



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2023

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 29 November 2023

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 29 November 2023

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) took the chair at 12 noon, acknowledged country and read prayers.

VISITORS — SALVADO CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [12.01 pm]: On behalf of the member for Darling Range, I welcome to the public gallery the year 8 students from Salvado Catholic College in Byford. I cannot see the member for Scarborough here at the moment, but that group includes Mr Luke Johns, who I was told is the member for Scarborough's old footy coach. I expect he was quite good at footy.

HERDSMAN LAKE REGIONAL PARK

Petition

MS C.M. TONKIN (Churchlands) [12.02 pm]: I have a petition that has been certified as conforming with the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly, has 289 signatures and reads —

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled.

We, the undersigned, say that **Herdsmen Lake Regional Park requires public toilets.**

- It is a 300 hectare urban reserve with 8 kilometres of walking trails and there are no public toilets.
- It is an environmental risk to the visitors of the lake and the wildlife.
- It should be an accessible facility for all visitors to the reserve.
- With high visitor numbers to the reserve, lack of public toilet facilities is a serious concern.

Now we ask the Legislative Assembly to;

- **Set up appropriate 24 hour public toilet facilities** in strategic locations around the reserve.
- Maintain these facilities to a presentable standard.

[See petition 48.]

PAPERS TABLED

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

BILLS

Assent

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

1. Reserves Bill 2023.
2. Duties Amendment (Off-the-Plan Concession and Foreign Persons Exemptions) Bill 2023.

BILLS

Notice of Motion to Introduce

1. Sentence Administration Amendment (Monitoring Equipment) Bill 2023.

Notice of motion given by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)** on behalf of Mr J.R. Quigley (Attorney General).

2. Climate Change Bill 2023.

Notice of motion given by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)** on behalf of Mr R.R. Whitby (Minister for Climate Action).

3. Insurance Legislation Amendment (Motor Vehicle Claims Harvesting) Bill 2023.

Notice of motion given by **Ms D.G. D'Anna (Parliamentary Secretary)**.

4. Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Residential Construction Exemptions) Bill 2023.

Notice of motion given by **Dr J. Krishnan (Parliamentary Secretary)**.

POWERINGWA — RENEWABLE ENERGY TRANSITION*Statement by Minister for Energy*

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Energy) [12.06 pm]: Western Australia is about to transform, decarbonise and futureproof our main electricity network, the south west interconnected system. Electricity modelling suggests that demand could increase fivefold by 2050, and this will require more than 50 gigawatts of generation capacity. The grid needs to be transformed to access the best renewable resources at the lowest cost, which means up to 4 000 kilometres of new and upgraded transmission network could be required. This energy transition, combined with ambitious industry decarbonisation goals, means the scale of new renewable energy generation, storage and transmission that will need to be built is unprecedented.

To support this transition, I am pleased to advise the house that the Cook government has established PoweringWA. This new government entity will coordinate the actions required to deliver new electricity infrastructure at the pace needed for decarbonisation. Transforming WA's electricity system is a complex but necessary task, and the scope of it reaches outside any single government trading enterprise and beyond the responsibilities of any existing agency.

An infrastructure build of this scale requires community support, and we are committed to ensuring communities are brought along on the journey from the beginning. PoweringWA will engage meaningfully with stakeholders and will help impacted communities and First Nations people to realise value from the energy transformation. Western Power will continue to be responsible for planning, designing and delivering transmission projects, and renewable energy proponents will retain responsibility for the delivery of their projects. PoweringWA will help orchestrate the various moving parts and ensure that the delivery of electricity infrastructure is efficient, effective and mitigates impacts as much as possible. PoweringWA is now in its development phase and is located in the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. I look forward to updating the house on progress next year.

EDUCATION — MINISTER'S INNOVATION CHALLENGE*Statement by Minister for Education*

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [12.08 pm]: Before I commence, I acknowledge the students here from the year 7 gifted and talented education program at the wonderful Kelmscott Senior High School.

