining industry takes place miles from home. We know that for people in the city, it is often the experience of being a fly-in fly-out worker or knowing someone who is a FIFO. For regional people, it is very much part of their everyday lives and the environment in which they live. I am not talking just about huge and well-known mining provinces like the Pilbara and the goldfields. Even in my own electorate, which is probably considered to be more of a farming and fishing area, mining and gas developments have been key contributors over many decades.

In the early years of the Western Australian colony, the area around Northampton was an important source of lead. It was known simply as “the mines”. It was in fact the site of the first public railway in WA. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were gas and mineral sands developments around Dongara, Eneabba and Cataby, with further development by Tronox in the 1980s and at the GMA garnet mine in the Northampton area. There is also iron ore mining, with the Karara magnetite project, and the development of vanadium processing at Mullewa. More lately, we are seeing prospective mineral sites in the Shires of Toodyay, Victoria Plains and Moora. That shows that there is more to mining than just iron ore and that there are more minerals to be found right across Western Australia, especially some of the critical minerals needed for new industries such as electric vehicles.

That is why we in the opposition prize the exploration incentive scheme. That was championed by Wendy Duncan, a former member for Kalgoorlie, the Mining and Pastoral Region and the Agricultural Region. That scheme, which started in April 2009 and was originally supported by royalties for regions under the Nationals WA, has a long history of providing very positive economic benefits. A 2017 ACIL Allen Consulting report confirmed that the EIS has a strong multiplier effect on the state economy; namely, for every \$1 million invested in the scheme, the long-run expected net benefit to the state in higher gross state product is \$23.7 million. A 2020 study from the University of

Western Australia showed that there was a \$31 return for every \$1 invested in the exploration incentive scheme. That is a very important scheme that the Nationals WA are very proud to have initiated, and to see that continued in this term of government is a good thing.

I turn now to the transport portfolio. I want to thank the Liberal–National coalition government in Canberra for the tremendous support it has given Western Australia in transport infrastructure in recent years. The commonwealth’s tied grants for transport infrastructure total \$7.261 billion over the forward estimates. The Morrison government has also provided floor and top-up payments that have stopped our GST from falling to as low as 10¢ in the dollar based on population share, with a top-up this year of \$2.115 billion. That substantial direct support from the federal Liberal–National coalition government has led to some of the good news that we see in this budget and to the ability for this government to provide some of the transport infrastructure programs that it so proudly proclaims.

I note that includes the Metronet program, of course, which is also receiving substantial commonwealth funding to enable it to go ahead. It often appears to me to be a bit hard to get updated information on Metronet from the Minister for Transport. Whenever I ask a parliamentary question, either verbally or in written form, I usually get the response, “It is noted that the opposition has resisted Metronet for several years”, and, “The Leader of the Opposition has labelled Metronet as not a need-to-have project”, and so on. In one question, when I asked the minister about the Yanchep rail, she said, “The member”—that being me—“must clarify whether the Metronet Yanchep rail extension is a project the opposition wants to cancel.” I am very happy to clarify for the minister that we have no intention of cancelling the Yanchep rail extension. It would be a tad silly to do so.

That rail project is underway. However, I can assure the minister that we are concerned about some of the delays with that project. I have asked about that in this house, and that has since been confirmed in the budget papers. In the last year, actual expenditure on that line was nearly \$97 million under what was budgeted. The government had a program that I think it called Smoothing the Pipeline. That program was announced in September. However, by that point, the financial year had closed, and the government was short of nearly \$100 million of expenditure on the Yanchep rail extension. That could only go to show that that project is in quite a bit of strife in its ability to be delivered and that the rumours that have been floating around the community and the newspaper reports that have published about delays are very true. We know also that the government has tried to get the proponent, the City of Wanneroo, to agree to drop the principal shared pathway along the railway line. I have asked questions about that. The minister has denied that that is a cost-saving measure. I would like to see whether shelving that part of the project will actually lead to a reduction in its overall cost. It should do, but if it does not, it is just a way to try to shore up the project a little more. The City of Wanneroo knows full well that if the government’s plan to put in bits and pieces of the path is enacted, it will eventually have to come to the party and do it itself, and retrofitting will be much more expensive than doing it in the first place.

The Forrestfield–Airport Link seems to be an ongoing issue. The original deadline was late 2020; the new deadline is somewhere in 2022. It just keeps blowing out. Every six months we are told that it will take another six months. We do not see that project coming to fruition. The government seems to be consistent in its inability to deliver some of these projects on time.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Transperth is subsidised to around \$950 million. The government is a bit worried that Transperth patronage seems to be falling off, and that is probably why fares are being capped at the price of two zones, at a cost of an extra \$60 million over three years. It will be interesting to see whether that works and drags patronage back to trains and buses, because passenger numbers have not been improving.

**Ms R. Saffioti:** It’s called a pandemic—seriously.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** We are told that our patronage numbers are better than they are for some other cities, but some of those other cities are locked down and that would perhaps explain why people are not on those trains too often. We have not had that level of lockdown. Anybody who drives around Perth at the moment will notice the traffic chaos on many of our roads, because people are staying off public transport in droves. It will be interesting to see whether the government can attract them back to public transport. I note the press release the other day about the government giving away golden tickets so that people can travel for free. If these measures do not work, there will be some problems in the future for the transport system. We want people to use public transport. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be happening under the current government.

One project that also has been cited for smoothing is the Bindoon bypass. I asked a quite reasonable question of the minister in this place to find out whether that project is going to happen, after it was announced by Mains Road WA officials at a town meeting in my electorate that it would be delayed by two years. The minister told me that she makes these decisions and not Main Roads. She could easily have said at that time that, yes, the project will be delayed by two years, because a press release dated 9 September confirmed that that is indeed the case—the project has been delayed for two years and will now not be delivered until 2026. Just on that issue, the proposed bypass is part of a strategic freight link all the way from Kewdale through to the north-west. Part of the aim of the bypass was to enable the passage of triple road trains all the way down to Muchea, which would have led to substantial

savings for freight operators. Freight costs are increasing due to the inability to get these road trains down to Muchea. Infrastructure Australia puts this cost at \$62 million by 2025, increasing to \$86 million by 2045. There is a cost to operators in having to go up and down the highway to pick up the extra trailers. It also leads to 216 extra freight trips per day between Muchea and Wubin, simply to make up for the missing link between NorthLink WA, or Tonkin Highway, and the improved Great Northern Highway all the way up to Wubin and beyond. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on Great Northern Highway and also on NorthLink, yet this missing link—this little bit in the middle; the \$265 million, 61-kilometre bypass—has been pushed back, even though the Infrastructure Australia priority list gave it a cost–benefit ratio of 3.4 to 1, which is extraordinarily high.

If we look at what will be achieved by the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, for instance, its cost–benefit ratio is only 1.34 to 1. That is a relatively marginal project in terms of benefit to cost, according to Infrastructure Australia. I am not denigrating the project in any way, but it seems strange that the government would choose to smooth a project that has such a high cost–benefit ratio, would have an immediate return by reducing heavy traffic on the roads and is virtually shovel-ready, and pick up projects that have a much lower cost–benefit ratio. I do not know whether that was a political or an infrastructure decision—I do not know the rationale behind it. I may be able to get some answers from the minister during the estimates hearings. It seems to me that some projects are picked based more on where people are located in seats rather than necessarily on what is the best outcome for the community, industry and the state.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** That is a bit of a cheek, coming from the National Party.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Thank you, Minister for Water! It seems to me that there are still considerable concerns in Gelorup about some of the constraints on the southern section of the proposed Bunbury Outer Ring Road. I am told that the route has been sitting on the map for 48 years, but people are still asking whether it is the best route in terms of its environmental impact and whether it is too constrained or narrow to be able to accommodate future growth. Actually, the corridor is pretty narrow; there will be sections of the road where the lanes will be running side by side with just a concrete barrier between them. It is quite a narrowly constrained corridor, and that perhaps needs to be looked at. I might raise that with the minister in other forms as well.

I will talk briefly about the Northampton bypass, which is not listed in the budget papers. That project has been under discussion for decades. The situation is now very urgent in Northampton, with Strandline Resources receiving approval to bring 230 tonnes of mineral sands per annum from Coburn, south of Shark Bay, to Geraldton port via the narrow streets of Northampton. The initial project has a 22-year life, so we are talking about a very long time for the people of Northampton to have to put up with that measure. We know that the Northampton bypass could be treated discretely from the rest of the planned Northampton–Dongara freight route. It does not really matter where the rest of that route goes; the Northampton bypass is pretty well settled. We also know where the section from Northampton down to Oakajee on the North West Coastal Highway will go. We know that we will need greater access to Oakajee. There needs to be relief and a conclusion for the people of the Chapman Valley shire, who for years have put up with the potential that a road network will go through their properties, without compensation or certainty. That needs to be fixed. There are issues around Moonyoonooka and Walkaway that need to be resolved. Nationals WA and Liberal members also have been approached by people in Dongara with concerns. I understand that the shire is quite supportive of the route that has been put forward, provided there is a link through from Indian Ocean Drive. That is what they have spoken about to me. I hope that is being considered as part of the whole project for the future, so that Dongara is not unfairly treated in that regard.

I have raised other issues in this house. One is the proposed closure of Robinson Road in Bellevue, which the minister announced on Tuesday would be going ahead. The minister said that traffic modelling had shown that there would be a manageable impact on Midland traffic and that vehicles that were using the crossing were expected to use the Lloyd Street underpass. Time will tell. I predict traffic chaos for Midland, and I think many other people are predicting traffic chaos for Midland. There is already traffic chaos around that area. The closure of Robinson Road will have a detrimental effect on traffic flow in Midland; there is no doubt about it. It is a matter that has been raised by the member for Midland and other members in this place. It has also been raised by the community; there are 3 000 signatures on a petition calling for it to remain open. I know traffic modelling has been discussed with some members of the community, but I have not seen that. I am hoping it will be released publicly very soon. I know that area is very, very congested, and we will watch this crowded space.

I have only four minutes left. I want to refer very quickly to this government's rhetoric on tier 3 rail, declaring that there is some hope for it. There is nothing in the budget for it. We know that some work has been done, but where are the dollars for the future? All we know is that in a press release dated 24 September 2020 the Minister for Transport stated —

“We'll now work, in collaboration with CBH Group and Arc Infrastructure, on business cases to Infrastructure Australia examining the full suite of costs and benefits to government and industry of rail investment proposals on Tier 1, 2 and 3 lines.

“Submission of business cases to Infrastructure Australia could lay the groundwork for potential future funding partnerships with the Federal Government for rail freight investment.

In fact, the government is saying that funding is, again, dependent upon the federal government. The commitment to tier 3 rail is there, provided the federal government pays for it, but we do not see anything in this budget for the advancement of that issue.

The third area I would like to very briefly touch on is the climate action portfolio.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Do you believe in climate change?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Yes, our party accepts that there is climate change and that it needs to be addressed.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** Does your federal leader?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Our state party, of which I am a member, recognises that action is required to address climate change. If I could continue.

A climate action fund of \$750 million has been put forward and, as I say, we welcome investment in climate action. At the last election, we actually proposed substantial investment in climate-based action. We had programs for addressing the effects on coastal communities, carbon capture, renewables and a range of other initiatives aimed at ameliorating the influence of humans on the climate and helping communities adapt to climate change. We certainly welcome a commitment in the budget to climate action, but when we go through some of the details, it gets a little hairy.

We know that in the budget, \$350 million has been put into a special purpose account to plant some 33 000 hectares with softwood. That comes on the back of the quite deceitful actions of this government in closing the hardwood industry without any notice and without any proper consideration of the people —

*Point of Order*

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I think it is under standing order 91—I may be mistaken—but the member just made a statement about the “deceitful” behaviour of this government, and I think that is unparliamentary.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** No, it’s not.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Were you the speaker?

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** It is not a point of order because the member was not referring to a person, but a body.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** That will be used to plant softwood on 33 000 hectares in prime agricultural areas where the government has closed the hardwood industry. It needs to be in areas that receive more than 600 millimetres of rainfall per year. I searched and could locate only three properties of any size: one in Boyup Brook, \$780 000 for 62 hectares; one in Manjimup, \$1.59 million for 132 hectares; and one in Mt Barker, \$3.75 million for 303 hectares. All of those properties cost around \$12 000 per hectare, so the government’s money is not going to go very far.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) [11.24 am]:** Thank you, Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to address the budget that has been handed down. I would like to start with the portfolio of health and look at the government’s budget commitments through the same lens as the Minister for Health. Our part-time health minister has so far this year said that the health system is outstanding and is performing magnificently. But he has also said that the ongoing code yellows that are being called in our system because hospitals do not have capacity to take any more patients are business as usual.

When issues arise, the minister is quick to divert to his list of excuses, none of which relate to his handling of the portfolio, and all of them attributable to someone or something else. Some of the excuses that appear in the budget papers include higher levels of acuity; long-stay patients with complex health conditions; an ageing population; the increasing burden of chronic disease; high levels of obesity and of mental health issues; and rapid technological advancements. It is claimed in the preamble to the health budget that the health system is in a transition to recovery. Recovery from what? What ailment is it recovering from, other than the lack of funds and investment in the first term of the McGowan Labor government? There is also reference to a post-COVID elective surgery blitz. Obviously the spin doctors included that in the budget papers before this month’s cancellation of hundreds of surgeries.

This all paints a picture of how the government sees the health system, and may explain why the budget falls drastically short of doing anything to address the urgent needs in the system right now. It is apparent that our part-time Minister for Health is living in an alternative reality to that of our healthcare workers and patients, who are telling us every day that the system is in crisis. These are the people who contact me every day to say that their loved ones with serious medical conditions are waiting for hours on end in the back of an ambulance for a hospital to accept them. They are the people who are managing ongoing pain on a daily basis, and who risk losing their livelihood because their elective surgery is continually being delayed. They are also the nurses and midwives who protest, write letters, and plead with the government to listen to their concerns, because they fear their patients’ lives are at risk because they are burnt out and understaffed.

**Mr D.J. Kelly** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean!

**Ms L. METTAM:** The unions are also raising concerns that this is happening with no COVID in the community, and that after four and a half years of this government's chronic underfunding and under-resourcing the system is on its knees. In essence, this is a lucky, lazy and uninspiring budget that does little to address the health crisis we are experiencing right now. This is not a budget for a health system that is crumbling around us; this is a budget designed to address the issues of another time. I am sure that members opposite will wheel out the Treasurer's spin that the government is spending billions on health. We saw that \$4 billion election commitment on the front page of *The Sunday Times*. However, it is an eleventh-hour investment that will barely support a system that is unnecessarily putting lives at risk. The reality is that operational expenditure has increased by only 1.38 per cent from last year. That does not even cover the consumer price index rate of 1.75 per cent that the government outlines in the budget. A 1.38 per cent increase is miserable; it is a pittance from a government that has spent the last week crowing about its record surplus—a \$5.6 billion surplus built on the good fortune of the resources industry.

To say it is underwhelming would be an understatement. The budget fails to even try to address the fact that patients' lives are being put at risk every day due to this government's apparent lack of urgency in fixing the mess it created. That did not stop the Premier; Treasurer, who obviously does not trust anyone else to do the job, take the credit, or wheel out the spin. I refer to the 9 September media statement titled "Massive funding boost for health in State Budget". It refers to \$3.1 billion to expand WA's health system, with \$1.3 billion going to improving health infrastructure.

If we dig down deeper into that spending to see what is new and what is being spent this year, we can see another picture. This year, the hospital system is in crisis. In one month, hundreds of elective surgeries have been cancelled because the hospitals are at capacity. There have been 111 code yellow internal emergencies due to lack of capacity in a system in which there has been ambulance ramping of over 6 500 hours in one month; six times what was recorded before this government came to power and was deemed a horror story by our Minister for Health. We have seen the worst ambulance response times on record. One in four emergency calls were not responded to within the 15-minute target. There have been protests by nurses because staff morale is very low and they are burnt out due to consistently being asked to do double shifts and overtime this year.

With the health system on its knees, new recurrent expenditure, excluding for the COVID pandemic, will increase by \$287 million in 2020–21—\$287 million of the so-called billions of expenditure to address the health crisis this year; \$287 million when the government has recorded a \$5.6 billion surplus. This brings me to the forward estimates. The next part of the massive funding boost for health spruiks that 332 new hospital beds will be opened, supported by 100 new doctors and 500 new nurses, and I quote from a 2021–22 budget fact sheet —

Of the 332 new beds opening across WA hospitals, 223 are general beds and 109 are mental health beds.

...

Graduate nurses and midwives employed in WA hospitals will increase from 700 a year to 1,100 in 2021 and 1,200 in 2022—delivering on a McGowan Government election commitment.

The McGowan government has just announced an additional 170 graduate nurses to be employed in COVID-19 response positions. New staff are certainly a welcome announcement, as are the new beds. We welcome any immediate measure to address the obvious lack of capacity and lack of staff. A couple of concerns are: where will they come from and how will the government pay for them beyond this year, because we see a two per cent cut in operational expenditure in 2022–23? This again is against the demand that the Australian Medical Association Western Australia has highlighted, which is consistently growing at three to four per cent each year. Although in theory there will be more beds, there will not be an operational budget next year to run them. There was an expectation among healthcare workers that this record surplus would be reinvested to try to fix the health crisis. Instead, we are actually going backwards with cuts to the budget from next year by a Labor government that clearly has its head in the sand about the magnitude of the health crisis we are currently experiencing. We are again seeing a health budget that is not keeping up with growth and is ignoring the health system, which is struggling to cope without any COVID in the community. It is staggering at a time when the state government is sitting on this record revenue. It ignores the pleas from healthcare workers to shift from cost cutting to a patient-centred approach. It is not unreasonable for Western Australians to expect a world-class system when we have a health system that is on its knees and the state is recording hefty surpluses, but this is simply not the case. It is appalling and we as Western Australians deserve better. At a time when our finances are healthy, there is absolutely no excuse for patients to have elective surgery delayed or for hospitals to be forced to turn patients away due to a lack of capacity. So, too, do our healthcare workers deserve better.

We have seen multiple protests and rallies by nurses and doctors begging the government to take their fears for patient safety seriously, pleading for extra resources to manage their patients. The latest Your Voice in Health survey stated that fewer than half the number of health workers felt valued. One in three felt that it was safe to speak up. An unprecedented WorkSafe notice was issued to Bunbury Hospital at South West Health Campus to fix what has been described as a toxic culture. Severe staffing shortages across the board have resulted in casual staff being used to fill the void. The tragic case of Aishwarya Aswath earlier this year touched every Western Australian and

highlighted some real fears raised by staff regarding staff shortages that had the capacity to impact patient safety. It was shocking to see junior doctors and nurses being thrown under the bus in response to this tragedy, something that exacerbated the low morale felt amongst healthcare workers.

We have also seen other moves such as the refresher pathways program finally reinstated after being suspended for 18 months as a way to get nurses and midwives back into the system after severe absences. This is a mess created by this government and now it is using simply a bandaid to fix it.

No doubt the government will argue it is investing in the future. It has made much ado about the \$1.8 billion for the proposed women's and babies' hospital, a project the Liberals also committed to during the election campaign. It is much needed because King Edward Memorial Hospital for Women is under significant stress. It is forecast to deliver 6 200 babies this year, representing a significant growth in demand from an overstretched workforce that delivered 5 800 babies in 2020. It is unconscionable that our state's only dedicated tertiary maternity and gynaecological hospital was forced to go on bypass because it had no capacity. It was not the only hospital to turn away pregnant women; we know that on the weekend a number of maternity wards at different hospitals were at capacity and on bypass. A mother, pregnant with twins, had to bypass two hospitals before giving birth at Fiona Stanley Hospital. There were not only not enough beds but also not enough staff. We were aware of fears raised by the Australian Nursing Federation Industrial Union of Workers in July this year that Health would be about 120 to 150 midwives short across the system. We know that a loss of 40 midwives has been recorded in the system over the last 12-month period. We also know that this service will be further stretched this year. Even the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia chief economist, Aaron Morey, said that an additional 1 500 babies will be born this financial year. Medicare data certainly also backs this up.

We welcome the announcement of the new hospital but question when it will actually start. All we have is \$5.4 million in this year's budget to further support the business case and planning. Work is not estimated to begin until 2023. It is reasonable to expect any new hospital would not be in service for years beyond that, which begs the question: what is the government doing to address the situation now? If King Edward Memorial Hospital is being put on bypass and turning away women in labour because it does not have the capacity to take them and we are experiencing severe midwife shortages, what is the plan for now and the next few years? How will the hospital cope with the expected increase in the number of babies on the back of the current so-called baby boom? It is a fair and reasonable question, one that the minister could not answer in this house yesterday because there is simply no plan in the short term to address this. It appears that bypasses are the new standard of care that birthing mothers can expect until this new hospital is open. When that will be is anyone's guess.