I rise to inform the house that I recently announced the winners of the Minister's Innovation Challenge. I was highly impressed by the way year 8 students engaged with the challenge and took part in a real-life learning opportunity. This challenge is so good because it helps ensure that young people are better prepared to lead and innovate in our changing world. It also offers students the opportunity to connect with the local community as well as industry partners as they develop innovative solutions to local issues or problems that they care about in their communities.

Let us get down to the winners! Bob Hawke College took out first place for its outstanding efforts in developing an innovative solution to an issue faced in the community, which was how it could help ease heavy traffic and congestion at Matthews Netball Centre car park in Jolimont. Students at the college developed an app that shows the live and predicted status of the car park at a given time, with the option to host or carpool with a teammate or friends. The host can input the number of passenger seats they have available and provide an option to collect other passengers from their home or another location. It is such impressive work!

Denmark Senior High School was awarded second prize for developing an innovative solution to a problem it faces on its south west beaches, which was how it could reduce the amount of plastic entering the ocean at Denmark beaches for people who live in Denmark and care about the environment so they can make a local contribution to reducing microplastic pollution. The answer was an interactive art installation, featuring a drinking fountain and rubbish bin, which is connected by a wave sculpture. This sculpture has space to educate people about microplastics.

Third place was awarded to Exmouth District High School, for developing an innovative solution to an issue faced in the North West Cape, which is how it can ensure visitors to this beautiful region act sustainably. Students came up with an app that provides visitors with a fully immersive virtual reality experience. The VR app enables users to experience the life, play and struggles of a native animal of their choice, so they have greater empathy for the biology of the region as well as the threats to coral reefs worldwide. Congratulations to all the year 8 students from the 30 schools that were selected to participate in the challenge. The future looks bright with those innovative thinkers at the helm.

CLOSING THE GAP*Statement by Minister for Aboriginal Affairs*

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [12.11 pm]: Yesterday, I stood in this place to contribute to a formal apology on behalf of the WA government for the historical policies and practices that led to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being paid little or no wages between 1936 and 1972. It was a reminder that we must all remain committed to addressing systemic racism and transforming the way that governments work with Aboriginal people to achieve equality of life outcomes for all. This is, in fact, the principal objective of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to which the WA government is a signatory. I am pleased

to table today the second WA government *Annual report: Closing the Gap 2023*. The report draws on data from the Productivity Commission and highlights WA's progress against the four priority reforms and 17 Closing the Gap outcomes under the national agreement between October 2022 and October 2023. This annual report was developed in consultation and collaboration with all WA government agencies, demonstrating the extent to which Closing the Gap is truly everybody's business. We are also grateful to our key strategic partner, the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA, and our Coalition of Peaks partner, the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, for their feedback and input.

The annual report highlights the WA government's targeted investment in growing and supporting the Aboriginal community-controlled organisations sector. The aim is to not only strengthen and sustain Aboriginal organisations, but also establish a strong foundation for genuine partnerships with the WA government over the life of the national agreement. This investment has included the awarding of \$3.4 million in ACCO sector-strengthening grants to 16 organisations and the provision of \$5.725 million in operational funding for the newly established Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia. CASWA will play a critical role in diversifying the voice of ACCOs working across the Closing the Gap outcome areas. We have made improvements across several of the Closing the Gap targets in Western Australia. This is pleasing to see; however, there is still much work to be done. Last month, the WA government released its second *Closing the Gap implementation plan 2023–2025*, which outlines the strategic approach we will take over the next two years to meet our commitments under the national agreement and drive further progress against the targets. I look forward to working with our important Aboriginal stakeholders and my ministerial colleagues and their agencies across government as we embark on our next phase of implementing this important work.

[See paper 2557.]

FITZROY RIVER — DRAFT WATER ALLOCATION PLAN

Statement by Minister for Water

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Water) [12.14 pm]: I rise to inform the house that on Monday, 23 October this year, I announced the release of key policy positions that will form the basis for the Fitzroy River water allocation plan. The key policy positions support state government election commitments to protect the Fitzroy River while providing the opportunity for sustainable economic development in the region. The published *Water allocation planning in the Fitzroy: Policy position paper* outlines 10 key policy positions and reaffirms the state's commitment to not dam the Fitzroy River and its tributaries. The key policy positions support allocating groundwater for future use and economic development, with no additional surface water to be allocated for licensing. Surface water take will be restricted to existing surface water entitlements and exemptions, such as domestic needs, non-commercial livestock watering and emergency firefighting.

In November 2020, the government released a discussion paper seeking feedback on the future of water management in the Fitzroy River catchment. During public consultation, more than 43 000 submissions were received from a range of stakeholders. The state government has now released a summary of the feedback for the 2020 discussion paper, as well as five technical reports on the hydrogeology, hydrology, ecological water requirements and known values of the Fitzroy River. The key policy positions have been informed by the comprehensive consultation for the discussion paper, as well as the scientific studies across the Fitzroy River catchment. The proposed water allocation plan for Fitzroy will provide a clear and transparent approach for water management in the Fitzroy River catchment, and community consultations will be a critical part of this work. When the draft Fitzroy River water allocation plan is released, I encourage the community to provide their views on the proposed framework for water allocation planning in our important Kimberley region. I want to thank everyone who has provided their effort and input into this process to date and for the work to come.

GREENING OUR COMMUNITIES — LAKE MONGER AND PERRY LAKES

Statement by Minister for Water

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Water) [12.16 pm]: I rise to inform the house that on Thursday, 23 November this year, I announced that two projects funded under the Greening Our Communities small grants program had been completed at Lake Monger and Perry Lakes. The Greening Our Communities small grants program delivers on an election commitment that has been completed in partnership with the Town of Cambridge. The Lake Monger project has refurbished the nutrient-stripping channels, and rehabilitated natural areas on the east side of the lake adjacent to the Mitchell Freeway, improving the quality of stormwater entering the lake. The project included removing large strands of non-native river she-oak, as well as planting native species to support local biodiversity. At Perry Lakes, the project focused on re-establishing native vegetation to improve water quality, following the removal of large strands of bulrushes, which are an invasive native species. The project complemented recent works undertaken by the Town of Cambridge at Perry Lakes to supplement water levels using diverted stormwater. The projects have resulted in the planting of 108 800 native reeds and rushes and 35 000 native wetland buffer plants on the lake edges.

Last Thursday I was fortunate to visit the Lake Monger to celebrate the completion of these two projects with the member for Churchlands, Christine Tonkin, MLA, and Town of Cambridge representatives, including Mayor Gary

Mack. Members of the Friends of Galup–Lake Monger and Friends of Perry Lakes were also in attendance, and I thank them for their commitment and support. The two projects will contribute to improved water quality and healthy urban wetlands that can be enjoyed by the community for many years to come. They will also support the conservation of biodiversity by providing habitats for various plant and animal species. It is a great achievement to see the projects reach completion, and I look forward to receiving further updates on the Greening Our Communities projects into the future.

MARIGINIUP BUSHFIRE — DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Statement by Minister for Community Services

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Community Services) [12.19 pm]: It is often said that emergencies bring out the best in people. Last week the best in people from my electorate and the Department of Communities was on display in droves. It has been my privilege to stand with the Wanneroo community and broader communities in supporting those impacted by these devastating fires. I have heard many stories and observed inspirational acts from community members, including people opening their homes to a family of strangers so that they did not have to stay at the evacuation centre; a man helping to move 60 horses out of harm's way with his ute and float; people hosing down their neighbours' home because they were away on holidays; and so many more.