The government spin on Joondalup Health Campus is something we are now used to. The Joondalup Health Campus announcement is a 2017 election commitment; a \$256 million project of which \$158 million is commonwealth funding. The original plan in 2017 included eight operating theatres and a medihotel. That is no longer in the scope; it has been cut from eight theatres to one. Although I am glad that Labor has finally committed to this project after four years, it is not expected to open in its entirety until at least 2025, eight years after Labor went to the polls spruiking its commitment to the people of Joondalup. Despite the desperate need for extra beds, the medihotel is still not off the ground after four and a half years of planning; another 2017 election promise has been shoved to the side. Of the three medihotels Labor promised, only one—at Royal Perth Hospital—has actually been opened. Four beds opened in August last year—three and a half years into government to deliver four beds! Murdoch medihotel is also not yet delivered.

Urgent care clinics was another platform of the 2017 election. It was a pilot across the state that started in 2019, and it was supposed to relieve pressure on our important emergency departments. The feedback so far is that it has been hard to get an appointment and hours vary for each clinic, but they are never open after hours, especially in regional areas. It paints a picture of a government that is big on spin, big on numbers, but short on action and very happy to kick the can down the road when it comes to implementing its promises. Such has been the case with the sustainable health review. Where is that?

I turn to COVID-19. We have heard much from this government about the significant impact COVID has had on our health system. There is \$301 million available in 2021–22, but nothing in the forward estimates, despite consistent messaging that COVID is here to stay, part of our life, and Delta is coming—not if but when. In this place on Tuesday, the Minister for Health said not to worry. According to the uncorrected *Hansard*, he said —

We do not fund into the future too far in relation to these things, because we have to understand what those impacts will be. Generally, we will make sure that there is plentiful funding to ensure that the health system and other aspects of government activity are able to respond to whatever challenges COVID-19 puts up.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** If there is plentiful funding for the health system to respond to the future, why is there not enough funding to address the crisis happening now and why is the operational budget being cut in future years?

I turn to mental health. Although there is much support for the 109 mental health hospital beds, which will, hopefully, move people out of emergency departments more quickly, it is important to note that we have the lowest number of available public beds in the country. The Western Australian Association for Mental Health describes a chronic

underfunding of prevention and community-based recovery services. The main issue with the announcement is that there is not enough of a commitment to grow scale. We need to change the dangerous trajectory of growth in mental health presentations. Mental health is having a significant impact on many other key state government areas of concern, even impacting police. The lack of investment in early-intervention mental health care is seeing a revolving door of hospitalisations in our health system. It is shocking that one in six mental health patients are readmitted to the system within 28 days of discharge from acute specialised mental health units. This is a real concern. As reflected by the response to the budget from WAAMH, the rate of growth in spending on prevention and community support continues to fall relative to the rate of spending in acute services. I quote WAAMH —

WAAMH is concerned the longer this persists the further WA will fall behind in the optimal mix of services people require access to, to address their mental health needs and relieve pressure on our acute mental health services.

We have consistently heard from this government that mental health patients are presenting in greater numbers at our hospitals. We know it is not always the best place, but the reality is that they are often presenting because they have nowhere else to go. There is a flow-on effect, with an overwhelming impact on our ED and overall hospital system. This has been predictable and on trend, and this government can address it. The *Better choices. Better lives. Western Australian mental health, alcohol and other drug services plan 2015–2025* calls for significant investment in mental health prevention and community support, moving focus from current hospital-based funding, yet this budget has prioritised hospital-based services, at 47 per cent of the mental health budget, or \$478 million, at a cost to other areas. Although we welcome the \$57 million for community-support initiatives such as Youth In-Reach Support and Youth Long-Term Housing, the reality is that these funding initiatives fall well short. Community-support initiatives are only 4.9 per cent of the Mental Health Commission budget, a decrease of 5.1 per cent from 2020–21, and also drastically short of the 22 per cent target for 2025 outlined in the plan. Prevention has also been severely underfunded, at 1.15 per cent of the Mental Health Commission budget, falling well short of the five per cent target for 2025. It is perplexing that the government is to focus on hospital-based care for mental health support rather than also investing in community-based services when we know the latter is much more cost effective and, when utilised, can prevent hospital admissions in the first place.

I turn to child and adolescent mental health services. Earlier this year, I presented a grievance about the fact that despite at least eight reviews and inquiries on the mental health system in WA, and recommendations from the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2011 and 2015, we have a system that is broken. I note there will be another task force to look at the public mental health services for children and adolescents. In its 2020 update, the commission concluded that the reforms fall well short of making the desired impact for children and young people without proper financial investment and resourcing. In December last year, the targeted *Chief Psychiatrist's review into the treatment of Ms Kate Savage by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services* painted a pretty dire picture of the system as a whole, and I am sure the minister is aware. It states that within the past decade metropolitan emergency departments have experienced a 214 per cent increase in self-harm incidents, suicide risks or attempted suicides in the 13 to 17-year age group and a 403 per cent increase in under-13s. Child and adolescent mental health services funding represented just 6.5 per cent of the total 2020–21 mental health services budget of \$1.01 billion, despite the 51 per cent increase in demand for services in the years to 2019.

Through questions in the other place yesterday, we were advised that the Mental Health Commission was yet to work out what percentage of its overall budget would be allocated to CAMHS, but I sincerely hope it will account for a bigger percentage than last year. I welcome \$7.9 million in funding for CAMHS, in particular the 99 additional staff positions and the \$129 million package to keep our youth out of hospitals. As our Chief Psychiatrist said in his report —

What is clear is that the situation is now well-beyond a band-aid or temporary solution ... there is an urgent need to rebuild CAMHS as a whole-of-childhood service and restore public confidence.

I turn to eating disorders. Since the onset of COVID-19, there has been a significant increase in the number of people with eating disorders. In 2020, there were 273 referrals compared with 185 in the year before. The number of patients admitted to Perth Children's Hospital with a diagnosis for an eating disorder increased by 86 per cent from 2019 to 2020, and this increased rate has been sustained. During the election campaign, the Labor government committed \$31 million to a statewide eating disorder specialist service. Given that there is unprecedented demand, why is the government not significantly investing in this area earlier rather than later? This year, \$468 000 has been allocated. The other funds, the rest of the \$31 million, is in the years beyond that. Given this unprecedented need, why is the government's investment in this area not significantly changing until 2022–23? We know that this illness usually starts in adolescence and has the highest death rate—20 per cent in 20 years—of all mental health illnesses. The Perth Children's Hospital's eating disorders unit has eight inpatient beds. We have heard from a number of different families that are distressed because the services are simply not available now to help their children. They fear they will die waiting to access help. We heard about one mum flying her daughter to New South Wales to receive treatment because no services were available earlier this year in WA.

I turn to the area of disability services. I welcome the commitment to an office of disability for WA. There is concern that the commitment of \$13.4 million is thin on the ground. We have 500 000 people with a disability in WA,

including about 2 000 with complex needs, who have ongoing concerns. On coming to office in 2017, the McGowan government opted for the national decision-making model as opposed to a more localised scheme, which was enjoyed in electorates such as mine under the My Way trial. Not only did the government turn its back on this opportunity, but it also dissolved the Disability Services Commission. Disability Services is now in a mega department. No shortage of funds are being committed to the commonwealth scheme by WA taxpayers, but it is being undermined by the absence of localised input from the state government. It has vacated the space. Although NDIS funding is delivered through the commonwealth and the Labor government opted for decentralised decision-making, there is a role for the state to play.

There is an outstanding functional review of the Department of Communities. I understand that an undertaking was given that it would be released, but we are still waiting. The state provides about \$5 billion to the commonwealth for disability services over four years, with \$3.4 billion in NDIS. It is important to ensure that this program represents our people in the best possible way. In order to prepare a case to argue for the best arrangements for WA, we need to build data and information.

In the area of the prevention of family and domestic violence, the pressure point is social housing. Family and domestic violence was exacerbated during COVID. The loss of 1 300 social housing homes over the past four years has had a massive impact on this sector. Although the social housing package that was announced is very much welcome, there is concern about the crisis that currently exists and what can be done now to assist our vulnerable. The expansion of the Safe at Home package is certainly a worthy initiative. There is a concern that funding of \$3.4 million from 2021–22 to 2024–2025 may be too thin on the ground, but there is certainly a lot of support for that program.

In WA, 49 198 police domestic violence incident reports were triaged in 2019–20, which was an all-time high. Children were present in 15 832 of these cases. In WA, 63 per cent of assaults in 2019 were family and domestic violence related. I quote from the Western Australian Council of Social Service —

We were also glad to see significant investment from the McGowan Government in the area of Family and Domestic Violence, following through on their pre-election commitments.

#COVID-19 disproportionately affected low-income households, women, young people & migrant communities ... Many ... currently accessing community support services are doing so for the first time, which is a concern.

This is placing additional strain on already stretched services.

In conclusion, this budget has again failed to address the critical needs of the health system right now, ignoring patients and putting them at unnecessary risk. It fails to acknowledge that many of these urgent care and staffing issues were created by this government after four and a half years of chronic underfunding. We are now seeing the government scrambling to try to put a bandaid on a system that is haemorrhaging.

The people of WA deserve better. They deserve to know why the government has an opportunity to address the issues in our health system but is ignoring them; why patients are forced to wait hours on end in an ambulance because hospitals are continually at capacity; why a mother pregnant with twins is turned away from two hospitals before finally finding one with a bed to accept her; and why the response to these issues, when asked in this place, is that a hospital is coming—in the never-never. The people of WA need to know why they keep getting fed spin and excuses from this government.

**MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.54 am]: I, too, rise to make a contribution to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021. Before I do, I want to quickly state that I was very proud to be in this chamber this morning when the Minister for Electoral Affairs delivered the second reading speech on what will be the most important bill in this state, relating to the electoral reform of the upper house so that we have a fair and democratic voting system in this state so that every person's vote is of equal value. I very much look forward to that debate in this chamber and for the opportunity to engage with my community and explain the changes. It has always been a frustration of mine—many members would agree—that the majority of people do not even know how the upper house works. They do not know who the people in the upper house are. When this bill is debated in this place, it will be a fantastic opportunity to educate people about our system of democracy in Western Australia and how we propose to make the upper house fairer and more representative. I look forward to that debate.

This budget is the fifth budget for the McGowan Labor government. It is the first budget for our Premier as Treasurer. The headline of this budget is that our government has delivered a record \$5.6 billion surplus. This is something to be proud of. It is something for every Western Australian to be proud of. I heard the Deputy Leader of the Opposition use the same terms as the Leader of the Opposition used yesterday—that we are lucky and lazy. I would suggest that the only people who are lucky and lazy in this place are the surviving members of the Liberal Party. They were extremely lucky to survive. When we talk about being lazy, we can quote from the media and all sorts of places but there is no better place to quote than from the Liberal election review itself, which says —

The staggering laziness of the Opposition and lack of action by the Party in creating and 'selling' acceptable policies much earlier than the advent of the pandemic were contributing factors.

It is a bit rich for members of the Liberal Party to talk about us being lucky and lazy.

Everyone is proud of this budget, except for the opposition. Western Australia is the strongest state in the country. Western Australia has the strongest economy of any state in the nation and we have one of the strongest economies in the world. In coming to government in 2017, we were elected on our promise to get the state's finances back on track after years of financial recklessness by the previous Barnett government. Let us be clear, everyone—this was also mentioned in the Liberal Party review—when we came to office in 2017, debt had climbed from \$5 billion when the previous government took office to \$44 billion when it was kicked out by the people of Western Australia. We inherited a debt of over \$44 billion from the previous Liberal government, which now makes up a rump in opposition. We promised that we would fix the state's finances and we have. Since coming to government and throughout the pandemic, we have made responsible and disciplined decisions. We have brought spending under control. We have turned deficits into surpluses and we are paying down the credit card that was maxed out to the tune of \$44 billion by the previous Liberal–National government. We had a surplus of \$5.6 billion in 2020–21 and a projected surplus of \$2.8 billion for 2021–22, and we are expecting solid surpluses in the future based on solid prudent assumptions. I want to explain something that I think is lost a lot of the time: yes, this government has had a degree of luck in the sense that we have a very strong mining industry that is doing really well at the moment, but you make your own luck. Of course, one key reason the mining industry has been able to survive as it has during this time is because of the actions that this government has taken during the pandemic to make sure that we protect industry so it can keep our economy strong. The second point in regard to that is: the previous government was pretty lucky, too. It governed during a mining boom as well, but its future projections were not realistic and its budgeting processes were based on a high iron ore price; whereas, this budget is a very responsible, disciplined budget that does not assume the current price of iron ore will be sustained in the future. That key point is often missed, particularly by the opposition, when we debate that matter in this place.

Net debt will fall for a third consecutive year to \$32.1 billion in 2021–22. Our net debt-to-revenue ratio, which was the worst in the country when we took office, is now the best. Debt is now \$11 billion lower than projected when we came to government. We are paying off Barnett's credit card; we are paying down the debt and we are the only government in Australia doing that. We had a strong, sound financial position prior to the pandemic. That allowed us to respond in the way that we have during the pandemic to make sure that we have a strong, thriving economy during the pandemic. All that happened during a time when the priority of the McGowan Labor government was to make sure that we kept Western Australians safe. Our financial discipline in the first term of government has been crucial in giving us the financial capacity to respond to this one-in-100-year crisis. This budget and our strong surplus position will allow us to further respond to circumstances going forward whilst still grappling with this pandemic.

This strong financial position also allows us to address pressures on the health system while protecting our most vulnerable, including record investment in social housing. Of course, a strong economy has everyday impacts on everyday people. More Western Australians are now in work than ever before. The unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level since 2013, at 4.6 per cent. The McGowan Labor government has created 107 000 jobs since March 2017 and there are forecasts of another 34 000 jobs this year. These statistics are often thrown around, but we need to remember what this means in real terms for the people we represent in our electorates. It means that people in our electorates are finding work and have meaningful employment, and that is giving them the opportunity to get ahead in life. There has never, ever been a better time to be a young person in this state. With a low unemployment rate and record investment in training, there has never been a better time to be a young person to get a start in life than in Western Australia right now.

Of course, the budget strongly invests in our future. We are not squandering this strong financial position; we are investing in the future with a record \$30.7 billion investment in infrastructure, including a record \$9.1 billion going to the regions. Trains are being manufactured locally again. Metronet projects are up and about all over the metropolitan area, and I want to focus on one in particular. We talk a lot about the billions of dollars to build Metronet—I think the member for Moore tried to go there a bit in his budget reply speech—but I want to refer, of course, to the maximum two-zone fare to be introduced in January next year. The member for Dawesville is smiling, because it is a huge and significant thing that this government is doing. We are not only building and investing in infrastructure, but also making it easier, reasonable and affordable for people to use the infrastructure that we are building. For someone in the outer suburbs of Wanneroo, paying a maximum two-zone fare ticket to jump on public transport to go to work in the city means a saving of about \$1 800 a year. That is a huge, huge investment and commitment in making sure that not only do we have a public transport system that is state of the art and far reaching, but also people use it because they can afford to use it.

There is \$1.9 billion in the budget for additional health and mental health spending. There is \$875 million for social housing—a record social housing investment by this McGowan Labor government. There is \$715 million for the Australia Climate Action Fund. Of course, the announcement in the last couple of weeks to stop logging native forests is another reason I am proud to be a part of this McGowan Labor government. An amount of \$1.8 billion has been put aside—locked and loaded—for the women's and babies' hospital. We are not talking about it as the opposition did. I am not sure what it threw at it during the last election campaign—I think it was \$300 million—but \$1.8 billion is going into building the women's and babies' hospital.

There is \$1.4 billion for the state's next desalination plant. Again, we are talking about climate change and water certainty going forward in a budget that is future thinking in its approach. There is \$500 million for the digital capability fund. It may not be the sexiest thing to talk about and it may not get much media attention, but I argue it is one of the most critical investments in this budget to make sure that our systems in the future in this digital age are fit for purpose and take us further. An amount of \$400 million has been put aside for the Westport project fund. There will be further investments in hydrogen, jobs and training, and renewables. This government is without doubt a future-looking government that will not squander this strong budget position.

I want to take a few minutes to talk about my own electorate of Wanneroo. Of course, members of Parliament are responsible for making sure that we present a statewide budget that focuses on the key areas of health, education and public safety. But all backbenchers, of course, have particular interests and want to advocate for particular areas in their communities to make sure that where we live has the best available infrastructure and services. I will take a few minutes to highlight some of the things that I am very proud of that have been delivered and will be delivered in Wanneroo in this term of government. I am very proud of my achievements in my first four years in office. I delivered on every single election commitment that I made in 2017. Every single one of my election commitments in 2017 have been delivered in Wanneroo and I assure members that I intend to do the same in this term. I made a number of election commitments when I put myself in front of my community in March this year and I asked it for the honour of representing it for a second term. I intend to keep every single one of my election commitments; in fact, some of my local election commitments have already been delivered, despite the fact that we have been in our second term of government for only six months.

Members who know me well will know that I was a schoolteacher for 27 years prior to coming to this place and that education will always be a priority area for me in my local community. I am proud that since I became the member for Wanneroo, I have been able to advocate for my electorate and have delivered on behalf of the McGowan Labor government over \$27 million of investment into my local schools. In particular, my old school, Wanneroo Secondary College, has seen \$5 million delivered to build a new gymnasium and another \$5 million will be invested to build a new performing arts centre so that school can go even further with its fantastic sports and performing arts programs.

Joseph Banks Secondary College is a new school in my electorate, but with the growth of population and people coming into the northern suburbs, it has been under a fair bit of pressure to cater for all students. I am delighted that \$17.6 million is allocated to build a new learning centre at that school. Of course, the important and exciting part of that is that it will be no ordinary learning space. It will include a space science education centre that will allow that school to take its STEM programs one step further. I want to link in a couple of things to that commitment, which is exciting and important. The government is investing \$20 million into an automation and robotics facility in Neerabup, which links in beautifully with the work that Joseph Banks Secondary College is doing in the STEM area. Many of my beautiful, gorgeous primary schools have been able to benefit from the science lab program that the McGowan Labor government has been rolling out.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** I am talking about Banksia Grove Primary School, Spring Hill Primary School, Grandis Primary School, Wanneroo Primary School, Carramar Primary School, East Wanneroo Primary School and Tapping Primary School. All those schools have benefited from the McGowan Labor government's investment in science labs in schools. That fits in beautifully with and builds that strong connection between my local primary schools and their focus on STEM, as well as Joseph Banks Secondary College, which has a focus on STEM and will have cutting-edge facilities, as well as providing job opportunities of the future in Neerabup industrial park.

I will highlight a couple of other election commitments that I am pretty excited about that will be rolled out in this term of government. The first relates to the significant investment in the Wanneroo lakefront activation plan around Yellagonga Lake. There is a commitment of \$5 million to build a boardwalk along the eastern side of Wanneroo on my electorate's side of that beautiful lake, as well as a \$5 million commitment to support the City of Wanneroo to redevelop the Wanneroo Recreation Centre so that we can really optimise that most beautiful place in Wanneroo as a future tourism and recreational centre. I look forward to reporting back to this place on the progress in that regard.

I will mention quickly infrastructure in my electorate. Members will know that I am happy to have had two overpasses delivered in my first term of government for Wanneroo Road and Ocean Reef Road and Wanneroo Road and Joondalup Drive. They are complete and have been transformational for the commute time for residents coming in and out of my electorate. It is extraordinary how effective and efficient they are and the considerable difference they make to people who travel on those roads every single day. I am proud of those two commitments. The focus now is on making sure that my election commitment of \$20 million for much-needed upgrades to Flynn Drive, which is the feeder road into Neerabup industrial park, go ahead. I look forward to reporting back to the house on the progress of that key infrastructure that is being built.

I want to touch briefly on agriculture in Wanneroo. Many times in this place I have explained the significance of the agriculture industry in my electorate. I will continue to support that industry to ensure that it can continue to contribute to the state's output of agriculture. I am talking specifically about a \$600 000 commitment to assist the growers in Wanneroo to manage the drying climate. They are not easy decisions to make, but they are important decisions. It

is important to acknowledge that climate change is a real thing and that access to water is changing. We need to support our growers so they can make sure that they can survive and prosper in that environment. To that end, an election commitment of mine is for \$600 000 to support them to establish water efficiency, infrastructure and technology to ensure that they are as efficient as they can be.