The Department of Communities played an important role in responding to the terrible and fast-moving situation, providing emergency relief and support to the impacted community. On Wednesday, 22 November, the Department of Communities quickly opened the Gumblossom Community Centre to provide immediate shelter, food and water to those impacted by the fire near Mariginiup in the City of Wanneroo. The following day our government announced that the Bullsbrook Centre for National Resilience would be opened to provide additional accommodation for impacted residents and volunteer firefighters. Communities staff worked incredibly hard to open the centre to impacted residents later that day. More than 500 staff and volunteers from multiple agencies worked tirelessly to keep people safe, including the Department of Communities' emergency relief and support team and the north metropolitan regional district, which positioned two field teams and a central team to support the response. In addition to the evacuation centres, Communities also engaged key emergency response partners to support with food and meals, clothing, laundry services and psychological first aid.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our purple shirts—better known by some as Communities' staff and volunteers—involved in the emergency response, including local child protection staff. Many evacuated community members have contacted me to express their thanks and gratitude to Communities' staff and volunteers, like Phil and Angela who texted me to say, according to my notes —

Overall a fantastic facility, individuals commitment to go the extra mile is throughout and you should be very proud of what has been achieved, not only here, but at the evacuation centre too.

Graham also texted to say, according to my notes —

Hi Sabine, just to let you know we are finally at home. We got the all clear and left the facility. To say the staff have been outstanding is an understatement, Especially Mark, what an amazing person he is.

The emergency support continues, and I am proud as Minister for Community Services to see the dedication of the staff and volunteers in supporting our local community. To the Wanneroo community I say, as a member: this state government will stand with you and will support you throughout the recovery journey. We've got this, Wanneroo.

COUNCIL MESSAGES — CONSIDERATION ON DAY OF RECEIPT

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.22 pm]: I move —

That for the remainder of this year so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the day on which they are received.

This is a normal procedural motion that is put in place usually at the end of the sitting year. It will simply allow us to deal with any messages from the other place forthwith. I do not expect any messages from the upper house today, but if there are any, this motion makes provision for that procedure to take place.

Question put and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — TEMPORARY ORDER — SITTING HOURS

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.23 pm]: I move —

That the following temporary order applies for 2024 —

- (1) The house will meet on Tuesdays at 1.00 pm.

- (2) If the house is required to sit beyond 7.00 pm on a Tuesday evening, such as to require a dinner break, the Speaker will advise the house of this before question time on that Tuesday.
- (3) Standing orders are suspended accordingly to the extent necessary to effect these arrangements.

Again, speaking briefly, this motion will put in place for 2024 the amended sitting times we have enjoyed this year. As members will be aware, our Tuesday sittings have been amended, including an earlier starting time at 1.00 pm and a conclusion at 7.00 pm. If there is a requirement to sit beyond 7.00 pm, there are arrangements for a dinner break to be announced by the Speaker on that sitting day. I thank the manager of opposition business and the Leader of the Liberal Party for agreement that we will continue with these arrangements for 2024.

Question put and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — TEMPORARY ORDER — DIVISIONS

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.24 pm]: I move —

That, until the end of 2024, the following temporary order in relation to divisions applies —

- (1) Standing order 137 be amended in suborder (2) by deleting “will not leave the House and”.
- (2) Standing order 139 be replaced by the following —

Procedure for division

139. When a division has been called for —

- (1) Strangers will withdraw from the Chamber.
 - (2) The Speaker will state the question and direct members to exit the chamber and re-enter through the door behind the Speaker’s Chair.
 - (3) The Speaker will direct the “Ayes” to pass to the right of the Chair and be marked off as they pass by a Clerk at the Clerks’ Table and the “Noes” to pass to the left of the Chair and be marked off as they pass by a Clerk at the Clerks’ Table.
 - (4) The Speaker will appoint at least one Teller for each side.
 - (5) The Speaker will order the division bells to be rung for two minutes.
 - (6) After passing the Clerks’ Table members will either resume their seat or leave the Chamber.
 - (7) After the two minutes have expired, voting will continue until either the Tellers agree and advise the Speaker that all members present have voted, or until a period of one minute has elapsed from the last member to record a vote.
 - (8) After counting the votes the Tellers will sign their respective lists, and the Speaker will declare the result of the division.
- (3) Standing orders 138, 140 and 141, in relation to divisions, remain unchanged.
 - (4) Standing orders are suspended accordingly to the extent necessary to effect these arrangements.

This means that the arrangements we have had in place this year with regard to the operation of divisions will continue for the 2024 sitting year.

Question put and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — TEMPORARY ORDER — E-PETITIONS

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.25 pm]: I move —

- (1) That the recommendation of the fifth report of the Procedure and Privileges Committee, *Electronic petitions*, that the Assembly adopt a new temporary order regarding e-petitions, be agreed to for a trial period as follows —
 - (a) the trial shall commence on Tuesday, 13 February 2024;
 - (b) any posted period for an e-petition must not extend beyond Sunday, 11 August 2024;

- (c) the last date for presentation of an e-petition by a facilitating member shall be Thursday, 15 August 2024; and
 - (d) the trial period, and the temporary order, shall expire on Friday, 16 August 2024.
- (2) That the Procedure and Privileges Committee be requested to review the operation of the temporary order upon conclusion of the trial period.

We had discussions with the opposition after receipt of the Procedure and Privileges Committee report tabled in the house a couple of weeks back. One of the report's recommendations was to trial electronic petitions in this chamber. It is my understanding that the Western Australian Legislative Assembly is one of the few chambers around Australia that does not accept e-petitions. The other place does; I understand it has done so for a while. The motion before the house will simply allow us to trial e-petitions in the first half of next year, after which a review will be referred to the Procedure and Privileges Committee for report back to the Parliament. Depending upon the outcome of that review, I expect that electronic petitions will probably become something of a regular procedure in this chamber.

Question put and passed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — TEMPORARY ORDER — MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Motion

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Leader of the House) [12.26 pm]: I move —

That, as a trial until the end of 2024, the following temporary order in relation to members' statements applies —

- (1) Standing order 147 be replaced by the following —

Members' statements

- 147.** Once in each sitting week, at a time decided by the Speaker, the Speaker will call for statements by Members, and up to eight Members, other than a Minister, may make a statement not exceeding two minutes each.
- (2) Standing order 101 is amended in "Members' statements" by deleting "90 seconds" and substituting "2 minutes"; and by deleting "Maximum of 6 members" and substituting "Maximum of 8 members".
- (3) Standing orders are suspended accordingly to the extent necessary to effect these arrangements.

Members' statements are traditionally held in this place prior to the lunch break on Thursdays. It has been the case, as I understand it, for a very long time that six members' statements can be delivered within that time allocation before the lunch break on Thursdays. This temporary order will be relevant for 2024 and will also include tomorrow, if the house agrees with this motion. Basically, it means that up to eight members' statements will be able to be taken before the Thursday lunch break. Those eight statements will be of two minutes' duration each, not 90 seconds, as is the current arrangement. The net change is two additional members' statements and a time extension of 30 seconds for each statement. I think this is a good move; it will give more members an opportunity to deliver statements and also allow members to not have to race through their statements, as we have seen in the past. The former member for Albany (Mr P.B. Watson) was probably one of the most recalcitrant offenders in that regard, and would fit as many words as possible into his statements; I recall him once reading out the names of actors in a theatrical production he had attended! Two minutes, I think, will give members an opportunity to deliver members' statements on their electorates in a much more useful way. I am happy to move this arrangement for 2024, but I remind members that if it is passed, it will be in operation from tomorrow, so from tomorrow we will have up to eight statements.

Question put and passed.

PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [12.30 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 is to amend the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act 1967, the Petroleum Pipelines Act 1969 and the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1982 to provide

a framework for permanent geological storage and transport of greenhouse gases, and provide for the exploration and production of naturally occurring hydrogen as a regulated substance. These amendments are important for our state's future and will allow the resources sector opportunities to decarbonise. The greenhouse gas provisions in the bill will provide property rights for greenhouse gas storage formations, acreage release provisions, and exploration, retention and injection licences, and will address injection, site closure and long-term liability requirements in the state's onshore and offshore petroleum legislation. In addition, the bill will also amend the onshore and offshore pipeline legislation to provide for the transport of greenhouse gas substances via pipelines.