I want to respond briefly to the opposition's approach to the budget. Usually in budget reply speeches, government members use the opportunity to explain to their electorates what measures in the budget will support their electorates. I guess that from an opposition's point of view, yes, the task is to highlight concerns within the budget or to question what areas of service are not being provided for in the budget. However, having listened to all the speeches of the opposition leaders, I am really disappointed that it has been just a whinge. There has not been anything in any of the budget reply speeches that would suggest to the electorate of Wanneroo what they would do instead. We can assume only that they would spend the entire surplus as they did last time they were in government because the only time they get to their feet is to criticise the government for not spending enough money. The Premier mentioned in Parliament yesterday and the day before the bizarre situation of Hon Dr Steve Thomas, who is the shadow Treasurer, so I assume he is the lead in responding to the budget that our Treasurer has brought down. The Premier reminded us that Hon Dr Steve Thomas is actually quite an honest bloke and that in 2018 Hon Dr Steve Thomas apologised for the multigenerational debt the previous government had left the Labor Party. It is interesting to note the response of the now opposition leader—the alternative Premier, I suppose—to the budget last year, in which she states —

... I want to put on the record my great disappointment in the commentary regarding royalties for regions I hear from the opposition shadow Minister for Regional Development, Hon Dr Steve Thomas.

...

Yesterday, on ABC regional *Drive*, he was interviewed by Andrew Collins and said that a couple of billion dollars could have been spent better, referring to royalties for regions.

The now opposition leader then said —

I truly hope that the position proffered by Hon Dr Steve Thomas does not reflect the broader Liberal Party view of royalties for regions.

She said also —

Any future government that is formed with the Nationals WA will come with the provision that funding to royalties for regions will be restored and the portfolio of regional development and the management of that fund will be a matter of high priority for the National Party.

This was back in October 2020. It is bizarre to me that the opposition leader would say that, after her party was humiliated at the last election. The current coalition—no; it is not a coalition. It is —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** An alliance.

**Ms S.E. WINTON:** An alliance. I suggest it might be more of a dalliance than an alliance.

I assume that the opposition leader had a big part to play in who would take the shadow portfolio positions. She made Hon Dr Steve Thomas shadow Treasurer. Things were not always so sweet between them. I go back to January, when I assume the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party were trying to offer themselves as an alternative to the McGowan Labor government, and I will quote from an article on the website [farmweekly.com.au](http://farmweekly.com.au). It states, in part —

Instead of coming together to put forward a unified approach to the Royalties for Regions ... program in Western Australia, opposition parties have been butting heads.

The article goes on to state —

Dr Thomas said that without a working agreement and better decision making principles, the future of RfR was at risk.

The article then quotes Hon Dr Steve Thomas as saying —

“To that end I expect National Party promises from the RfR fund to be matched by cuts.”

The article then quotes the reply from the opposition leader —

“The Nationals WA are an independent political party, we don't meet with other political parties to formulate our policy,” ...

I will read that again —

“The Nationals WA are an independent political party, we don't meet with other political parties to formulate our policy,” ...

I find that confusing. I accept that the Nationals WA is its own party. I accept that the Liberal Party is its own party. But the reality is that the only way in which they will ever be able to form government is if they form government together. I would suggest, members, that in that circumstance, it is critically important that those two parties get

together and agree on some key financial policies going forward. It has been six months since the election. There is only three and a half years to go. At some point, those two parties will need to come together and have an agreed position on key policies that will have a huge, huge impact on the budget going forward.

I will summarise. This Mark McGowan government is a stable, responsible, hardworking and disciplined government. It is united government, made up of a cabinet that has been, and should be, given shared credit for the financial position that this state is in now. We have a cabinet full of ministers who are across their brief and have been disciplined in their approach to make sure that we have been able to produce this budget. The Liberal Party and the Nationals WA find it inconceivable that the Labor Party can be a sound financial manager. We have proved that before under the Gallop Labor government, and certainly the McGowan Labor government is proving that again in its second term, having produced a budget surplus of \$5.6 billion that will allow us to address not only the existing pressures in our health and education systems, and in other agencies, but also a future that is still very uncertain. Thank you, members.

**MS A.E. KENT (Kalgoorlie)** [12.23 pm]: I rise today to discuss the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the remarkable 2021–22 state budget. As many of my colleagues have already mentioned, this budget is exemplary for so many reasons, and I have my own.

When I first put my hand up to represent the goldfields community, it was with a constant ringing in my ears about what royalties for regions had done for the Kalgoorlie electorate. Of course, history has shown us that the mismanagement of royalties for regions at that time contributed to over \$40 billion of debt. But I do not want to dwell on the past, because the future looks so much brighter for the goldfields region.

Prior to the historic election, the McGowan Labor government released its *WA Labor's plan for the goldfields*—a plan to keep the goldfields strong, a plan to invest in quality local jobs, a plan to fund a pipeline of infrastructure works, and a plan to deliver on key services like health and education. I am standing here today to talk about a budget that includes a record \$9.1 billion investment in regional infrastructure. Only nine per cent of this is funded through royalties for regions. An amount of \$4.2 billion has been allocated to royalties for regions over the next four years.

I want to talk today about what is in the budget for the goldfields community. Hopefully, that will tell the story about why I am so proud to be standing here as part of the McGowan Labor government. I will start with health, which is such an important service for us regional people. As a past president of the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre, I am fully aware of the impact on women's health when services are depleted. This happened back in 2019 when the federal government changes to Medicare resulted in a cut to major women's health services. Things like cervical screening and sexually transmissible infection screening and testing are now required to be performed by a general physician rather than a clinical nurse. Prior to 2019, an average of 1 000 clients per annum took advantage of these services at the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre, resulting in many detections of abnormal tests that could have led to fatal health issues. In the goldfields, the screening rate of women for these tests is currently sitting at 43.3 per cent, well under the state's average screening rate of 55.4 per cent. There are already a number of barriers for women in regional areas, in which a large number do not get screens regularly; therefore, the risk of developing cervical cancer is higher. We cannot continue to put women's lives at risk.

Since 2019, I have been advocating strongly, alongside Gloria Moyle, the CEO of the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre, for the creation of a dedicated goldfields women's wellness clinic. I am absolutely thrilled to say that this state budget will provide \$1.78 million to the Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre for a permanent GP that will enable the 5 000 women in our community who use that centre to have ongoing access to screening and other primary health services. The goldfields community will be a massive winner from this funding, and many lives will be saved because of this commitment.

Staying with health, I want to talk about another enormous commitment. This state government is investing \$2.76 million for the construction of a purpose-built therapy centre in Kalgoorlie–Boulder to enable children with special needs to access specialised therapies and allied health. The facility will be constructed by Full Circle Therapies, which currently provides therapeutic services from three demountable buildings that are definitely not fit for purpose. Full Circle was founded in 2010 by local community members to provide services in the goldfields for children with autism. The provision of these local services has grown to widen the support to all children with special needs, and their families. That will alleviate parents of the onerous responsibility of having to disrupt family life with expensive travel to Perth for treatment. Full Circle currently provides support and therapies for children and their families to assist with physical, social, emotional and cognitive development by delivering therapy programs individualised to each child's ability and specific needs. This local service is vital in supporting children and their families in Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the surrounding goldfields. The centre has seen a significant increase in client numbers and has reached capacity, with 48 clients currently on the waiting list. Full Circle supports families to stay in the region and care for their children.

The funding that will be provided to create this purpose-built facility will more than double the capacity of the centre, with the provision of services to an expected 200 clients. The new centre will be able to employ additional specialist staff, enabling increased local service provision to the Kalgoorlie and surrounding population. Once complete, the new centre will enhance regional service provision and assist regional liveability and population

retention. The new therapy centre will enable Full Circle Therapies to employ at least 10 qualified allied health professionals; extend its university placement and graduate program with the University of Western Australia and Curtin University to bring qualified allied health professionals to Kalgoorlie–Boulder; provide additional rooms to offer 60 to 80 additional therapy sessions for children per week; reduce the wait times from approximately 12 months to within three months for services in the goldfields region; and provide additional services to more schools and extend current school contact time for Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Kambalda and Coolgardie to support funded and non-funded families with school-based therapy services. It is a credit to the parents, carers, staff and board that Full Circle Therapies has survived 10 years in demountable buildings. It has provided therapy programs and services in unsuitable buildings, but no more. I shall be proud to watch the new centre being constructed and know that this state government is delivering critical health services for the goldfields community.

I now move to sport. Everyone knows how important involvement in sport is to the wider population. It is even more important in the regions. Regional sport brings people together. It allows the community to blend together and harness a feeling of togetherness, which is sometimes missing in areas that have a transient population, such as the goldfields. Consequently, I am overjoyed that the McGowan Labor government will deliver a huge \$5 million to upgrade the Niels Hansen Basketball Stadium in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The current facility was built in 1979 and is no longer up to standard. The stadium has three indoor courts that were built 42 years ago and two outdoor bitumen courts that are inappropriate for anything other than casual use. The stadium is home to the Goldfields Giants men's State Basketball League team and two Basketball WA division 1 teams, both male and female. These teams train and play at the stadium, and host other competitive elite sportspeople within these facilities during home games. In total, some 1 500 people use the stadium each year. This stadium no longer meets the needs of the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Basketball Association, the Goldfields Giants or other user groups. There are not enough courts or change rooms to meet demand, there is no show court that complies with the needs of elite basketball or netball games, and other amenities have deteriorated beyond repair. Additionally, the stadium does not necessarily meet all current International Basketball Federation standards, and is so substandard that the Goldfields Giants will no doubt be out of the league in three years' time. So it comes as no surprise that this commitment from the McGowan government to provide \$5 million to the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Basketball Association for the new stadium has been extremely well received by the community. This funding will see the construction of two additional indoor courts to accommodate basketball and netball standards at a minimum, with one to be a show court with the capacity to seat a minimum of 800 spectators in tiered seating. Other improvements will include new public toilets, a referee room, a dedicated first-aid room, a canteen with servery and bar, multiple meeting rooms, and a large foyer that will be used as a function space. These upgrades will provide world-class facilities to service the growing grassroots participation in sport across the goldfields region, and will be used for not only basketball but also badminton, volleyball, netball and disabled sports. This commitment is indicative of what the McGowan government is doing to keep the community active, healthy and connected. We have not finished yet.

I will go on to talk about what young people in the goldfields will be getting. The McGowan state government is providing \$2.1 million to the Kalgoorlie–Boulder youth precinct, which will unify Kingsbury Park and the Lord Forrest precinct into a central youth-focused precinct called Kingsbury hub. The City of Kalgoorlie–Boulder identified the youth precinct concept through engagement with the Kalgoorlie–Boulder Youth Council and the development of its youth strategic plan and the Kalgoorlie city centre project. Kingsbury hub will become Kalgoorlie's go-to place for kids and teens to get active and feel connected. It will operate on two rhythms, offering more fast-paced and energetic activities for teens, and nature discovery for young families. The much-loved skate park will be expanded and upgraded, and a dirt BMX track will offer a new attraction for adrenalin seekers. A playground reflecting Kalgoorlie's history and people will cater to younger children—a place to dig, crawl, climb and construct. The Lord Forrest Olympic Pool buildings will be converted into a youth recreation and drop-in space that will appeal to a wide range of teens, with a gaming arcade, table tennis and basketball courts. Kingsbury hub will be an activity-programmed area that will make use of the stage with a focus on youth-centred events, including live music. This will link this space with the art and cultural quarter and reach out to students at the Western Australian School of Mines, Eastern Goldfields College and TAFE. Although predominantly a daytime destination, Kingsbury hub will also host night-time events, such as twilight skate competitions, gaming nights and basketball—basketball seems to be quite a theme! This flexible youth space will offer a safe space for young people to hang out, participate in workshops or activities, and connect with sports programs. Whenever I talk to young people at schools, in the street or at markets, they tell me how much they need this precinct and how excited they are to get it. These types of facilities are important to regional communities as they encourage people to come to the goldfields to work and live, and keep them there.

I want to talk now about the famous Karlkurla Bushland Park, which covers about 200 hectares of regrowth bushland in the suburb of Hannans in Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The bushland park contains more than 2 000 trees and shrubs, the majority of which were planted by community volunteers, and is popular with locals and visitors alike. The McGowan government will fund \$600 000 to build a large-scale nature playground on the site of Karlkurla Bushland Park to provide recreational activity for the whole of the community of Kalgoorlie–Boulder and the goldfields. The nature playground will include a combination of large and medium-sized play units with climbing, swinging, balancing and nature-play elements and soft-fall requirements; shade sails; and shelters. Additional elements will include

water channels, a pump track, spinners, trampolines, a flying fox, and sensory and musical play. The drawcard of a nature playground in the amazing setting of the Karlkurla bushland will be a huge winner for the community. Families with children of all ages will be able to take part in a wide range of activities at the nature playground, which I am sure will also increase visitation to the city.

My electorate of Kalgoorlie is vast—over 555 square kilometres—and each year it faces the risk of bushfire. It is wonderful to see that the McGowan government has \$38.4 million in the budget to boost frontline firefighting services, including \$17.8 million in 2021–22 for additional firefighters to be based in regional Western Australia. This funding will strengthen the state's defence against natural disaster, with the placement of 36 additional career firefighters in Geraldton, Albany and Kalgoorlie–Boulder. The Kalgoorlie career fire and rescue station will also be upgraded to accommodate the additional personnel, at a cost of \$1.2 million. This funding package also includes \$4.9 million to replace personal protective clothing for both career and volunteer firefighters. Together, these investments demonstrate the McGowan government's commitment to ensure and enhance emergency services for all Western Australians. This funding package will help keep the local community safe for years to come, and demonstrates the state government's commitment to enhancing emergency services in Kalgoorlie and beyond.

The McGowan government has undertaken considerable work over the last four years to drive down the cost of airfares to a range of regional destinations, but the \$19.8 million funding for the regional airfares zone cap initiative will enable the state government to work with airlines towards an arrangement whereby residents of regional communities that are less than a thousand kilometres' driving distance from Perth will pay no more than \$199 each way. This is wonderful news for us in the goldfields. The program will play a key role in supporting economic development in the regions and will keep communities connected. The current high cost of airfares affects every goldfielder, in many different ways. For some people it is regular medical appointments in Perth; for others, it is an unexpected family emergency, or just trying to run a small business. I know this initiative will mean so much to our community, and I am proud of the McGowan Labor government for putting in the hard yards and getting this policy together.

I want to discuss an extremely important \$2.5 million initiative that is coming to the goldfields. The banned drinkers register will work to reduce alcohol-related harm in the goldfields. The scheme, already in place in the Kimberley and Pilbara, will target problem drinkers and restrict their access to takeaway alcohol. People who are subject to a current prohibition order or barring notice are placed on the BDR; people can also volunteer to be placed on the BDR, which will operate with a technological system that scans an ID and displays a green light if the sale can proceed. A red light will be displayed if the individual is a registered banned drinker and cannot legally be sold takeaway alcohol. The scanner will also include the takeaway alcohol management system, which allows customers to responsibly purchase alcohol according to a daily volume limit for their area. Personal information on the BDR will remain confidential, and no records will be kept by licensees about the purchaser, what they have purchased, or whether they have been refused service. Those identified as banned drinkers will be directed to appropriate community services to provide access to relevant support programs and initiatives. The program will be rolled out throughout the electorate of Kalgoorlie, which includes Laverton, Leonora and Menzies. I look forward to seeing how this tool will help our community.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms A.E. KENT:** The BDR will add to the new suite of community safety initiatives for Kalgoorlie–Boulder. These measures are aimed at tackling antisocial behaviour, reducing crime and improving police responses across the Kalgoorlie–Boulder community. There is \$1 million in this budget for a significant expansion of closed-circuit television. This upgrade will boost the city's existing network and add new locations that can be accessed by police, both locally and in real-time, at the State Operations Command Centre during a critical incident. Significantly, it includes automated numberplate recognition cameras for entry and exit into Kalgoorlie–Boulder. This sophisticated technology will result in the location of wanted suspects, missing persons and the resolution of serious crime investigations.

Five extra specialist police officers are also being deployed to Kalgoorlie as part of an initial allocation from the government's 950 additional police officers program. Residents deserve to feel safe and secure in their community and in their neighbourhood. I have heard people's concerns over the last 12 months, and have been advocating strongly for more community safety measures. That is why we are funding important initiatives like the significant expansion of the city's CCTV capability, to help police disrupt and investigate crime. It is initiatives like these that will support our hardworking Kalgoorlie police.

There are so many more important funding initiatives for the goldfields in this budget. There is \$1 million for a new STEM classroom at Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School; \$485 000 for a STEM upgrade and primary science at Kambalda West District High School; investment into science resources for Boulder Primary School, Kalgoorlie School of the Air and the region's district high schools and remote community schools; and investment in three virtual power plants at schools in Kalgoorlie.

The government is continuing the Lower Fees, Local Skills program, which has seen an increase of 32 per cent in TAFE enrolments in the goldfields–Esperance region in 2021, and is delivering on the \$10 million new heavy plant and engineering trades workshop at Central Regional TAFE's Kalgoorlie campus.

There is \$23.47 million for the new Laverton Hospital project; \$19.7 million to the patient assisted travel scheme to increase accommodation subsidies from \$60 to \$100 per night; \$10.9 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service, to upgrade aircraft; and an additional five paid paramedics in Kalgoorlie and one in Laverton.

There is more than \$46 million through the regional road safety program to upgrade more than 1 600 kilometres of goldfields–Esperance roads with road safety treatments; \$52 million for upgrades to the Coolgardie–Esperance Highway at Emu Rocks; and \$510 000 for upgrades to the Boulder Camp.

This is just to name a few of the additional ones; I do not have time to go into detail about them all. But this outstanding budget is a testament to the hard work the McGowan government has undertaken to create a big surplus. The government's financial management is the envy of the nation, and this budget clearly demonstrates the McGowan government's continued commitment to keeping regional WA and the goldfields strong. As promised, we set out our plan for the goldfields, and now we have begun delivering on our commitments to the community. That gives people every reason to live, work and raise a family in the goldfields community. I commend the bills to the house.

**MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston)** [12.45 pm]: I rise today to support the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021, and to specifically talk about the initiatives contained in the budget for my electorate of Collie–Preston. This budget builds on the strong financial position the government has maintained since coming to office in 2017. That position was discussed very eloquently by the member for Wanneroo, so I will not go through that information again, other than to highlight the fact that this budget delivers for regional Western Australia, to the tune of a \$9.14 billion investment in regional infrastructure; only nine per cent of that amount is delivered through the royalties for regions program.

There is \$4.2 billion of spending in the regions under the banner of royalties for regions. I often hear the opposition accusing Labor of scrapping or getting rid of royalties for regions programs. I am here to say that that is not true. My electorate of Collie–Preston and many other regional electorates are the beneficiaries of very good programs funded by royalties for regions. People in my electorate have said to me that it is not so important where funding comes from, but rather the fact that funds are being spent in our regional communities. The McGowan government is delivering for regional Western Australia, including Collie–Preston, in spades. The people of Collie–Preston have confidence in the decisions this government has made, and will continue to make, to secure our future across Western Australia. The government is investing in our future through this budget. Regional tourism, as an example, has never been better in Western Australia, and certainly not in Collie–Preston.

Regional housing sales are through the roof in Collie–Preston. I took the Minister for Culture and the Arts; Heritage through Collie yesterday and pointed out to him how many “sold” stickers there were in the windows of estate agents. This is being echoed right across the electorate of Collie–Preston. Regional building approvals have also gone through the roof. I recently obtained Shire of Collie building statistics, and they show that there were four houses built in the Shire of Collie in 2017; nine in 2018; 10 in 2019; and in 2020, the year that COVID hit, the year started in a similar fashion to previous years, but ended with 25 building approvals. This year we already had 12 building approvals by the end of June. Just in my shire alone, there has been an increase of over 600 per cent in the number of building approvals. It is an incredible number and absolutely a testament to the McGowan Labor government's management of the finances and management of COVID in Western Australia.

This is a budget that focuses on job creation. As recently as this week, the Nationals WA, specifically the member for Moore, attacked spending in regional areas. He queried why money was being spent on social housing in Bunbury, Albany and Geraldton. He often queries where spending is occurring when it is potentially not in his electorate. Certainly this government is delivering for regional Western Australia.

The member for Moore also attacked the McGowan Labor government for its investment in Collie–Preston, an area that has literally powered the state for more than 100 years. It provides 1 200 direct jobs in the coal and power industry across the Collie–Preston electorate and the south west region, and at least that again in indirect jobs across the region. They are jobs the McGowan Labor government is looking to protect through its Just Transition process for the coal and power industry.

The member for Roe declared in this house that the opposition has an in-house joke regarding the McGowan Labor government's commitment to the people of Collie–Preston, in particular the Collie people themselves. It has called this fund that the Labor government has set up to support our workers and our communities the “Collie slush fund”. They were the member for Roe's exact words. The people of Collie–Preston do not see this as an in-house joke of the National and Liberal Parties; they see it as the McGowan government protecting their jobs, their livelihoods and their communities and they do not take it as joke.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Ms J.L. HANNS:** Perhaps they can save the jokes for their WhatsApp groups and do not make jokes at the expense of people who live in my electorate or people who live in the neighbouring electorates of Roe, Bunbury, Murray–Wellington and Vasse.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 4127.]

**TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES — JACQUI McNAMARA***Statement by Member for Central Wheatbelt*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [12.51 pm]: I rise to pay tribute to Mrs Jacqui McNamara, from York Swimming Club, who has recently returned from the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, representing Australia as a technical swimming official. With over 15 years' experience, Jacqui was one of only two Australians who were selected to officiate at the Olympic Games on the pool deck, working alongside FINA's best technical officers from around the world. This was her first Olympic appointment, having represented Australia previously at meets, including the 2018 Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast and the 2017 World Championships in Budapest. Jacqui officiated some of the biggest moments at the Olympics for Australia, including those exceptional wins from the women's relay team and a number of our individual swimmers. Further to this amazing achievement, she has also been awarded Swimming WA's top honour for technical officials, recognised as Technical Official of the Year in 2019. She is a life member of Swimming WA and York Swimming Club, and has served in many roles to support the grassroots swimming competitions in regional WA through to our most elite competitions on a national and international stage. Jacqui has dedicated many hundreds of hours on the pool deck at her local club in York, and has now realised a goal she set as a young girl—to one day attend an Olympic Games. I congratulate Jacqui on her achievements. It was wonderful to see Jacqui's hard work, passion and dedication recognised on an international stage, and equally as lovely to see how proud the York community is to call Jacqui one of their own and celebrate her success at the recently held York Agricultural Show.

**SENIORS CARD HOLDERS — REBATES***Statement by Member for Mirrabooka*

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka)** [12.53 pm]: I am pleased to report to the house on a seniors' morning tea held in my electorate in Mirrabooka recently that was attended by over 85 senior citizens. Our special guest, Minister for Seniors and Ageing, Hon Don Punch, was able to inform attendees about the McGowan government's reintroduction of the \$400 seniors safety and security rebate for Seniors Card holders. This benefit was abolished by the previous Liberal-National government and its reintroduction will help seniors improve their home security and help keep them safe. The minister was also able to inform participants about the cost-of-living rebate for Seniors Card holders of \$93.12 for singles and \$139.64 for couples. I want to thank the wonderful members of the Girrawheen-Koondoola Senior Citizens Club, including executive members Terry Dodd, Deanne Hetherington and Coral Jebb, for assisting to organise the morning tea. I also want to thank the year 10 students at Balga Senior High School for their excellent catering and professional service, particularly their teacher, Jessica Brown, and students Mohammed, Majd, Moustafa, Fatima, Ruth, Barra, Andrianna, Hamida, Rini and Marie. I am fortunate to have a number of active seniors clubs in my electorate and I look forward to introducing the minister to members of another one soon—the Balga Autumn Club. I greatly value our senior citizens and I am proud to be part of a government that has helped to make life better for them.

**GIVE OUR STRAYS A CHANCE***Statement by Member for Cottesloe*

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [12.55 pm]: I recently had the opportunity to meet with an inspiring young man, Dean Morris, who has dedicated his life to helping stray pets. At the age of only 10, Dean started his charity, Give Our Strays a Chance. After his mum saw an ad for a stray dog scheduled to be euthanised that day, she and Dean raced over to the country pound to save him. This was Dean's first dog, Hooch. The conditions that Dean saw in the pound inspired his 10-year-old self to try to make a difference. Founding Give Our Strays a Chance, Dean created a charity with a vision to help care for stray pets. During our meeting, Dean told me about some recent Give Our Strays a Chance projects. Especially impressive was that in 2020 Dean was able to coordinate a massive pet food drive for Street Cat Appeal Narrogin, a country rescue shelter that was stranded without supplies as regional borders closed. Dean also gave me a copy of his new book *Saving the World — One Stray at a Time*, describing life for dogs in the pound and his journey of trying to make a difference, with every cent of sales going straight back into the charity. Dean is using this book, in addition to speaking at several schools, to encourage our young people to give back through charitable work. Dean has deservedly won many accolades for the work, including the RSPCA WA Youth Award, and is an RSPCA junior ambassador. It was a privilege to speak to such an impressive young man and discuss how we could support his mission going forward. Thank you, Dean, and your charity, for all that you do for our community.

**EDUCATION FORUM — SCARBOROUGH***Statement by Member for Scarborough*

**MR S.N. AUBREY (Scarborough)** [12.56 pm]: Today, I would like to thank the local schools and the hardworking P&Cs for attending an education forum in Scarborough on Wednesday, 1 September. The attendees were: Jacquie Cooper and Jane Humphry from Deanmore Primary School; Meg Huitema and Paul Clements from Doubleview Primary School; Lynne Anderson from Lake Gwelup Primary School; John Worthy, Wesley Gregory and Callan Rose from Newborough Primary School; Sarah Dawson and Leah Manuel from Scarborough Primary

School; and Janine Moses from Yuluma Primary School. It was a great opportunity for the schools to personally present the issues and concerns affecting the wellbeing and future of their students and staff. I would also like to give thanks to Minister Ellery for coming to Scarborough to meet with the schools. The feedback has been incredibly positive, with many surprised at the amount of time they were given to share their concerns, and we are incredibly grateful to Minister Ellery for listening and resolving to investigate issues further. It has been a difficult 18 months for schools, students, staff and parents who have all been required to adapt at a moment's notice. As Minister Ellery highlighted, schools became an important hub for the community and an important point of contact for parents. We are incredibly lucky to have such incredible schools in Scarborough run by inspiring principals and dedicated P&Cs who not only adapted but excelled. A special thankyou to John Worthy and Newborough Primary School for providing the space to host the forum. Schools are the backbone of our community, and I am proud that this education forum was the first of its kind to be held in the Scarborough electorate. While I am the member for Scarborough, it will not be the last.

#### **IRWIN DISTRICTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY — PULLIN' THE POTS**

*Statement by Member for Moore*

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [12.57 pm]: Today, I will talk about the Irwin Districts Historical Society's Pullin' the Pots project. I would like to highlight the incredible work undertaken by the Irwin Districts Historical Society in preserving the history of the fishing industry in the Irwin district. Assisted by federal and local funding, dedicated volunteers were able to collect and have professionally transcribed over 30 hours of oral interviews from 18 local fishermen and women. The Pullin' the Pots project involved the collection of stories spanning a 70-year time frame, with an equal number of men and women interviewed to ensure that the contribution of women to the industry would not be forgotten. The stories highlight not only the role of women in the industry, but also the social and economic changes that ensued. The interviews, as well as photographs, artefacts and a video from the late Bob Hope, were placed on display for all to enjoy. A live interview with Helen Hope was the highlight of the morning, with her recalling how hard but rewarding life was down the coast. The morning was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended and is a testament to the hard work and dedication put in by the volunteers of the Irwin Districts Historical Society. These stories are now archived and will soon be available to the public for research and reflection. I would like to commend all involved in the project for their dedication to ensuring the preservation of their local history and highlighting the significant contribution that the fishing industry has made to the Irwin district. Well done Irwin Districts Historical Society for this important capture of a unique slice of history.

#### **CITY OF BELMONT 2021 NAIDOC COMMUNITY AWARD — KOBİ MORRISON**

*Statement by Member for Belmont*

**MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont)** [12.59 pm]: Today I would like to congratulate the recipient of the City of Belmont 2021 NAIDOC Community Award, an outstanding local, Kobi Morrison. I was delighted to attend the City of Belmont's NAIDOC Week event on Monday where Kobi did a beautiful performance of John Denver's *Take Me Home, Country Roads* in his traditional language. Since 2018, Kobi has been leading Noongar song workshops and weekly choirs across Perth. Kobi explained how he feels this process of singing in traditional language and the use of music promotes reconciliation and enhances healing. We also had many of our great local Aboriginal elders in attendance at this event, including my very good friend Shirley Voss and Nan Roma Winmar, who gave a welcome to country in traditional language.

My local schools also held special NAIDOC assemblies and events. I was privileged to attend Redcliffe Primary School's smoking ceremony and NAIDOC assembly, where a beautiful Wagyl mural, which the students and staff helped paint, was unveiled. Last week, I also attended the amazing assembly at St Maria Goretti's Catholic School, where young Indigenous students from Aquinas College performed traditional dance, accompanied by didgeridoo playing, and we heard from young Finn, a year 6 student at the school who won the City of Belmont NAIDOC award for his school—well done, Finn! It was an honour to be part of these special ceremonies that honour and celebrate our wonderful First Nations locals.

*Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm*

#### **QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**

##### **ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS**

#### **540. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

Can the Premier confirm that the legislation introduced today to reform the Legislative Council will remove the reference to the metropolitan boundary from the act thereby removing the requirement for the Western Australian Electoral Commission to have regard for regional Western Australia or regional electorates when conducting boundary redistributions for future elections in WA?

#### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The legislation we brought in deals with the terrible rorting that goes on in the upper house. The vote weighting in some regional electorates within the lower house remains unchanged. That is the situation. The terrible vote rorting

in the upper house is an assault on democracy. It is a corrupt system in the upper house. It is corrupt and it offends every democratic principle, what is going on in the upper house. The fact that some people's votes are worth six times that of other people's votes is wrong and offensive to democracy! Democracy should not mean that some people's votes are worth six times that of others. I would have thought that was an easy principle to understand.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The argument that members of the Nationals WA and the Liberal Party put that somehow they are out there representing the regions is also wrong, because half of you have your offices in West Perth when you are members of the upper house, including the Leader of the Opposition. Here we have it in this photo. When she was a member of the upper house, she lived in Perth and her office was in West Perth. That is the fact of it, Madam Speaker. There it is. Her office was upstairs, over the road from Parliament. There she was across the road from Parliament, not representing the people of the regions. That is the truth of it, Madam Speaker.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Members! It is very difficult to hear the Premier if so many people yell at once. We have had the question and we have had plenty of interjection; please leave it to the Premier to answer the question.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Let us have a look at the other people they have put into the upper house—people like Hon Jim Chown. The Liberal Party put Hon Jim Chown into Parliament as a representative of the Agricultural Region. That is what the Liberal Party did. His office was in West Perth—I wonder why that was? The Liberal Party also puts into Parliament people like Hon Peter Collier, who describes women as “sandwich makers”. I have not heard a word from the Leader of the Liberal Party about that. The Liberal Party and the National Party have put some pretty disgraceful characters into the upper house and they have supported the absolute roting of democratic principles in the upper house whereby some people's votes are worth six times those of others. Obviously, the system has to change.

#### ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS

##### **541. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question.

**The SPEAKER:** A supplementary question that hopefully will be heard in silence.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Why did the Premier choose not to put these significant reforms to the electorate before the election and instead use sneaky, evasive language to avoid revealing his plans to reduce regional representation in the state's Parliament?

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, leave it to the Premier, please.

##### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I repeat again: there is no reduction. If a person lives in a regional community, their upper house representatives will go from six to 37. The regional representatives put into Parliament by the conservatives, like Hon Jim Chown, are pretty poor representatives. Instead, people will now have 37 representatives representing the entire state. That is the reality of what will occur under these changes. It is just democratic practice, as occurs in the Liberal–National run states of New South Wales and South Australia.

#### JOBS — COLLINS-CLASS SUBMARINE FULL-CYCLE DOCKING CONTRACT

##### **542. Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE to the Premier:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's unprecedented efforts in creating more jobs for Western Australians.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on today's labour force figures and what they show about this government's record when it comes to creating new jobs?
- (2) Can the Premier outline to the house how these efforts have been undermined by today's decision of the federal Liberal–National government to give the full-cycle docking contract of the Collins-class submarines to South Australia?

##### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Cockburn for the question. Today's labour force figures show that there are more than 1.423 million Western Australians now in work. That means, since coming to office in 2017, this government has created over 120 000 new jobs in Western Australia. We have a strong investment policy in jobs and employment, and the economy. We have a state that is free of COVID that is doing the best of any state in Australia when it comes to these matters. In August, we saw more than 12 300 new jobs created, an increase of 0.9 per cent and the strongest employment growth in Australia. In contrast, employment fell nationally by 1.1 per cent, or around 133 800 jobs, led by a massive decline in New South Wales. Therefore, Western Australia, once again, is carrying the nation.

The unemployment rate has stayed at an eight-year low of 4.6 per cent and our participation rate has grown to 69 per cent, up from 68.5 per cent. If our participation rate had stayed at 68.5 per cent, which it was last month, our unemployment rate today would be 3.8 per cent. We have the strongest participation rate in the country by a long, long way. That means more people have confidence in getting a job and more people are in work in Western Australia.

It is good news, Madam Speaker, but I want to make a few points. We took to the 2017 election and the last election a strong plan for jobs and also investment in defence manufacturing. We have made significant investments in the Australian Marine Complex in Henderson. We have provided huge incentives into the TAFE system to train Western Australians for defence jobs, in particular in South Metropolitan TAFE. We put forward to the federal government a compelling business case for the Collins-class submarine full-cycle docking to come to Western Australia. As part of the business case, we demonstrated how it was in the national interest for this work to be undertaken in Western Australia. That is why we are so disappointed at today's decision by the Liberal–National government to give the full-cycle docking contracts to South Australia.

I want to make a few more points. The six Collins-class submarines are based in Western Australia. The crews are based here and live here. The industry is here. The shipbuilding and repair industries are stronger here and they are internationally competitive. The industrial capability, the workforce capability, is immeasurably stronger in Western Australia than in South Australia. Independent studies have shown the work should be done here. The state has invested, over successive governments, hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars into the Henderson shipbuilding precinct. Today's decision by the Liberals and Nationals is not a decision in the national interest. Today, the Liberals and Nationals have turned their backs on Western Australia, Western Australian businesses and Western Australian workers. This is a decision that should not have been made. South Australia is already getting the overwhelming majority of Defence work into their shipbuilding industry in Port Adelaide. Clearly, the Collins-class submarines are based in Western Australia and the work should be done at Henderson, six kilometres from where they are based. Western Australians should not forget this decision today by the Liberals and Nationals. They have let our great state down.

#### ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS

##### 543. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I refer to the election commentator Antony Green's comments in relation to this government's appalling electoral reforms —

The government has been very cute in constantly referring to Tucker's victory as justification ...

...

There are plenty of reasons for changing the Legislative Council's regional structure, but Wilson Tucker's victory is not one of them.

Why does the Premier keep pretending that stripping away the representation of regional Western Australia is about stopping minor parties when it is clearly about the long-term political benefit to the WA Labor Party?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! Member for Balcatta!

##### Mr M. McGOWAN replied:

I saw Antony Green on the television on the night of 13 March this year, a night that the member might recall. I heard him on the television that night indicating that the Legislative Council of Western Australia needs to be changed and that the system in the upper house of Western Australia is totally—how would I put it—undemocratic. That was what I recall him saying at that point in time, and it is—it is totally undemocratic. I thought that in Western Australia, and Australia, we lived in a democracy. Obviously, the Liberals and Nationals do not support democracy because it is not democratic. It is not democratic when some people's votes are worth six times the votes of others. I listened to the member for Vasse and I explained to her yesterday that the vote of people in Northam is worth 2.4 times the vote of someone in Augusta, in her electorate. She seems to think that that is okay. She seems to support some of those people that the Liberals put into Parliament in the upper house, such as Hon Jim Chown. She seemed to support Hon Jim Chown when he was a member of the upper house. She seems to support Hon Peter Collier, who describes women as “sandwich makers”. That is what the Liberal Party thinks about people in Western Australia.

We had Hon Malcolm McCusker, whom the Leader of the Liberal Party denigrated yesterday, undertake a report into these matters. I heard his commentary downstairs yesterday and he said that he thought that people would be very happy if the vote of someone living in one area versus the vote of someone living in another area was of the same value. I have seen some of the other commentary around the place. Basically, if a party wins more votes, it gets more members. What is wrong with that? If a party wins a majority, it wins government. Is that not a good thing?

If a party wins a majority in the upper house, it wins a majority of the seats in the upper house. Is that not the way that democracy is meant to function? I am absolutely flabbergasted by some of this commentary from people who actually went to university but do not seem to understand the fundamental basis of democracy—that a majority means they should win a majority of the seats! Somehow the Liberals and Nationals have portrayed that a party winning a minority of the vote should win a majority of the seats. How is that democratic? In what world does that function? When shareholders vote at a shareholders' meeting, do we say, "If you win a minority of the votes, you should win a majority of the board members, and, therefore, decide what happens"? No! It does not happen anywhere. But the Liberals and Nationals seem to think that that is the way the upper house should function. It is absolutely bizarre that people who are educated actually think that that is a system that should exist.

We can look at all the anomalies around the system, which I have pointed out a couple of times over the last couple of days, whereby people who live closer to the city than other people, by hundreds of kilometres, have a vote value that is worth more than the people who live hundreds of kilometres away. Even if members opposite support some sort of regional weighting, how is it justifiable that people who can get to the city in an hour have a vote that is worth nearly three times that of people who would take a day to drive to the city? How is that justifiable? According to the Liberals and Nationals, vote weighting is appropriate, so why is there not a weighting of 20, 50 or 100? If it is okay, why do we not have that? Why do we not have the vote of people who live in the Mining and Pastoral Region worth 100 times the vote of someone in the city? Because if we accept the principle that, for some reason, someone's vote is worth more than someone else's, the sky is the limit.

As we know, over time the system has become more and more rorted. In various areas, including in the member for Vasse's electorate, the population growth has meant that the value of the vote of people there is declining. The member is actually acting against the interests of her own constituency by saying that their vote is worth less than someone else's vote. That is what the member is doing. I do not think that the member for Vasse's heart is in it. I look at her sitting there every day, next to the member for Cottesloe, tapping away on her phone and showing no interest. I actually think that her heart is not in it because I think that she knows that having an undemocratic and a completely rorted and corrupt system in the upper house is actually wrong.

#### ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS

##### **544. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. If preventing the election of minor parties such as the Daylight Saving Party is the Premier's priority, why does he not just change the group voting tickets instead of taking away the parliamentary voice of regional Western Australia?

##### **Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

The premise of the member's question is wrong. I will explain it to the member again. There will be 37 members of Parliament representing every part of Western Australia, as opposed to six. That is what will happen under these reforms—exactly as is in place in the Liberal-held state of New South Wales and the Liberal-held state of South Australia. It is this thing called democracy. It is this thing called equal representation. When the history books are written about this period, the fact that Liberal and Nationals members wanted to have a corrupt system in the upper house will bring shame upon all of them.

#### CORONAVIRUS — VACCINATIONS — ELIGIBILITY

##### **545. Mrs J.M.C. STOJKOVSKI to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to getting as many eligible Western Australians vaccinated as quickly as possible. Can the minister update the house on changes to eligibility for the vaccine, as well as the rollout of vaccinations in regional and remote parts of the state?

##### **Mr R.H. COOK replied:**

I would like to thank the member for the question and I thank her for her support for health initiatives everywhere, but in particular the vaccination program. We have been saying that we want everyone to roll up for WA. People should get themselves vaccinated against COVID-19 because that is the only way we are ever going to be able to get out of the global pandemic. The Premier and I made an announcement earlier this week that people over the age of 60 will be eligible for the Pfizer vaccine from Monday. I am very pleased to say that because we are now confident of our Pfizer supplies, we will make Pfizer available first thing tomorrow morning to everyone over the age of 12 years, bringing forward the eligibility for the 60-plus age group. We are making more slots available and our clinics are ready to roll, whether people go to the Claremont, Joondalup or Midland clinics, plus we have more slots becoming available in Kwinana and the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. More than 50 000 appointments will be available in the next six weeks.

We are urging everyone to roll up for WA and make sure that they get their vaccine. They are eligible for any of the vaccines if they are aged over 12. For those who were part of the previous Pfizer eligibility, the good news—I hear this from the member for Riverton—is that Pfizer is starting to roll out to the GP clinics, and will be available from Monday. But people in the 60-plus category who want the Pfizer vaccine will have to go to one of the state vaccination centres.