Currently, the injection and permanent storage of greenhouse gas in underground geological formations is regulated in Western Australia for only the Gorgon gas project under the Barrow Island Act 2003. The Gorgon project is the world's largest commercial carbon capture and storage project and will continue to be regulated separately via the Barrow Island Act 2003. The state's existing suite of petroleum legislation has been adopted as the vehicle for the greenhouse gas regulatory regime because greenhouse gas storage uses similar technologies to that of the petroleum industry. Many of the provisions in the bill follow the existing petroleum legislative regime, including work program-based acreage releases and title types, as well as allowing for existing well integrity and environment plan regulations to be amended to include greenhouse gas operations following the passage of the bill.

Similar to the Gorgon project, the state will assume long-term liability for the stored greenhouse gas. Approaches to the treatment of long-term liability and other matters differ between the states and the commonwealth; however, there is a common recognition that government will ultimately assume long-term liability for stored greenhouse gas after the government is satisfied with the behaviour of the stored greenhouse gas, and the completion of the site closure process. Once greenhouse gas injection operations have ceased and the site closing work program has been completed, the greenhouse gas injection licensee can apply for a site closing certificate. The greenhouse gas injection licensee must also lodge a specified security to cover the estimated costs of post-site closure monitoring. A greenhouse gas injection licence will remain in force until the minister has granted the site closure certificate. The minister will have up to five years to decide whether a site closure certificate will be issued and may refuse the application. The decision point for the state to assume liability will be at least 15 years after the site closing certificate is issued. The state will also assume long-term liability if the licensee has ceased to exist.

As part of this staged approach to the transfer of long-term liability, if stringent conditions are satisfied over at least a 20-year period after injection ceases, the state will take over common law liabilities. The conditions for acceptance of liability will centre on the stored greenhouse gas substance behaving as predicted and that there is no significant risk that the greenhouse gas will have a significant adverse impact on geological integrity of the formation, the environment, human health or safety.

The introduction of greenhouse gas storage and transport legislation is one of a number of options for the state's response to climate change. As part of this response, the bill will provide the legislative certainty to encourage greenhouse gas storage projects and the development of the greenhouse gas storage industry.

The other core objective of the bill is to enable the exploration and production of naturally occurring hydrogen, which will be achieved through the introduction of the new concept of "prescribed regulated substances" in the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Resources Act and the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act. Naturally occurring hydrogen shares many similar properties to petroleum and, accordingly, the government considers the petroleum legislative framework to be appropriate to regulate the exploration and production of naturally occurring hydrogen that is intended to be prescribed in regulations as a "regulated substance". Under the proposed framework, a regulated substance will be defined as a naturally occurring substance in a natural geological formation and will be prescribed by regulations. Once a substance has been prescribed in regulations, the existing petroleum framework will be made available for the exploration and production of regulated substances through the granting of additional rights; that is, existing petroleum titleholders and prospective petroleum title applicants may elect to apply for additional rights to pursue a regulated substance or, alternatively, may continue their existing petroleum operations unencumbered by these amendments.

A further general amendment will allow additives to be added to petroleum. This amendment will formally permit additives such as anti-corrosive chemicals and safety-related odorants to be added and will also have the benefit of permitting the blending of hydrogen with petroleum and the conveyance of a blended substance. The government is aware that industry is interested in exploring for naturally occurring hydrogen as an alternative source of energy, and this government is committed to reducing emissions. Together, this amendment will assist both government and industry to progress towards the goal of reaching net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Further amendments proposed in this bill occur in the form of general or operational amendments. Amongst other things, these amendments seek to expressly recognise "care and maintenance, decommissioning and rehabilitation" as specific and distinct phases of a petroleum operation; introduce the "polluter-pays principle" to ensure titleholders are financially responsible for any escape of petroleum; enable third party processing of petroleum by revising requirements for the ascertainment of the quantity of petroleum; revise the manner of approving the underground storage of petroleum; and introduce amendments to facilitate electronic transactions.