In addition, we are putting effort into our regional and remote communities. Tomorrow, I will travel to Tom Price to visit the new COVID-19 vaccination clinic that has been set up to boost the vaccination rates in the Pilbara. The Tom Price clinic, along with another in Paraburdoo, is part of a joint effort by the McGowan government, the WA Country Health Service, Rio Tinto and the Shire of Ashburton. It does not matter if all the mineworkers can be vaccinated if the communities in which they operate are not vaccinated. We would like to thank Rio Tinto for its efforts to look after not only its workforce, but also the communities in which it operates. We are having conversations with other large mining companies about how we can continue to roll out this program in other parts of Western Australia.

People can book their appointments on [rollup.wa.gov.au](http://rollup.wa.gov.au) and walk-ins are also welcome. The Tom Price community vaccination clinic will run from 17 September to 21 September at the Tom Price Community Resource Centre at Central Road, which will be open from 9.00 am to 6.00 pm, and the Paraburdoo clinic will open on 23 September at the Ashburton Hall in Ashburton Avenue. I would like to remind everyone that although we are very lucky in Western Australia and have no COVID in our community at the moment, I do not want people to be complacent. New South Wales has seen more than 40 000 cases of COVID-19 and, tragically, 200 deaths. That is our future if we do not choose to vaccinate now. It is important that people roll up for WA. We want people to protect themselves, their family and their communities. As I said today: do not procrastinate, just vaccinate. Get yourself vaccinated. Roll up for WA and protect everyone in the community.

#### POLICE — CRIME STATISTICS

##### **546. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the worst violent crime on record in WA, including more attacks over the last weekend.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I refer to the worst violent crime on record in WA, including more attacks over the last weekend. Can the minister explain how he expects to get ahead of this violent crime crisis when the total appropriation for the police was cut in this budget in this financial year?

##### **Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I do not know what state the member is living in, but that is not the Western Australia the member talked about. In answer to a similar question the member asked the last time we sat, I said that Western Australia has experienced a reduction in crime since the peaks under his government. There has been a 22 per cent reduction in crime across the state since the peak in the fiscal year 2015–16 during the time when the member's party was in government. Overall, there have been 65 000 fewer offences; home burglaries are down by 43 per cent; motor vehicle theft is down by 38 per cent; stealing is down by 37.6 per cent; and property damage offences are down by 28 per cent. Offences against the person, which is part of the encompassing category to which the member referred—the member has not referenced a category—are always a concern. Those things happen. As I said the last time I was asked this question, one of the things that has occurred recently is that we have been able to encourage women in particular to report domestic violence like never before, and that is a good thing. We should encourage and applaud the fact that people feel safe, listened to and certain that the police will respond appropriately to what is a serious crime. That is a good thing, so of course the reporting of family and domestic violence is up. Something that I did not refer the member to the last time I spoke to him about this matter is that sexual assault reporting is also up, and for the same reasons. The reporting of sexual assault, particularly by women—they are predominantly women—is being reported now like never before. That is also a good thing. It is terrible that those crimes occur. They are appalling crimes and, rightly, nowadays, thanks to the professionalism of the Western Australia Police Force and the real focus on ensuring that these matters are investigated appropriately with all the necessary resources, there is much more confidence in the community and people are reporting, so that has increased, which has contributed to the numbers the member is referring to.

Individual, random and violent assaults generally increase with the increase in population. During the last couple of years of the former government, we witnessed a decrease in the population. There was a significant exodus from the state because there was not much hope and so people left Western Australia, as opposed to recent times—over the five years to which the member referred—when there has been population growth. The member referred to an increase in violent crime and individual assaults. They are a small part of the category of crimes against the person. They have increased by 3.7 per cent and the population has increased by 3.9 per cent, so it is not surprising that there has been an uplift over time in that type of assault, because it reflects the population increase.

#### POLICE — CRIME STATISTICS

##### **547. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Police:**

I have a supplementary question. Given that recurrent expenditure on police has increased by only 0.8 per cent this financial year, how does the minister expect to deliver additional police officers unless he intends to cut services in other areas?

**Mr P. PAPALIA replied:**

I appreciate the opportunity to refer to the budget. Recently, including during our last term in office, we increased the WA Police Force budget by \$1.006 billion. That is a more than \$1 billion increase. The Premier is looking at me. I try to keep it under wraps and avoid too much discussion about the increase in the police budget, but it has been significant. Madam Speaker was probably responsible for a large amount of that increase! Some of the capabilities that have been introduced into the Western Australian police as a result of the increase in the budget include \$19.2 million for body armour for every frontline police officer. Around the state, every single one of our police officers is protected by that equipment. It also includes \$24.7 million for body-worn cameras and \$51.46 million for digital mobility. Every single police officer now has a mobile phone with apps to access intelligence databases that they have never had before. That is an incredible improvement in their capability. We budgeted \$54 million for two new police helicopters. One of them was budgeted for in this budget and one in the last budget, which seems to have escaped the member's attention. We have provided \$1.3 million for a new drone fleet. Every district in the state has at least two drones and four drone operators. All across the state we now have the capability to provide assistance through drones that were never there before under the member's government. We provided \$166.7 million for the meth border force initiative and new state-of-the-art drug detection equipment and \$16.7 million for automatic numberplate recognition. That wonderful technology is rolling out around the state and we are looking at getting more all the time. If I were the member, I would not go to the financing or resourcing of police, because it is not his strong suit.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT — FARES

**548. Ms E.L. HAMILTON to the Minister for Transport:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to making public transport more affordable for Western Australians. Can the minister outline to the house how this government is using its strong responsible financial management to bring down the cost of fares and make public transport more accessible for more Western Australians?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

I thank the member for Joondalup for that question. As members in this place know, there are a number of initiatives that we are rolling out to make public transport more accessible and also more affordable. On accessibility, we are rolling out Metronet all around the suburbs. There are new initiatives funded in this budget, including the new Greenwood multistorey car park, and, of course, the new operations control centre, which is part of our technology rollout to make sure that we can have technology that allows more trains to operate more often. We are also funding the level crossing removals through Victoria Park and Cannington. We are building the next generation of railcars right here in WA. Remember, this was a policy that was opposed by the Liberal–National opposition. We are bringing railcar manufacturing back to WA. The then Leader of the Opposition said, “We do not support propping up industries from a bygone era.” That was the claim by the then Leader of the Opposition. As I said, new technology across our rail networks will eventually see the ability to run trains every two minutes across our network, which makes accessibility absolutely incredible for everyone across that network.

Of course, the new initiative that was announced as part of the election campaign and funded in this state budget is the capping of public transport fares across the suburbs. The maximum anyone will pay to travel across the suburbs will be a two-zone fare. This will see thousands of dollars of savings for people across the outer suburbs. Someone living in Dawesville, for example, will be potentially saving over \$3 000 a year under these initiatives.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Yes, who's paying for it?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is the member for Cottesloe! This is the Liberal–National party that has opposed every Metronet project we have put forward. It has opposed every Metronet project. It has bumper stickers attacking all the Metronet projects. Then it comes in and says, “We're not opposed to Metronet in here.” Every day of the week, it has opposed Metronet, and we have seen the member for Cottesloe go out there and give mistruths about what is happening with Metronet. The latest is about how many inches of rail line we have delivered. We know that the Liberal Party review noted the laziness of the Liberal Party in policy development. This is a demonstration. Not only did members of the Liberal Party not open the budget papers, but they did not even look at the front page, which has the new kilometres of rail that we have laid for Metronet.

A government member: We even gave you a picture!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** We even gave you a picture, member for Cottesloe, and you still cannot get it right!

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** What is that, member? The member for Vasse, one of the key policy coordinators for the 2021 election campaign—remember, she was standing there next to the former member for Dawesville, right there, side by side—one of the key architects of the worst election loss in living memory across the world, and she is sitting there talking about the Ellenbrook rail line. The audacity! The laziness! Again, that was demonstrated today. Members opposite ask a question and then they go on their phones. When there is a matter of public interest, they launch an MPI and then they disappear out of the chamber. They are so lazy that they do not even have the attention span to listen to an answer provided to a question that they have asked!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Minister, I do not think that I require the point of order. Can I ask you to draw your answer to a close and keep to the point. I am quite happy for the minister to conclude her answer.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Thank you.

**Mr D.A. Templeman:** She hasn't landed him yet! She has him on the line; she has to land him now!

**The SPEAKER:** Leader of the House, can I rely on you to set a better example? Thank you.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** That is a mistake, Madam Speaker, if you are relying on him to set a better example!

We are investing a record amount in public transport infrastructure. We are rolling out the new two-zone fare cap, and the Golden SmartRider competition will be run through the month of October to reward those people who are using public transport and to encourage more people to use public transport. This is a transformation of our public transport network that the Labor Party is proud to be delivering.

#### GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION ACT — REFORM

##### 549. **Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:**

I refer to this government's failure to support seniors in our communities, highlighted by the approach taken in this budget. Why has this government established an elder abuse advocacy service, but failed to reform the Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 to protect seniors?

**Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:**

I have been to a couple of seniors forums of late, and I have to say that the seniors love the McGowan Labor government. They love it! I took a picture of the seniors in the member's electorate, and they were all waving their hands, thanking the government for getting in there and looking after seniors. It was only earlier this week that I was asked a question about seniors and the seniors rebate, and what did I mention? I mentioned: Who was the party that got stuck into seniors back in 2015? Who was it, members? It does not take much to get the answer. It does not need to be a competition. It was the Liberals and the Nationals that got stuck in and removed those valuable concessions that seniors love.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.T. PUNCH:** It is shameful. It is this government that has got in and supported elder abuse strategies and elder advocacy services right through the state. If the member wants to know about the guardianship changes, I suggest that he address that question to the Attorney General, who is the minister responsible.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please! I am waiting for silence. Leader of the House, sadly, I cannot rely on you.

#### GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION ACT — REFORM

##### 550. **Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Seniors and Ageing:**

I have a supplementary question. It has been 1 600 days since this bill was meant to be introduced as a priority. Why has this government instead prioritised electoral reform and cutting regional representation over the safety of our seniors?

**Mr D.T. Punch:** Member, you really want to raise electoral reform again?

**The SPEAKER:** Minister! Member, the minister has made it quite clear that the Guardianship and Administration Act falls under the portfolio of the Attorney General, so I am ruling the supplementary question out of order.

#### AFL GRAND FINAL — OPTUS STADIUM

##### 551. **Mr S.A. MILLMAN to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:**

I refer to Western Australia's efforts in keeping the state safe and free of COVID-19, which has led to Perth being chosen to host an historic AFL grand final at Optus Stadium. Can the minister advise the house how this event was secured and outline what arrangements are in place with regard to the attendance of sponsors?

**Dr A.D. BUTI replied:**

Thank you very much to the member for Mount Lawley. He is the most appropriate person in the chamber to be asking this question, as he is the nephew of a legend of the AFL, Kevin Murray, who is also a Brownlow medallist.

Several members interjected.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** What a great place to be living in—Western Australia! Not only are we about to hold the grand final for 2021, but we are also the state that is committed to electoral reform and making our upper house a democratic chamber. What a great place to be living in—a very safe and strong place with a thriving economy. Firstly, though, my thoughts do go with the millions of people on the east coast who are locked down during this period and therefore were not considered able to hold the AFL grand final. We are holding the AFL grand final because the McGowan government has kept Western Australia safe and has also kept the economy strong for the last 20 months, when members opposite would have wrecked it by allowing Clive Palmer into the state.

The member asked me whether we actually paid, or how we secured the grand final. I hope that the member for Vasse is listening, because I think she might have gone on radio and maybe said a few things that she should not have said.

**Ms L. Mettam:** You should have answered the question!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Member for Vasse, please listen. There has been a lot of commentary in sections of the media and by some members opposite, including your good self, regarding the AFL grand final and how we obtained the rights to hold the grand final. Can I make it very clear to the member for Vasse that the state government has not paid the AFL for the hosting rights for the 2021 grand final. We have not paid for the hosting rights. We are holding it in Western Australia because we are a safe state to hold it in. That is why we are holding it in Western Australia.

The state contributed to the cost of the match-day entertainment, but on the basis that Western Australian artists were given preference. The AFL also received some concessions for the use of Optus Stadium, which is very normal in an AFL season, as the member would very well know.

There has also been some criticism by members of the opposition that we have allowed AFL players into Western Australia while Western Australians in New South Wales have not been able to come back to WA since the hard border was reimposed due to the disgraceful efforts of the New South Wales Premier in ensuring that New South Wales was kept safe. I assure the member for Vasse and others that all decisions about entry to Western Australia are taken by the Chief Health Officer and the WA Police Force. None of the AFL finals teams that have played in Western Australia, including the two grand finalists, has been in New South Wales since mid-June or in Victoria in the last three weeks.

The member for Vasse may have also talked about corporate sponsorship. In terms of corporate sponsors from interstate attending the grand final, the AFL and the WA police agreed that essential stakeholders, which comprise major sponsors and commercial partners, would not be able to travel to WA for the grand final. None of those corporate sponsors from over east is coming to WA for the grand final.

The AFL only today said —

“The interest for the 2021 Toyota AFL Grand Final in Perth has been unprecedented,” ...

“The fans in WA have wholeheartedly welcomed the AFL and welcomed the event.

“Today’s on-sale and record breaking number of fans wanting to purchase tickets demonstrates the WA community’s excitement for the first ever grand final in the state.”

I am sure that the member for Vasse and others are applauding that we are having this grand final in Western Australia on the weekend after this weekend. It is only because of the state of our health that we are holding it in Western Australia. I urge those people who were unable to purchase tickets today—I think the general admission tickets were sold in seven minutes—to go to the pubs and cafes and watch it on the screens or go to the local store, buy their barbecue stocks and have a great barbecue and enjoy a great weekend. It is so good to live in Western Australia under the McGowan government.

#### DE FACTO COUPLES — SUPERANNUATION SPLITTING

##### 552. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Attorney General:

I refer to the injustice in Western Australia’s legal system that means that when a de facto couple separates, they are unable to divide their superannuation entitlements when finalising a property settlement. Why has the Attorney General’s government been able to fast-track ticket scalping legislation and prioritise electoral reform legislation to rip regional representation from the Parliament, but is yet to introduce this much-needed legislative change?

##### Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:

I became the Attorney General in March 2017 and one of the first things I did was to get on to the commonwealth to see whether it would pass the legislation to allow superannuation splitting. It took right through until December 2020. It took complete pestering of the commonwealth for the entire first term of me being in office to get movement over there, and it was not until December that it eventually passed the legislation. It also included provisions relating to bankruptcy concerning divorcing people, especially de facto couples, so we have to redraft some legislation in Western Australia and that currently has priority at the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office.

#### DE FACTO COUPLES — SUPERANNUATION SPLITTING

##### 553. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Attorney General:

I have a supplementary question.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** You didn’t know that, did you?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I can ask the question without your help, minister; thank you!

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** I am happy to give you as much help as you like.

**The SPEAKER:** Sorry; you will not be giving any help, thank you, Minister for Water.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** No, I need no help from you!

I thank the Attorney General for that answer. When will the legislation be brought to the Parliament for our consideration?

**Mr J.R. QUIGLEY replied:**

I have it down as a priority at the Parliamentary Counsel's Office. We are just waiting to get it back. I can assure the member that it will not take the four years that it took the Liberal coalition government in Canberra to deal with this important problem. We will have it before this Parliament presently, but it is not going to dillydally for four years like it did with the Liberal–National coalition government in Canberra.

#### DESALINATION PLANT

**554. Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE to the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's investment in infrastructure that will set up WA for the future, including the \$1.4 billion that has been set aside for a new desalination plant. Can the minister outline to the house how this investment will help secure the future of Perth's drinking water supply?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

I thank the member for the question. We on this side of the house accept that climate change is real. The south west of Western Australia is one of the places on the planet most impacted upon by climate change causing declining rainfall. We have seen about a 15 per cent reduction in rainfall in the south west since the 1970s. For Perth, that has meant a drastic reduction in the amount of water running into our dams. We used to get each year on average in winter 400 billion litres of water running into our dams due to rainfall. Now, if we get 50 billion litres, we think we have done well. This winter people think we have had a lot of rain. So far we have had 110 billion litres run into our dams—not the 400 that we normally got, but 110. Because of that, we now rely very heavily on desalination. Forty-three per cent of our drinking water for Perth comes from desalination. It was the Gallop–Carpenter Labor government, of course, that commissioned Australia's first large-scale desalination plant in 2006. In this budget, we have continued that work. We have allocated \$1.4 billion for the next source. Through the Water Corporation, we are investigating one site in the northern suburbs and one site in Kwinana to determine a final location for the next source.

The amount of \$1.4 billion is a very significant investment. Incidentally, it will not cover the full cost of that project. I understand that through the great advocacy of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, for the first time, Infrastructure Australia has given a high-priority rating to securing Perth's water supply. For the first time, the federal government, through Infrastructure Australia, has recognised the need for this project. We look forward to the federal government in due course making a contribution to this project. This is because of the sound financial management and good budgeting that the Premier; Treasurer has done to get Perth's water supply on a secure footing.

Some people think that climate change is not real. Some people think that if it is real, it is a problem for some time in the future. Here in Western Australia, climate change is costing us money now. I note that a few weeks ago the federal government announced a \$1.4 billion fund for water infrastructure, but it is available only to states that share part of the Murray–Darling Basin. That is \$1.4 billion that Western Australia will not be able to access —

**Ms M.J. Davies:** You won't sign up.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** The Leader of the Opposition actually does not know what she is talking about.

**Ms M.J. Davies:** You are able to sign up to that program and you refuse to.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Will you just listen? This is a \$1.4 billion fund that is accessible only by states that share part of the Murray–Darling Basin. Unless we move the state of Western Australia over to the Murray–Darling Basin, we cannot access that fund.

Several members interjected.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** That is true. Geography is not the Leader of the Opposition's area. Leader of the Opposition, it is a \$1.4 billion fund for the Murray–Darling Basin states. We cannot access it. We have said to the federal government, "Fair enough—provide all that money to the eastern states for water infrastructure, but we should get our share." This particular project, the next desalination plant for Perth, is one project that the federal government could contribute to. We understand the impacts of climate change. We understand that to deal with these things requires significant infrastructure investment. The fact that we have delivered such a stellar budget this year means that we can put a significant down payment on Perth's next water source.

**The SPEAKER:** The Deputy Leader of the Opposition with the final question.

#### GOVERNMENT PROJECTS — DEFERRAL

**555. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Treasurer:**

I refer to the time lines for 16 major projects that have been pushed back due to the significant workforce and skills shortage in the state, including key Metronet rail projects, upgrades to highway networks and renovations to TAFE sites. Will the Treasurer please identify which of the projects on the deferral list were experiencing delays prior to the budget being handed down?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I think around 16 projects have been pushed back, most by around a year or so, including two Metronet lines, from memory, and a range of road interchanges and some TAFE upgrades, but it is around 16. Bear in mind, the budget contains within it hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of projects all over Western Australia. The entire pipeline of work across the state is more than \$30 billion—\$30.6 billion or so of capital work across Western Australia—so the totality of the projects that have been pushed sideways is not a major proportion of that, but it will assist industry to manage a very large workload, both private and public, at this point in time. I had a meeting with the Minister for Transport, industry and the unions a few months ago to discuss this. They were very keen for this to happen because it is so difficult in terms of the very heated construction and residential construction markets in Western Australia. It is a very hot market; that is actually a good thing. Just so that the member for Moore knows, that is a good thing because it means lots of projects, lots of jobs and lots of people working. It is a good thing. The alternative, of course, is that it is very quiet like it was when you were in office. Do you remember that you delivered the only recession in Western Australian history when you were in office and that you managed to have record revenues but delivered record debt at the same time?

**Dr D.J. Honey:** What was the iron ore price then?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Member for Cottesloe, I am not blaming you because you were not there. You came in as the tail end batsman. When Colin Barnett left, you got preselected and, as Hon Peter Collier said, it was an embarrassment to the Liberal Party. I can only quote Peter Collier, who described you as an embarrassment and women as sandwich makers. That is the capability of the Liberal Party in the upper house.

Obviously, it is a very hot market across Western Australia, which is actually a good thing, but we are assisting by moving some projects sideways to reduce the pressure on construction companies. It means that the pipeline of work will last longer, which is also a good thing. For instance, our major social housing investment will make the pipeline of work last longer, which is also a great thing.

## GOVERNMENT PROJECTS — DEFERRAL

**556. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Treasurer:**

I have a supplementary question. To confirm, is the Treasurer saying that the Yanchep Metronet rail project was on budget and on time before the decision to defer it was made?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I think it is two rail lines. I think it is Yanchep and Thornlie–Cockburn, both of which are under construction. I have been out there and inspected some of the work that is underway. Obviously, they are complex projects. I will tell you what, Madam Speaker; we are building them. The member for Moore actually has a sticker on his car opposing them.

**Mr R.S. Love:** No, I don't.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** He has taken the sticker off! The sticker is gone. He has moved the sticker. The next thing you know, he will be moving his office into West Perth like the rest of the Nationals WA! What I love about these fake regional people in the National Party is that they put their offices in West Perth, have all their staff there, have all their IT there and hang out at Gordon St Garage; that is the modern-day National Party. Remember the days of Hendy Cowan, the boy from Narembeen—remember that? They are long gone—long gone with this bunch.

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, I am taking a point of order.

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Standing order 78 states that an answer must be relevant to the question.

**The SPEAKER:** There is no point of order.

*Questions without Notice Resumed*

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As the minister just pointed out to me, New South Wales has stopped all construction. It has shut down construction, it has shut down hardware—everything in New South Wales. Here our problem is that we have so much work, the strongest participation rate, the lowest unemployment rate in Australia, the best finances of anywhere in the world. New South Wales has shut down everything and somehow the member for Moore is complaining about our state. Our state and the revenue that we are producing is carrying the nation. How does he think that the commonwealth is paying for all the full-cycle docking in Adelaide? The revenue is generated in Western Australia. What do we get for it? Nothing. What do we get for it from the Liberals and Nationals? Nothing. All the Liberals and Nationals do is punish Western Australia for supporting the rest of the country as the Collins-class decision today shows.

**The SPEAKER:** That concludes question time.

**PAPERS TABLED**

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

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON WITTENOOM***Evidence — Release — Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [2.56 pm]: I wish to inform members that under the provisions of standing order 32, I have approved the release of certain evidence provided to the former Legislative Assembly Select Committee on Wittenoom. The request was made by Hon Robin Chapple. The select committee reported to the Legislative Assembly on 3 August 1994, although some of the evidence it received was not tabled and not publicly released.

At a public hearing in December 1993, representatives from the then Department of Minerals and Energy agreed to provide the committee with certain information and documentation by way of notice. Mr Chapple has requested copies of this evidence. Under Legislative Assembly standing order 30, any committee evidence or documents that were not published or publicly released cannot be disclosed until the expiration of 10 years and such a decision is subject to the determination of the Speaker. With regard to the documents requested by Mr Chapple, the 10-year period expired on 16 December 2003 and I have decided to release the documents.

**ELECTORAL REFORM — REPRESENTATION — REGIONS***Standing Orders Suspension — Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.57 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house condemns the Labor government for using the guise of group ticket voting reform to push through changes to our electoral system that will reduce regional representation.

I understand that there have been discussions behind the chair.

*Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion*

On motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**, resolved —

To insert after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

*Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended*

**The SPEAKER:** As this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to succeed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

*Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [2.58 pm]: I move the motion.

Off the back of the answers we received from the Premier during question time today, I will reiterate the motion, which states —

That this house condemns the Labor government for using the guise of group ticket voting reform to push through changes to our electoral system that will reduce regional representation.

Let us look around the chamber and see which Labor MPs will shortly betray their communities that no less than six months ago put their trust in their leader and his team. Let us get on the record which of these MPs will betray their communities and future generations just six short months after —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Sorry, just pause for a moment. Minister for Water and member for Balcatta, your interjections are incessant and I ask you to desist.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Let us get on the record which of these MPs will betray their communities just six short months after they were entrusted to be the advocates, defenders and supporters of their electorates. Every regional Labor MP has turned their back on their constituency to line up and toe the Labor Party line. Shame on the member for Kalgoorlie; the member for Pilbara; the member for Warren–Blackwood—it is a double whammy for the member for Warren–Blackwood because after six months, she has already betrayed them twice—the member for Geraldton; the member for Bunbury; the member for Collie–Preston; the member for Murray–Wellington; the member for Dawesville; I will even throw Mandurah in there; and the member for Kimberley. All these members are traitors to their communities, served up as cannon fodder —

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** Madam Speaker, I ask for your ruling regarding the imputation on all members with regard to the word that was used.

**The SPEAKER:** Can you clarify?

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** The member named a number of members and then accused us of being traitors. I am just asking you to rule on that.

**The SPEAKER:** That is an adverse reflection. You have named individual members, so I would ask you not to continue to do that.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will not say it again.

They have been served up as cannon fodder by the Premier and the Attorney General in their pursuit of a Labor utopia, instead of focusing on the issues that impact their communities.

Several members interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There are a lot of objections going on over there. It is obviously going to be a very sore point; they are a little bit touchy in these communities. They are slavishly following their Premier who was sneaky and deceitful before and after the election. I did not realise that the Premier had been asked after the election whether the electoral reform that we are about to debate was on the agenda, but he was. He was asked by, I think, Gareth Parker and perhaps another journalist as well. Not only before the election was he asked repeatedly six or seven times by one journalist; then again in the debate before the election; and multiple times in regional media around the state. After the election he continued to tell the people of Western Australia that electoral reform was not on the agenda. Still the Labor Party is standing behind the stalking horse that it says is the reason that the reforms are very much required. It has been rubbished, as we heard in question time today, by political commentators, including Antony Green.

Antony Green said that there is no reason that we need to see the changes to the electoral reform in the Legislative Council to reduce regional representation linked to dealing with the group voting ticket. The government could have done that and it would have had our support. It could have addressed the group voting ticket issue with the support of the opposition and the community, instead of introducing these far-reaching reforms to the Legislative Council electoral system. The bill read in today puts the issue in black and white. The second reading speech in the second paragraph removes the reference to the metropolitan boundaries, so it removes any delineation or requirement for the Western Australian Electoral Commission to have regard to regional communities in future distributions of this place, while at the same time reducing regional representation in the Legislative Council.

The Labor Party has form for it; prior to the 2008 state election, it ripped six electorates out of regional Western Australia and put them into the metropolitan area. We now see it doing it again. Labor is ripping regional voices, muting them in our Parliament when members should be allowed to bring expertise, influence and important issues to this place. Labor is shameless in its pursuit of embedding Labor's power into Parliament for years to come.

The Premier and Attorney General's expert committee was a sham. People have seen the Premier deny and deny that this was an issue before and after the election, and then bring in this legislation. People know that they will not be able to trust him. Labor has done it again with the forestry decision; it did that without asking the people of WA what they think. That is arrogant, and it is now a very slippery slope as we wait to see what else the Premier will decide he can just do without asking the people of Western Australia. It will be a long three and a half years to go. Regional members, take note. Your electors will know exactly how you vote and how you betray them. We will make sure of that. You are about to vote to reduce regional representation and I look forward to you explaining that to your communities.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.05 pm]: I am ready to contribute to this discussion because sitting right behind the Premier is the member for Albany. She was at that infamous radio interview in Albany in which the Premier denied over and over again that regional reform, regional redirection and cutting regional representation was on the agenda. Sitting right behind him was the member for Albany and, ironically enough, that same member is sitting behind the Premier today. She was sitting there today as we heard the Attorney General read in this bill that will strip away not only regional representation but also any reference to the regions in legislation whatsoever. The Attorney General knows very well the implications of that because he discussed with me directly that that will mean that the regional seats that we now hold throughout Western Australia can be forced into the metropolitan area, one by one. We will see a lack of regional representation in not only the upper house but also the lower house of Parliament in the future. That is Labor's aim. That is what Labor has been about the whole time.

We know this is a very longstanding tradition with the Labor Party. We do not even have to look as far back as the Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference of 2018. Hon Kate Doust did a presentation when she was the President of

the Legislative Council and put forward option C: whole-of-state electorate. Guess what the Labor Party has gone with? It has gone with exactly what the then President put up to the conference way back in 2018. It has been on Labor's agenda for a very long time, but it has denied it.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [3.06 pm]: This government has absolutely no mandate for what it is about to do, and I can do no better than to quote —

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Thank you.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I can do no better than to quote the excellent article by Peter Law in today's *The West Australian* — McGowan's brief press conference was the latest example of his Government's dishonest and underhand approach to an issue which impacts every West Australian.

Furthermore, the article continues —

The Government has no mandate as it refused to ever honestly answer questions about its aspirations for electoral reform during the election campaign for fear of losing votes in the bush. It's now running scared from a referendum which would likely succeed, but also put the issue at the forefront of mind of regional communities.

That is the truth of it. We have a dishonest government and a dishonest Premier who has gone to the people of Western Australia without it on his mind. What did we observe in this chamber today, members? All of a sudden we have a one vote, one value warrior out there spruiking with great passion the whole point that this is somehow an equitable approach. This is the largest state in Australia and one of the largest electorates in the world. In fact, it would be the largest electoral region in the world, and Labor is going to strip away the specific regional representation in those areas. The Premier has no mandate for this whatsoever. It is quite obvious now that the Premier misled the public of Western Australia before the election and, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out, after the election as well. That is deceit of the people of Western Australia. We heard yesterday the Attorney General—again, someone utterly mute before the election; someone who never bothered to whisper a peep of this—tell us that it was a 120-year goal of the Labor Party. The Attorney General does not have a shred of decency in this matter. He did not mention it to the people of Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** All those regional members in this chamber whom the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out hid behind that lie. If you support this, you will betray your community. This is an absolute disgrace. The Premier should be ashamed; the Attorney General should be ashamed; and every regional member in this house should be ashamed of your government.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** You should be ashamed of your government. The simple truth is that you have no mandate for this whatsoever.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier)** [3.09 pm]: The government will not support this motion. I will explain why. Firstly, prior to the state election, the idea that someone could get elected with 98 votes was not something we had considered, but, obviously, if we did not deal with that issue, people would be criticising us.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I did not interject on the Leader of the Liberal Party —

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** But I will.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Here I have the report about the Liberal Party, Leader of the Liberal Party. It describes you in all sorts of terms in the WhatsApp group by a member of your party who is in the upper house.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** You refused to deal with them.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Do you know why you do not deal with them? It is because you do not have the strength and you do not have the courage. You do not have the courage to take on Hon Peter Collier, who describes women as “sandwich makers”.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** You will not say anything about it.

We need to reform the upper house. Clearly, what occurred with Mr Wilson Tucker was a blight on democracy—that someone could be elected with 98 votes and displace other people who got many thousands of votes. It needs to be reformed. It is a blight on democracy. We commissioned Mr Malcolm McCusker and an eminent group to do a review into these matters. They have made some recommendations that also deal with the blatant rotting and corruption of the voting system in the upper house. The reforms we are bringing to Parliament will ensure that regional people will have 37 upper house members representing them as opposed to six. That is what will occur.

It will also make it easier for people across the board to get elected if they get—what is it?—2.6 per cent of the vote, as opposed to the current 14.5 per cent. It will better reflect the will of the people. That is what democracy is. It is the will of the people. It is only people stuck in the 1800s, like the Liberals and Nationals in Western Australia, who do not understand that.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** Why didn't you let the people decide?

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Will you please be quiet! No-one listens to you, Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party, you have had your say!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** No-one listens to you! I will tell you what, Leader of the Liberal Party, I will tell you a home truth. You are the first Leader of the Liberal Party I have ever met who could walk down the Hay Street Mall and no-one would know who you were. He is the first one I have ever met.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is how insignificant you are!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Your role in this Parliament and your role in Western Australian history will be nothing more than a footnote.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I can tell you what: we have the evidence that in the 1990s you were out there backing one vote, one value.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** And here you are, coming in here, saying exactly the opposite to what you had to say back in the 1990s, Leader of the Liberal Party.

What occurred with Mr Wilson Tucker was a blight on democracy. Mr McCusker has presented a report that shows that the upper house is clearly in need of reform, and we are going to reform it to make it more democratic. Imagine having two parties in modern Australia opposing a more democratic system; they are actually opposing a greater level of democracy. They are arguing against democracy. All over the world, people fight and die for democracy. Wars are fought over these things, yet we have the Liberals and Nationals in this Parliament arguing against it. They are arguing against more democracy in our state—that is, people's votes should be equal; when people run for office, their votes should be equal. When people run for anything—I gave the example of shareholders in question time—such as a committee position in an organisation, a club or whatever it might be, they are elected based on how many votes they get. That is the way these systems work. That is the essence of democracy, and the Liberals and Nationals are saying that somehow that is wrong—that some people's worth is less than others. That is what they are saying: some people's worth is less than others. Frankly, that offends the basic principle of being an Australian.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Liberal Party! Deputy Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** I will tell members what, the Leader of the Nationals WA stood up there and talked about betraying communities. When she was first elected to Parliament, she occupied an office over the road from Parliament. You were taking the money as a member of the regions, as a member for the Agricultural Region, while sitting over the road from Parliament, never seeing a constituent in your community, like Hon Jim Chown, who was also over the road from Parliament, and who the Liberal Party endorsed, sitting over the road there from Parliament for all those years. I think now we know that whilst on that committee, he opposed the reappointment of Mr McKechnie, and I think there needs to be a bit more inquiry about why that took place. If you want to talk about corruption, have a look at that issue. You were betraying your community, Leader of the National Party, when you occupied an office over the road from Parliament whilst representing the Agricultural Region.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the National Party!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** It was a shocking thing that you did, a disgraceful thing that you did, having your office over there. My electorate office is in my community where it has been for more than 20 years.

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** You could not even show your electors the dignity of having your electorate office in your community, because you just wanted to escape from that day-to-day work of meeting the needs of your community.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, you have had your say. It is time for the Premier to respond.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** We are reforming to remove the corruption of the upper house. Obviously, there will continue to be some support in terms of weighting in this house for some regional MPs, including you, Leader of the National Party. There was an extraordinary level of vote-weighting and —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** Malapportionment!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** —malapportionment, which is the proper term. It is basically a distortion of democracy. It is not democratic, to be frank, when some people's votes are worth six times that of others. It is just not democratic. It is the stuff we would see in a dictatorship, which would say it is somehow democratic, but it gives some people six times the votes of other people. Basically, that needs to be reformed, and that is what the government is going to do. We will ensure that regional people all over Western Australia have 37 MPs versus six.

**MS R. SAFFIOTI (West Swan — Minister for Transport)** [3.17 pm]: New members, I just want to outline a bit of history. In about 2018, we had the same Liberal Party and the same National Party that came into this house, targeting new members every day—the member for Wanneroo, the member for Mount Lawley, the member for Bicton, the member for Kalamunda and the member for Swan Hills—saying that they were going to lose their seats. They were threatening and bullying the new members every day. Do members remember the former member for Churchlands and the former member for Dawesville? They were targeting. Do members know what our members did? They went out there and represented their electorates. They doorknocked, they represented their views and then the government delivered to all of Western Australia. They were targeting the member for Pilbara all the time. Do members know what the member for Pilbara did? He went out there and he worked for his electorate and he represented its views, because that is what the people want. People want members working for them and representing their views.

Do members know what? All those people who were targeted got back in, and the people who were targeting them lost their seats, because they were lazy and arrogant. This is exactly what the opposition is doing today—sitting here, defending Hon Peter Collier and Jim Chown. Opposition members are standing up and somehow arguing that someone like Hon Jim Chown was representing his electorate because of the style of the electoral system. Because of the electoral system, someone like Jim Chown was somehow working so hard on behalf of his electorate. It is false. It is about members working for the state for all communities. That is what we intend to do and that is what we are doing.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party!

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** There is the false National Party. I get sick of hearing people who have never actually worked on a farm lecturing us about agriculture, day in, day out. People all know they are false. Again, the poor Leader of the Liberal Party is sitting in the chamber. He has to take that position because Hon Peter Collier and Hon Nick Goiran told him to! They are the puppeteers. I mean, honestly, all the power rests in the other house. The Leader of the Opposition's numbers rest in the upper house. Both leaderships rest on the power in the upper house, so, of course, they will defend the status quo.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (5)

Ms M.J. Davies  
Dr D.J. Honey

Mr R.S. Love  
Ms L. Mettam

Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (40)

Mr S.N. Aubrey  
Ms H.M. Beazley  
Dr A.D. Buti  
Mr J.N. Carey  
Ms C.M. Collins  
Mr R.H. Cook  
Ms L. Dalton  
Mr M.J. Folkard  
Ms K.E. Giddens  
Ms E.L. Hamilton

Ms M.J. Hammat  
Ms J.L. Hanns  
Mr M. Hughes  
Mr D.J. Kelly  
Ms E.J. Kelsbie  
Dr J. Krishnan  
Mr P. Lilburne  
Mr M. McGowan  
Ms S.F. McGurk  
Mr D.R. Michael

Mr S.A. Millman  
Mr Y. Mubarakai  
Mrs L.M. O'Malley  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr S.J. Price  
Mr D.T. Punch  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms R. Saffioti  
Mr D.A.E. Scaife  
Ms J.J. Shaw

Ms R.S. Stephens  
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski  
Dr K. Stratton  
Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Mr D.A. Templeman  
Mr P.C. Tinley  
Ms C.M. Tonkin  
Mr R.R. Whitby  
Ms S.E. Winton  
Ms C.M. Rowe (*Teller*)

Question thus negated.

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE — MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

#### *Report — Presentation*

**MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House)** [3.26 pm]: In accordance with the standing orders, I present the report of the management committee prescribing which parts of the estimates and off-budget public corporations will be considered by estimates committees A and B, and the time allocated for that consideration.

[See paper [617](#).]

#### *Adoption of Report — Motion*

**Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:** I move —

That the report be adopted.

The report that has been handed down is for the estimates process next week and includes the allocation of acting chairs along with the committee representation. I thank the opposition for its considerations and collaboration on the preparation of this report for what I am sure will be a smooth estimates committee process next week.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.27 pm]: I offer the opposition's support for the report. The member for Roe, the member for Belmont and I joined the chair this afternoon for our long and arduous meeting to discuss the estimates process. We had a very long and difficult discussion, chaired by the Leader of the House and overseen by the Clerk. At the end of that lengthy and difficult discussion, we came to this estimates hearing schedule as presented and we endorse it.

Question put and passed.

### APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2021–22) BILL 2021 APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2021–22) BILL 2021

#### *Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MS J.L. HANNS (Collie–Preston)** [3.28 pm]: Prior to the lunchbreak I was talking about the support the Labor government has given to the Collie–Preston electorate in the lead-up to some changes that will be occurring in the coal and energy sectors. This particular decision was made in the previous term of government and was centred on the fact that the energy market and the energy system in Western Australia is changing and that the significant uptake of rooftop solar has changed demand within the south west interconnected system. The government recognised the impact of that not only for Collie–Preston, but also right across the south west economy, which meant that our particular region needed significant support. One of the ways that the government has supported this area is through the Collie industry attraction and development fund, the Collie Futures fund and the Just Transition process. The Just Transition process brings together unions, industry leaders, affected workers, TAFE for the training sector, local schools, local government and a significant state government commitment through resourcing this particular Just Transition group. The McGowan government has received national and international recognition for how it has transitioned workers to industries of the future when decisions like these are made. The McGowan government has again demonstrated its respect for the local workers and our communities by investing a further \$20 million in this budget into the industry attraction and development fund. This fund is specifically designed to attract industries to the Collie region to allow workers to transition from current jobs in coal and power generation through to new

opportunities that are created by this funding. This is in stark contrast to the Liberal Party's energy plan in the lead-up to the 2021 election. I am very sad that nobody from the opposition is in the house to listen to this today. The Liberals' energy plan was not very well received in the Collie area. In fact, it had a plan to close the power stations by 2024. Once that particular announcement was made, the poor Liberal candidate for Collie–Preston was really never seen again. She did not get any warning or heads up about that particular plan and what it would do to her ability to run effectively as a candidate for the Liberal Party in Collie–Preston. The Nationals WA candidate also did not have a response for days, and, unless I have missed it, I do not know that the Nationals have an energy plan for Western Australia. It is an error on the part of the Nationals, given that it is in opposition.

In contrast, the McGowan government works with communities to transition workers away from transitional industries. We are a government that does not just lock the gate and walk away from our workers. The industry attraction and development fund will allow workers to transition and develop the high-valued skills needed to work in industries of the future. An example of this from the previous term of government is the investment in tourism in the Collie–Preston area. Yesterday, I took the Minister for Tourism; Culture and the Arts; Heritage to look at some of the attractions in Collie, including the Wellington Dam wall, which I have discussed several times in this house. In Collie, we also have the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's licensing centre, which was an initiative to devolve licensing services to the regions. This year the government has invested in the Cannaponics medicinal cannabis processing facility in Collie. It will bring in significantly more than a matched amount of private investment from Cannaponics with the project estimated to be worth \$20 million. Cannaponics has secured funding under the Collie Futures fund of \$2 million. The investment has attracted Cannaponics to set up in Collie and it has created a significant number of jobs for the region. International Graphite is another company that has taken advantage of the Collie Futures fund. It will bring the processing of graphite to Collie and it will create jobs for the future and jobs in future technologies.

The \$20 million Labor government contribution in this budget is a top-up of the initial \$80 million used to create industry investment in future jobs for our community. In fact, this government is investing in jobs for not only Collie–Preston, but also the south west in general. I have talked several times about how the Collie–Preston economy is linked very closely to the health of the economy across the whole of the south west. In considering the interrelationship between these two local economies, in this budget the McGowan government has also invested in local manufacturing in the south west. In the metropolitan region, we have brought back local manufacturing through the Metronet process and with the building of railcars at the Bellevue Assembly Facility. It has been announced that \$2 million will go towards a feasibility study on the development of a south west advanced manufacturing hub in the Bunbury Geopraphe region to create a project similar in scale to that of the Australian Marine Complex at Henderson, in the Perth metropolitan area. This will again create local jobs in the manufacturing industry in the south west of Western Australia. I am excited to see what job opportunities that brings for not only the Collie region, but also the south west. This particular location in the south west—it would be great if it was located in the Collie–Preston region—will take advantage of the fact that we already have an existing road and rail network, a skilled workforce and a port. Included in the geographical advantages is the fact that we are located close to Perth and the south west region, which creates a lifestyle that we enjoy.

The McGowan Labor government is creating new jobs right across Western Australia, including in Collie–Preston. It is creating jobs in areas where communities can thrive and not have to rely on jobs in FIFO workforce in remote locations. It is creating jobs whereby people, such as my husband and our friends, can come home every night—unless they are night-shift workers. That is why my family and I moved to Collie from Perth in the first place.

This budget also focuses significantly on skills training. It continues to prioritise skills training for all Western Australians. This budget has made a significant investment in continuing the Lower Fees, Local Skills program. Over the last term of government, the enrolments for South Regional TAFE in Bunbury, and all the campuses that sit within South Regional TAFE, have increased by 20 per cent as a result of this program. The budget also features a \$25 million upgrade to TAFE's facilities and equipment so that lecturers and students can work with state-of-the-art equipment that will replicate what they are likely to see in industry when they get jobs within the local area. We are making sure that WA's TAFE graduates enter the workplace with training that prepares them for twenty-first century jobs.

I am very pleased to see \$29.8 million in the budget to provide 8 000 additional vocational education and training placements in schools in Western Australia. Part of my previous role was working as a vocational education and training coordinator in schools. I enabled students to access training while at school, continuing their education and improving their literacy and numeracy standards to be able to graduate from high school and achieve within a workplace. Part of that training occurred in years 11 and 12 whereby students were also able to complete certificate II and III level training. This enabled them to leave school, as I said, with not only the required literacy and numeracy levels, but also qualifications. Often these students finish their pre-apprenticeship at school and are very competitive when seeking out apprenticeships and traineeships in further employment post-school. The \$19.2 million that this budget delivers for a year 9 career taster program is so important. In the good old days when I was a student at school, a year 10 student was asked what they wanted to do when they left school. I said that I wanted to be a teacher, and that worked out well for me. But it is a decision that a lot of other children do not find particularly easy to make.

It is very difficult for a year 10 student to make a decision about a future career, for example, boilermaking, when they have not tried metalwork at school but are potentially having to choose subjects for years 11 and 12. To be able to give year 9 students the opportunity to find out what the careers, jobs and skills look like so that they can make informed decisions about their future is an incredible opportunity. I have been pushing for that as a vocational education and training coordinator in our schools.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.L. HANNS:** I am proud that this government has listened to the people who work in schools and who know what our young people need, and is funding the programs that need to be funded to give our students the best start in life that they can possibly get.

In addition, \$37 million for training will go towards an employer incentive scheme. These are incentives for businesses to employ apprentices, including mature-age apprentices, and trainees, allowing them to gain skills. The Lower Fees, Local Skills program is aimed at reducing fees in some TAFE courses by 72 per cent. Those subsidised courses have been given priority because they are based on the state priority occupation list, or SPOL in education speak. That simply means that we are providing incentives for people to study TAFE courses for which there are identified skills shortages. The Leader of the Opposition declared in her budget reply that there was a skills shortage and that the WA Labor government was doing nothing in the budget to address it. I disagree. This government's investment in TAFE training, vocational training in schools and employer incentive schemes are all aimed to address the skills shortage and to provide future jobs and opportunities for all Western Australians.

There is a saying among teachers that teaching is the only job where I steal things from home and take them to work. I must say that I absolutely agree with that. I used to take to school my kids scissors, spare pencils, notebooks and shoes and school uniforms that my kids had outgrown. I took their schoolbags which were still serviceable and perfectly okay but which my children did not like anymore. I took those things to school and gave them to the students who needed them more than my children needed them.

As a teacher and deputy principal over the past nearly 30 years, the lack of funding around education was never more apparent than under the Liberal–National government. In contrast, the McGowan government's investment in quality education for schools in Collie–Preston is outstanding. The McGowan government committed to the school's maintenance program in 2020, which meant that many schools were able to update their maintenance and get on top of some of the works that needed to be done. In fact, the member for Hillarys, who is not in the chamber, had been a particularly strong advocate for her school that went for nearly 50 years without any proper maintenance or works. I am very pleased that she was able to address that as part of her election commitments. The McGowan Labor government funded additional education assistants in classrooms. EAs are our guardian angels and unsung heroes in the classroom who allow teachers the ability to provide instruction to students. The education assistants support the education of those young people as a result of that instruction.

We increased the number of school cleaners on school sites during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the previous government, under former member for Collie–Preston Hon Mick Murray, Collie Senior High School received upgrades of \$7.5 million for its classrooms.

In this budget, \$7 million has been set aside for Eaton Community College to build new design and technology classrooms, delivering state-of-the-art equipment and resources to that school. The government will also spend \$1 million on classroom upgrades at Donnybrook District High School. In preparation for the science-based jobs of the future, we have allocated funding for Wilson Park Primary School, Allanson Primary School, Treendale Primary School, Australind Primary School and Glen Huon Primary School, and Eaton Primary School is receiving a classroom upgrade. They are all very worthy recipients, building on the previous recipients of that program.

I would like to very briefly touch on the fact that as a deputy principal and teacher over many years, I have seen lived experiences of children and families at their most vulnerable. Often, the oldest child experiences homelessness, domestic violence, substance abuse or extreme mental health issues. The home environment causes the younger children in those families to observe and often reflect some of the behaviour that they see. Despite those family behaviours, we then expect that those young people will be able to go to school, sit at a desk in the classroom and listen to the teacher intently. We know what those students are trying to deal with behind closed doors. Often they are carers for family members, dealing with trauma or suffering from mental health issues from the things they have observed and experienced. Very sadly, young people are making attempts to take their own lives. These young people go to school tired and late. Those behaviours are often picked up by teachers and deputy principals, but the sad reality for the children whom we are seeing today is that the teachers and deputy principals are not the right people to deal with those very significant and complex issues because they are not adequately trained to do that. I am very pleased that the government has announced \$104 million towards student mental health in schools, including additional school psychologists. This will mean, and shows our community, that the McGowan government is delivering support for young people and vulnerable families by providing a safer environment while they are at school and also allowing them to be supported through mental health strategies in schools. That will allow the best possible future for those young people.

I was very pleased to see measures for foster carers appear in the budget papers. During my time as a teacher and deputy principal in Collie, I got to know a number of foster cares. A lot of families worry about what will happen to the foster child they are caring for when the child turns 18. I was incredibly excited to see that we are expanding the Home Stretch program. Children in foster care will be supported to the age of 21, if they wish to be. The government allocated \$41 million to deliver that initiative. I think that demonstrates our absolute commitment as a government to vulnerable Western Australians. Foster children are among some of the most vulnerable in our community.

An additional \$93 million in increased funding has been delivered for child protection services across the state. Sadly, the examples I have given members in the chamber today illustrate that these services are needed now more than they have been in the past.

Because this was raised in the chamber today, I want to give a shout-out to, and rejoice in, the return of the safety and security rebate for seniors, which was abolished by the Liberal–National government in 2015. Several seniors have approached my electorate office to thank us for making sure that this is funded in the budget. They collect their forms and we assist them in filling them out. We are delighted to see so many of our seniors taking advantage of the safety and security rebate. I could go on forever, but I promise I will not.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I am proud to be joining the McGowan Labor government this year. The government is delivering for everybody across Western Australia. I thank in particular the people in my electorate of Collie–Preston and I commend the bills to the house.

**MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren–Blackwood)** [3.48 pm]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021. It is with pride and honour that I stand here today as the elected representative of the diverse electorate of Warren–Blackwood. I am proud to be a regional member of the McGowan Labor government and was incredibly proud to watch the Premier hand down the 2021–22 state budget last Thursday.

This budget is based on the core Labor values of fairness and equality—I restate, fairness and equality—compassion, social justice, and building sustainable communities to not only thrive but also survive for years to come. The 2021–22 state budget delivers a strong surplus, which enables the McGowan Labor government to deliver major investments for all Western Australians in areas including infrastructure, social housing, hospital, mental health and climate action initiatives.

We have one of the strongest economies in the world. As a state, we have outperformed our national counterparts. As a government, we have strong financial discipline. Our economy has grown by 4.3 per cent in 2020 to 2021. Business and consumer confidence is high. The state’s unemployment rate fell to its lowest level since 2013 at 4.6 per cent, with high participation levels. In July, more West Aussies than ever were in jobs. We know that there are shortages in certain sectors, in line with national trends, and this budget includes measures to address shortages with a focus on skilling and reskilling more West Aussies into jobs.

The ability for people to receive a good education regardless of where they live or how much money they have is one of the core Labor principles. The McGowan Labor government is committed to ensuring that Western Australian students have the best possible opportunities to learn. I recently attended the Western Australian College of Agriculture open day in Denmark. It was heartening to see young people who are passionate about what they are learning, about their futures and about the opportunities available to them in WA. I met students from the cattle club and students studying viticulture, plant production, conservation, mechanics, hospitality, sustainability, and sheep, cattle and dairy production.

This year’s budget demonstrates the McGowan Labor government’s commitment to invest in high-quality infrastructure and facilities at public schools. Science, technology, engineering and mathematics will be the future drivers of innovation across our region. I am proud to be part of a government that prioritises statewide investment in STEM and science facilities and equipment in schools. In my electorate of Warren–Blackwood we have funded upgrades of \$400 000 to Bridgetown High School, \$1 million to Manjimup Senior High School and \$1.5 million to Denmark Senior High School to redevelop classrooms into STEM classrooms. This is great news for our future generation of forward thinkers, transformers and leaders. We have also invested more into science resources for schools across the region and will transform existing classrooms into science laboratories with funding for upgrades of \$85 000 to Boyup Brook District High School, \$460 000 to Nannup District High School and \$285 000 to Northcliffe District High School.

This government knows that for students to be their best at school, we also need to prioritise student wellbeing. There is an allocation of \$104 million across WA to support student mental health and wellbeing, including additional school psychologists. The budget also prioritises the continuation of revitalising WA’s TAFE sector and addressing skills needs. Our government has slashed the fees for 180 high-priority TAFE courses under the Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative, including courses in tourism and hospitality, agriculture, defence, construction, engineering, information technology and community services.

Quality education and access to facilities is important to me, and I am pleased that this budget prioritises this. It is one of my priorities to work with and support our valued organisations that deliver services to youth across our

regions, including schools, TAFEs, alternative educators, youth groups, mental health supporters and playgroups. In Mt Barker, I was pleased to commit \$7 000 to enable the Mt Barker playgroup to purchase new toys, lockable storage, a dishwasher and kitchen equipment to help it upgrade the Mt Barker playgroup facility that it shares with other community groups. In Augusta, I committed \$100 000 to the Augusta and Districts Community Childcare centre to help support the establishment of a new facility. Parents are currently travelling from Augusta to Margaret River and Cowaramup to access childcare services. This facility will mean that mums, dads, grandcarers and carers will have access to quality, affordable childcare locally, enabling them to get back into the workforce, work additional hours if they choose or just get some respite. This commitment is in addition to the \$4.74 million allocated in this year's budget to improve regional families' access to childcare by supporting the viability and sustainability of providers and the attraction and retention of childcare workers.

I have committed \$30 000 to the Margaret River Primary School to help it complete stage 2 of its nature playground and upgrade the quadrangle. When I met the principal at the primary school he talked about how the school community, local tradies and businesses had come together to build stage 1 of the school's nature playground. They were excited to get the additional funding to enable them to enhance the space and build stage 2.

Recently, in Bridgetown, I and the Minister for Youth, Hon Dave Kelly, met with the hardworking and dedicated staff, volunteers and students of the Blackwood Youth Action group to present them with a \$297 274 Lotterywest grant. This grant goes to fund a much-needed dedicated youth space in Bridgetown. Blackwood Youth Action provides support to young people and at-risk youth in the shires of Boyup Brook, Bridgetown–Greenbushes, Nannup and Manjimup. They are an incredible team—small but perfectly formed, with a strong focus on supporting young people. I was also able to commit \$50 000 as an election commitment to Blackwood Youth Action to help them purchase a vehicle for their driver support program to help young people get support in driving and getting their hours up.

As a regional leader, someone who has raised my kids in the country and someone who has worked for the WA Country Health Service and statewide telehealth services, I know how vital it is for regional communities to have access to quality health care. This budget includes a record \$1.9 billion boost to our state's healthcare system. This money will help address the unprecedented demand on WA's health and mental health system. In my electorate of Warren–Blackwood, the \$19.7 million increase to the patient assisted travel scheme—or PATS, as we call it—and the subsidy increase to \$100 a night will make a real difference to the families that use this service, as will the change to the eligibility criteria. It has now been expanded to increase eligibility for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and for women travelling to give birth.

Regional communities also rely heavily on the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This budget prioritises \$10.9 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to refurbish and replace aircraft engines. I would like to mention and commend a Denmark local, Chris Howden. I caught up with Chris recently at the Denmark Airport. He told me that he had had a heart attack and had made the long journey from his home in Denmark via ambulance to the airport to meet the RFDS. He is incredibly appreciative of the work that the RFDS does. Even before his health scare, over the last 15 years, he has been working tirelessly with a group of local volunteers from the Denmark Airport Association to upgrade the airport facilities. Most recently, these volunteers have worked day and night to create a transfer station that enables the ambulance to drive in, park under the shelter from the weather—it is often wet and windy down my way—and transfer the patient in protected, more comfortable conditions. It is this sort of spirit that really drives our communities and assists our most valued services such as the RFDS.

We have also included a record \$495 million boost to mental health support in this budget, resulting in more than \$1.14 billion allocated in 2021–22 to the Mental Health Commission to boost mental health, alcohol and other drug services. Investment in mental health, especially youth mental health, is an area of great importance to me. As the member for Warren–Blackwood, I was pleased to support the community mental health action team—COMHAT, as it is called—with its development of the Boyup Brook youth zone as one of my election commitments. We are investing \$60 000 to help progress the community wellbeing plan for Boyup Brook. This investment will help create a dedicated youth zone where young people in Boyup Brook can come together. The funding will also support the purchase of mountain bike equipment and a trailer for young people to transport equipment to various local tracks in the region. Projects like these are so important to communities within my electorate and I will always be a strong voice for the rural and regional towns in Warren–Blackwood.

Staying connected and supported is important, especially during times of stress, need and potential isolation. The McGowan Labor government continues to prioritise building strong, safe and fair communities. We will continue to protect vulnerable children, families and individuals through our community services investments and funding for more initiatives to prevent family and domestic violence.

We have invested \$6.2 million to increase support payments for grandcarers. Grandparents in Warren–Blackwood who are primary carers for their grandchildren through an informal arrangement will now receive increased support payments, with annual payments for the average grandfamily with two children to increase from \$650 to \$2 000. I am incredibly pleased with this announcement and know that many in my electorate will also be. It was one of the issues raised with me recently—the request for additional financial support. This announcement will make a real difference.

I am also excited by the strong investment in job-creating projects in the budget that will drive tourism and economic development in our region. We are continuing the successful \$40 million regional economic development grants program. In great news for our Margaret River and great southern wine regions, we have committed \$3 million towards the wine industry export growth partnership for our farming communities and \$15 million for our agriculture climate resilience fund.

Climate change has had a massive impact on the native timber industry, with slow growth leading to declining timber yields in the state's native forests. Since the 1970s, there has been a 20 per cent decrease in winter rainfall in the south west. It has been clear for some time that the next forest management plan will require significant changes, and business as usual with current levels of logging is not sustainable under the forthcoming forest management plan 2023–2033.

The native forest industry in WA represents only eight per cent of the total forestry sector. Since the commencement of the current FMP in 2014, the Forest Products Commission's native harvest operations have operated at a loss of \$2.8 million to the taxpayer. In comparison, the Forest Products Commission's softwood plantation operations have operated at a profit of \$38.7 million to the taxpayer over the life of the current FMP. It would be economically and environmentally irresponsible to continue with the native industry in its current form. It is estimated that half, or even less, of the jarrah and karri sawlog currently available for harvesting would be available under the FMP if we continued to harvest areas at the same rate as we do now. We want to ensure that the forest industry has a secure future, and to do that we must invest in plantation forestry. That is where the future of the industry lies.

Last week the McGowan Labor government announced an end to native forest logging in the south west by 2024. It is a decision that the McGowan Labor government did not take lightly. It is a decision that I know has been applauded by the majority of my electorate, but it is also a decision that I know is incredibly stressful for areas of my electorate affected by the transition away from logging in the south west native forests. Our government made this decision to ensure that we preserve our forests, protect our biodiversity and safeguard important carbon sinks to help us transition to net zero carbon emissions.

Our government also made the decision to invest \$350 million in softwood over 10 years. This will create jobs and provide opportunities for people in communities across the south west and ensure a sustainable forest industry for generations to come. As part of the announcement to end the logging of our south west native forests, \$50 million will also be invested in a Just Transition plan to support regional communities, businesses and workers through the transition. I understand that for some in my electorate, this announcement has caused stress, worry and uncertainty. Change is hard, particularly when it involves someone's livelihood and periods of uncertainty. Our government is committed to supporting employees, industry stakeholders and communities through this time. I am committed to supporting employees, industry stakeholders and communities through this time and to ensuring that the money from the transition plan goes to where it is needed and is best spent to support the people in my community. I know it is a difficult time for those facing transition out of the native timber industry. The McGowan Labor government will do everything it can to assist people affected as the transition plan becomes a reality.

The \$50 million that has been set aside to support affected workers and communities could be allocated to business transition funding, retraining opportunities for workers, attracting and developing new industries, diversifying economies and support for communities, support from financial counsellors, and enhanced redundancy packages. I will continue to liaise with community and industry stakeholders to hear from them about how I can help them over the more than two-year period of transition.

History shows us that in 2001, under the Gallop Labor government, WA became the first state in Australia to cease harvesting in old-growth forests. I am proud to be part of the McGowan Labor government that is continuing this legacy. I value our majestic forests and I want to see them protected, but I also want to ensure that the workers, business owners and communities affected are supported through the transition period.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms E.J. KELSBIE:** Anyone living in the regions will know how important sport and community wellbeing is in our towns. I have been able to commit \$11 000 to the Denmark Mountain Bike Club and \$15 000 to the Mt Barker Amateur Swim Club to purchase some timing systems.

I would just like to touch on the money going into trails in my electorate. An amount of \$12.78 million has been allocated to establish trail towns and centres to service existing and new trails in the great southern region of my electorate. For Warren–Blackwood, this will mean the realignment of the Munda Biddi Trail through the William Bay National Park to Denmark, new trails in the Valley of the Giants to Walpole, and upgraded trails at Castle Rock in the Porongurup National Park. An amount of \$2.24 million has been allocated to renew walk and cycle trails to encourage people to visit parks in the great southern region, including existing trails in the Porongurup, Walpole–Nornalup and Mount Frankland National Parks.

An amount of \$1.19 million has been allocated for upgrades on the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail, including renewing camp sites, bridges and sections of the track. An amount of \$1.56 million has been allocated for new and upgraded visitor facilities in national parks across the great southern region.

It is pretty monumental to emerge from a global pandemic with a budget surplus. I am honoured to be part of the McGowan Labor government that has led, and will continue to lead, WA to a place of economic resilience and environmental sustainability and will drive impact and change.

**MS R.S. STEPHENS (Albany)** [4.07 pm]: Today, on behalf of the community of Albany, I am delighted and proud to provide a reply to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021 as part of the Western Australian 2021–22 state budget. As the recently elected member for Albany, I am honoured to see the alignment of my values, as the local member for a very special regional electorate, embedded in the outstanding budget initiatives announced by Premier McGowan. I take this opportunity to thank the Premier for his attention to the high-priority projects for Albany that have been funded through this budget. As a candidate seeking election earlier this year, I spoke on behalf of my community and he listened. As a result, Albany will see transformations across a range of portfolios, including housing, environment, employment and skills, road safety, tourism and emergency management. When I joined this government, there was a comprehensive suite of priorities to attend to on behalf of the community. I am proud to announce that this budget goes a long way towards addressing that list of priorities.

Delivering high-quality health care for my community of Albany is a key priority for me, and that is reflected in this budget. It includes \$19.7 million for the patient assisted travel scheme to increase the subsidy from \$60 to \$100 a night and to increase the escort eligibility for people from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including women travelling to Perth to give birth. It also includes \$10.9 million for the Royal Flying Doctor Service to upgrade aircraft engines. This is an incredibly important service that is heavily utilised by our community of Albany, and I know many stories of people, especially in my family, who have used this service for their ongoing health. The Albany community will be particularly grateful for the welcome investment in additional local health infrastructure, including \$13.1 million for a radiation oncology unit at Albany Health Campus, which is now under construction. This will significantly benefit the Albany region more broadly, meaning that oncology patients can be treated close to home and their families without the need for frequent treatment in Perth.

The dental health of the Albany community will be boosted with the injection of funding to double the capacity of the Albany dental clinic. I know that many parents of young children will be particularly pleased about this.

Another budget initiative of which I am extremely proud is the \$4 million Spencer Park renewal project, which is part the government's \$2.1 billion housing boost. As part of this pipeline of work, eight new one and two-bedroom units are planned for construction to help meet the high demand for singles accommodation. On Monday, the Premier and I visited some of the refurbished properties in Spencer Park. We met James Bond, owner of Bondwood Services that has done six full house refurbishments and 14 full kitchens under the social housing economic recovery package. Another six houses will be refurbished under the contract and are due to be completed in 2022. As a result of SHERP, Bondwood Services has directly employed an extra apprentice and an additional tradesperson. There is also the flow-on effect of providing work for a wide range of subcontractors. James acknowledges the boost to the local economy that his work has provided, but he also tells the story of how great it is for the tenants of these properties. Tenants often visit the jobs to keep an eye on the progress of the houses because they really look forward to moving back in. On one of the refurbishments, the tenant was a single mum with three kids. After having been in the house for some time, she told James how it had changed her life for the better. She is now cooking regular healthy meals and has pride in her home, which she did not have before. She told James that this had turned her life around. The Spencer Park renewal project is about improving the overall amenity of the suburb, as well as the housing options available to improve the liveability and connection for all people living in Spencer Park. Having grown up in Spencer Park, I am thrilled to see the suburb receive this commitment from the McGowan Labor government. The renewal of Spencer Park has been a high priority of mine, and I am confident that this investment will make the suburb a more vibrant and attractive place to live. We will see better road connections and more footpaths and landscaping, but this project will also help to modernise and improve the variety of housing available to the most vulnerable people in Albany.

Last Saturday night, I attended the Master Builders Bankwest Building Excellence Awards, Great Southern. It was a fantastic night that showcased many of the talented people in the construction industry in Albany. The highlight of the evening for me was presenting Katie Woodhams from KBuilt Construction—the only female-owned and led building company in Albany—the award for best office space for under \$1.5 million for the construction of the new visitor hub at the historic Strawberry Hill Farm. The National Trust of Australia was a recipient of a regional economic development grant for this project.

An additional \$3.2 million is committed in this budget for new trails at Mount Adelaide and Mount Clarence. This investment will significantly boost our reputation as a cycle-friendly city and will help drive destination tourism. This is coupled with my small election commitment of \$150 000 to the Albany Mountain Bike Club for the construction of a multipurpose shed, complete with a bike wash down bay, to assist with the ongoing extensions and long-term maintenance of the Poikeclerup downhill tracks.

There is a significant boost to bushfire and emergency risk management in this budget, with a commitment of \$281.8 million statewide to boost frontline emergency services and help communities recover from major disasters, which Albany has experienced. It is welcomed news that the personnel in Albany will be boosted with additional career firefighters to help respond to emergencies.

Funding for regional businesses to thrive and grow has been particularly well spent in Albany with examples of business success linked to co-contribution grants through the value add agribusiness investment attraction fund, which is overseen by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and designed to support investment in new projects and expansions. One of the businesses that received this grant was Handasyde Strawberries, which was successful in rounds 1 and 2 of the value add agribusiness investment attraction. Handasyde is a family-owned strawberry farm that has transformed into a family-friendly visitor attraction that includes a cafe and a farm-fresh store featuring an art gallery and a new nature-based children's playground.

In 2019, Handasyde received \$75 000 for capital expenditure, which was spent on a freeze dryer. This co-contribution grant allowed it to purchase a freeze dryer, which has enabled the reduction in strawberry wastage to next to zero per cent and resulted in the development of a range of high-end retail products with freeze-dried strawberries. Local and statewide businesses have also benefited from utilising Handasyde's freeze dryer on a contract basis for fruit drying, medicinal mushroom drying, camel milk powder production and buttermilk production. These businesses have benefited from business growth and the extension of the shelf life of products. Lyn and Neil are hardworking members of the Albany community, and I look forward to seeing them to continue to succeed.

The regional economic development grants program is a \$40 million state government initiative. Over seven years, this investment in local projects has stimulated economic growth in regional Western Australia. The grants boost investment in local regional projects that contribute to population and economic growth. Himac Group's skid steer attachments is without doubt Albany's manufacturing success story, having gone from strength to strength since it began as a small family business in 2002. Himac received funding from the McGowan government during stage 2 of the RED grants rollout. This grant went directly towards implementing a digital infrastructure for on-the-job training within its new manufacturing facility. These digital systems are critical to ensuring new welders and factory hands are given the focus and guidance for a successful career. At the time that Himac received the grant, it had 54 employees. In the 18 months since, it has created 13 new local jobs and now employs 67 people. With the incredible growth that Himac has had, particularly in the face of the pandemic, planning is already underway for a third Albany manufacturing facility, which is due to open in 2024.

This budget will continue efforts to revitalise WA's TAFE and training sector—a sector in which I worked and for which I retain a passionate interest—with a \$198 million investment per annum in regional WA over the next four years, including a \$17 million upgrade to South Regional TAFE, Albany campus, for a new trade workshop. I was very welcoming of the \$19.2 million statewide vocational education and training career taster program for year 9 students because I was the regional manager of Worklink WA and had firsthand experience in delivering programs to students in schools. VET coordinators say that year 9 is the right time for students to receive such programs.

This budget further benefits the community of Albany through unprecedented investment in education, which is the lifeblood of our future. Education improves economic growth, raises standards of living, strengthens the economy and develops our human capital. In my electorate of Albany alone, this government is investing heavily in education with \$7.5 million to upgrade the administration blocks at Albany Senior High School; a \$6.3 million performing arts centre at Albany Senior High School, and as a former student of that school, having done lots of performances, I know that that is needed; \$1.1 million for STEM classrooms at Albany Senior High School and North Albany Senior High School; and the very welcome \$16.6 million rebuild at Mount Lockyer Primary School, which is under construction.

Road safety is also high on my agenda. Creating a safer road environment through the implementation of a safe outcome approach helps reduce death and injury on our roads and minimises road trauma. That is why I am excited to see a commitment of \$669 million in road safety across the state. After delivering a record investment in regional roads over the past four years, I am excited to see more investment in regional roads, including \$175 million for the Albany ring-road, which is already under construction, and \$28 million for the regional road safety program to invest in the repairing and rebuilding and road safety treatments on more than 320 kilometres of roads in the great southern. I have received much feedback about the road safety program projects that have already been delivered in my electorate.

The 2021–22 budget significantly invests in helping regional Western Australians stay active, healthy and connected with their communities, including a \$1.6 million renovation of the Albany Surf Life Saving Club. This will improve the functionality of the clubrooms and the accessibility of the emergency response team that volunteers tirelessly with other emergency service agencies, such as the Albany Sea Rescue Squad. I would like to acknowledge the Albany Sea Rescue Squad, which was awarded the outstanding group operations award at the Department of Fire and Emergency Services Marine Rescue Western Australia Awards for its search for two men who were swept off rocks near Cheynes Beach in February. These people are the heroes of our community. They risk their lives, time and skills to save the lives of others. I cannot commend them highly enough and I am so grateful that this government prioritises funding for their operations so that they can continue to keep our communities safe.

In closing, I again thank the Premier for the delivery of the budget as Treasurer. It is transformational in its scope and attractive in its local focus on my Albany community. We will see the benefit of the foresight in the coming years.

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Treasurer)** [4.19 pm] — in reply: I thank all the members who spoke in the second reading debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2021–22) Bill 2021 and the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021. I realise that there have been a great many comments and a lot of members have spoken about the importance of their electorate. I just heard the member for Albany outlining a range of those matters. It is important that particularly new members acknowledge the issues surrounding their individual electorates. It is terrific to hear about all those issues.

I want to make a few points about the state budget. For the third year in a row, net debt will decline to \$32.1 billion. That is more than \$11 billion less, or 26 per cent lower, than the debt across the forward estimates when we arrived in office. It was climbing to \$43.7 billion. As a consequence, we are the only government in Australia in the course of the last four and a half years to have paid down debt. Every other government has increased debt. I note some members, including the Leader of the Opposition, incorrectly stated the debt figure when we came to office. It was forecast to go to \$43.7 billion, and we reduced that to \$32.1 billion despite \$9 billion of COVID spend. Net direct debt is forecast to be stable. It rises modestly to \$36 billion by 2024–25. That is still \$4.2 billion lower than was projected in the *Pre-election financial projections statement* and despite a \$30.7 billion asset investment program. It reflects a very careful assessment of the iron ore price across the forward estimates.

When this government came to office, state debt was based upon the net-debt-to-revenue ratio, which is a metric used by credit rating agencies. It was the worst of all the states. Now it is the best of all the states. Ours will fall to 60.4 per cent in 2024–25, compared with 200 per cent in Victoria and 128 per cent in New South Wales. That was calculated prior to their lockdowns, so no doubt they will be worse off than that. No additional borrowings are required on the consolidated account over the next four years. Standard and Poor's analysis that it put out on budget day was fairly glowing about the state government's budget, as was Moody's. That we have that level of financial management in place is good news for current and future Western Australians.

I just want to post one warning to people. I note that overnight the iron ore price again fell, so it is now at \$US113. Back in May it was \$US240 and it is now \$US113. When people say that we should assume the very high levels of iron ore price will continue forever, that is wrong. The iron ore price is quite a concern. Obviously, a large part of our revenue depends on that, but it is now down to \$US113. Next year and across the forward estimates we estimate the iron ore price will be \$US66, so we still have a significant buffer. But across this financial year, we estimated it to be \$US121, from memory, but it is below that. It has been above that for a time leading up to now, across this year, so we are hopeful it will at least stabilise at this level and, hopefully, climb back to what we thought it would be when we set the budget parameters. It is inevitably volatile. It depends upon a lot of factors outside our control and so estimating is difficult. That is why it requires very careful estimations.

I refer to spending on health. The budget provides an additional \$1.9 billion investment in health and mental health across the forward estimates. That will deliver 332 additional beds, 100 new doctors, 500 nurses, a \$100 million emergency department support package and \$495 million for mental health, including a range of additional services, beds, facilities and the like. Health and mental health now receive \$10.6 billion or around 30 per cent of the total spend in the budget. This state spends more per capita on health than any other state in Australia—by a considerable margin. We do not build in the COVID spend across the forward estimates because we do not know whether we will need it. Therefore, the budget reflects that. At some point in the future, hopefully, our COVID spend will decline significantly and we will not need hundreds of millions of dollars built in for COVID. That is why there is what is perceived by some people as a decline in health spend. It is not. It is just that the COVID spend stops at some point in the future and, if we need to, we will continue it. But, hopefully, we will be in a situation that means we do not have to fund COVID at the levels we currently are.

In total, the health budget has grown from \$8.8 billion in 2016–17 to \$10.1 billion today, which is a 14 per cent increase. The budget allocates \$800 million for unforeseen costs with \$240 million set aside for WA Health if necessary. The budget invests \$3.1 billion in health infrastructure across Western Australia, which includes \$1.8 billion for the construction of a new women's and babies' hospital. I understand that the member for Vasse criticised this amount. I note that in the 2020–21 election campaign, the costings launched by the former member for Churchlands set aside \$3 million for the women's and babies' hospital. That was the commitment of the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA for the women's and babies' hospital. Although it is in the member for Nedlands' electorate, it services the needs of women, babies and indeed their families from all over Western Australia, both the regions and the city. Setting aside \$1.8 billion to fund it is a terrific use of our financial success of today for a project that will meet the needs of the state for a century to come. That is terrific news and shows our state's financial strength.

We have put in place \$350 million across the next 10 years, which is \$35 million or so a year, to expand WA's softwood plantations. That will ensure an ongoing capacity to meet the needs of the construction industry from softwood planted in Western Australia. That will secure around 2 000 jobs in the softwood industry, plus 140 jobs in planting. The advice I have been given is that it is perhaps the biggest investment in softwood plantations of any state in history. It is a terrific investment in an industry that will meet the needs of the construction industry, and it is a significant carbon sink.

On top of that, we put \$50 million into a transition plan to get out of native forest logging. Obviously, the Liberals and Nationals have criticised us over that, but it is not a sustainable industry and it is a dying industry. We are

providing support to continue the provision of timber for industry and to get out of an industry that is no longer sustainable, and do the right thing by the environment. I suppose if the Liberals and Nationals want to take the policy to start logging our native forests again to the next election, it is up to them, but I suspect most Western Australians will welcome that we have a transition plan, we are doing the right thing by the environment, we are stopping logging native forests and we have given plenty of notice about our intentions in that regard.

I refer to spending in regional Western Australia. An amount of \$4.2 billion is committed to royalties for regions in the state budget. That is just a fraction of our massive investment in the regions. A record \$9.1 billion will be invested in regional WA to build hospitals, health facilities, schools, roads and other infrastructure. We will invest in hospitals all over the state. The list includes Peel Health Campus, Bunbury Regional Hospital, Geraldton hospital, Newman District Hospital, Meekatharra District Hospital, Tom Price Hospital and Laverton Hospital. They are just a few of the hospitals either being completely redeveloped or rebuilt. There is a terrific contribution to health infrastructure and a range of other projects in towns all around Western Australia.

Then there is spending on roads, schools and other infrastructure around the state. There is \$9 billion worth of spending on identifiable infrastructure in regional WA in this budget. Only nine per cent of that, or \$828 million, will be funded by royalties for regions. Members can see that this is the biggest investment in infrastructure in history across regional WA. We are investing in high-quality services, including in health care, education, police and more. As the Minister for Police knows, 950 police officers will be recruited, many of whom will go to regional WA. That is an incredible investment in the regions.

There are proper processes around these things. I recall the last government's massive blowouts in projects in some towns and massive losses that were really quite extraordinary. We have not seen that under this government. We have proper processes and Treasury is engaged in them. The last government had two budget processes—the Nationals WA budget process and the Liberal Party budget process. It was a complete financial disaster for Western Australia and we have had to do significant repair work. We will continue to do that and I suspect future governments will have to repair the damage that was done.

In terms of household tariffs, and fees and charges, nearly \$400 million will be invested to keep the basket of household fees and charges below the rate of inflation. Transperth and Transwa fares will be frozen for a year. Water and electricity charges will be limited to the consumer price index. We are going to put in place a wonderful initiative from 1 January 2022 whereby the cost of any Transperth fare will be limited to two zones. Currently, some areas have nine zones. Transperth fares will be limited to two zones so public transport is more affordable for families who use public transport. It will get people onto trains and buses and make public transport cheaper for families. This is a significant cost-of-living measure for people who live in areas as far afield as Dawesville.

Fees and charges under this government compared with the last government have on averaged increased by around half. Some people have called for tax reform. Tax reform means two things: either cut taxes and/or put in place a transferral. One measure called for by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia is to get rid of stamp duty and put an annual land tax on everyone's house around Western Australia. When the CCI announced that measure, the estimated cost would have been around \$8 000 a year on everyone's house, which, of course, we are not going to do, no matter how much the CCI says it. I find the idea that that is somehow a tax reform and somehow helps anybody laughable.

In any event, it is important that this state is financially strong because it allows us to pay off debt, allows us to have surpluses and allows us to invest if we need to. We do not know what is around the corner. We do not know whether there will be another pandemic or another crisis of whatever nature. It is important that the state has the capacity to invest. Therefore, having the lowest debt per capita, having the best net-debt-to-revenue ratio of any state in Australia, and being the only state in surplus is important to our capacity to respond in the future.

Our \$9 billion response to COVID is because we managed the finances well and because we kept our industries open. Some people have criticised that and have said that it had nothing to do with the government. We actually kept the state and industry pretty much COVID-free. When revenue comes in from gold, alumina, iron or gas, it is because we have kept the industry open over a very difficult period. New South Wales has had massive disruption to its mining industry, relatively small as it is, and it closed down the construction industry. We avoided that and, therefore, ensured that revenues have continued to flow to both the state and also the commonwealth government. The income generated by people working in those industries continues to circulate throughout the economy, which provides further revenue in terms of GST and the like to all governments around the Australia. That is why managing COVID in a way that has prevented outbreaks in our state has helped the entire country. I understand that that is not appreciated. I note the federal Treasurer, Mr Frydenberg, keeps demanding that we bring down our borders and introduce COVID into Western Australia, but that is not a policy I want to adopt before such time as we have very, very high levels of vaccination. I do not understand why people keep insisting on that. They are stuck in a Sydney bubble and they do not understand that there is another Australia out there and that we prefer not to deliberately import COVID until such time as we have very high levels of vaccination. I keep telling them that at some point in time we will bring down border arrangements with the east, particularly New South Wales and Victoria, because we do not have borders with other states in effect, but it is not now. I genuinely do not want to infect people and

have people die. I do not know why they keep arguing that we do that. I just do not think they understand there is another Australia out there that is COVID-free. They continually say, “We’ve got to get out of lockdown.” We do not have lockdowns. We are not in lockdown. But for some reason there is a collective Stockholm syndrome among the senior leadership of the Liberal Party in New South Wales, combined with Mr Frydenberg, who seem to think that we are in lockdown. We are not. We are holding the AFL grand final next week, for goodness sake! There will be 60 000 people at the stadium. I just do not know why they keep doing that and why they cannot accept that states are at different places and are moving at different paces. But the pace in this state is way in front of other states because we are open and free and everyone is operating as normal. For some reason they do not seem to get that.

The commonwealth government always thinks that there should be one size fits all for the entire country. It does not recognise that different states are in different positions at different times and the one-size-fits-all approach does not always work. Sometimes there is a need for consistency in some laws, arrangements and the like. But at other times, there is not. This is a time when there needs to be some recognition of difference. In any event, we will continue to hold the line that we want to remain COVID-free as best we can until such time as we have very high levels of vaccination.

On that note, I encourage everyone to get vaccinated. The most important thing that people can do is to take advantage of this opportunity. There are no excuses now for people not to get vaccinated. Please get vaccinated. It will keep you alive, your family alive and your community safe, and it will ensure that when rules are put in about who can do what, you will be free and open to do anything. If people are not vaccinated, that will not be the case. That is why it is in everybody’s interest to get vaccinated. It is in the nation’s and the state’s interest as well.

I come back to the budget. In an overarching sense, the budget set aside today’s financial strength for important projects tomorrow—whether that is a desalination plant, a women’s and babies’ hospital, a social housing initiative or softwood plantations; there is a long list of them—that will be here for decades to come and will benefit Western Australians for decades to come. We are in a strong, good financial and economic situation. We want to make sure that that continues.

I thank all members for their contributions to the budget debate. I look forward to the budget passing.

Questions put and passed.

Bills read a second time.

Pursuant to standing order 222, bills and estimates referred to Estimates Committees A and B.

### ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

#### *Special*

On motion without notice by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**, resolved —

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 12 October 2021, at 2.00 pm.

*House adjourned at 4.37 pm*

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