The amendments within the bill align with the plans and actions in the *Western Australian climate policy* and the greenhouse gas emissions policy for major projects to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Greenhouse gas storage projects will help to position this state as a leader in low-emission technology, and assist Western Australia to make a significant cut to its greenhouse emissions.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms M.J. Davies**.

PETROLEUM AND GEOTHERMAL ENERGY SAFETY LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [12.38 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Safety Levies Amendment Bill 2023 is intended to be debated cognately with the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. The Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill requires consequential amendments to be made to a range of existing legislation and includes amendments to the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Safety Levies Act 2011. This bill makes provision to extend the administration of these levies to include greenhouse gas operations and regulated substances as proposed in the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. Under the Constitution Acts Amendment Act 1899, bills imposing taxation must deal with only the imposition of the tax. As the safety levies are in the nature of a tax, it is necessary to have a bill to continue the authority to impose the safety levies and that is what the Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Safety Levies Amendment Bill seeks to achieve.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms M.J. Davies**.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr J.N. Carey (Minister for Housing)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [12.40 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

When Western Australia's tenancy laws were last revised more than a decade ago, renting was seen as a short-term transition to home ownership. Now renting is more likely to be a longer-term housing solution for a growing number of Western Australians who find themselves renting for longer and maybe even for life. This substantial shift in the way that Western Australians live needs to be reflected in the residential tenancy laws that balance the needs of tenants and landlords.

The law reforms contained in this bill will adjust and create new rights, protections and responsibilities for parties to residential tenancy agreements in Western Australia and follow a national trend of modernising rental laws to help tenants feel at home in their rental property while, at the same time, recognising the landlord's asset. The Cook government recognises the importance of protecting the investments of the many property owners who contribute much needed supply to the housing market. The changes implemented through these reforms will strike an appropriate balance between landlord and tenant rights and provide a strong framework for parties to negotiate and manage mutually beneficial tenancy relationships.

The bill will deliver reform for a range of priority areas that were identified through extensive consultation with members of the Western Australian tenancy community. The review commenced in 2019 with the release of a consultation paper that examined a number of issues across the life cycle of a tenancy and outlined options for reforms to the Western Australian Residential Tenancies Act 1987.

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

Mr J.N. CAREY: I do hope the Minister for Environment gets his nap!

More than 350 submissions were received from landlords, tenants, members of the real estate industry and bodies representing those groups. The submissions identified dispute resolution as a key issue, with 92 per cent of

respondents supporting reform in this area. We heard from tenants that they want to feel better protected and at home in their rental property, and we heard from landlords that they need to be able to maintain control of their rental property. The review considered the need to develop a residential tenancy dispute resolution process that is fast, fair, delivers consistent outcomes, is accessible and gives all parties a voice. We heard members of the community say that attending the Magistrates Court to resolve disputes can be slow, stressful and inconvenient, sometimes leading them to agree to outcomes just to avoid going to court. At the heart of these reforms is the establishment of a new dispute resolution procedure for certain residential tenancy disputes, such as bond disputes and matters related to pets and minor modifications. Under the process, the Commissioner for Consumer Protection will issue a written determination based on evidence provided by both the landlord and tenant. This written determination will be provided to the parties, who will have the option to appeal to the Magistrates Court if they are unhappy with the decision. A body of the commissioner's de-identified reasons for decisions will be made public, providing clarity to all parties regarding how similar disputes may be resolved in the future. This approach will ensure fair, transparent outcomes without the stress and inconvenience of attending court.

The bill will also introduce a streamlined process for release of tenancy bonds that will ensure fast, fair disposal of the bond, especially when parties do not agree. Currently, all bond disputes that cannot be agreed by the parties must go to the Magistrates Court. This is time consuming. Consumer Protection has heard from tenants who choose to not fight for their bond money because they are too stressed or intimidated to go to court. Under the new process, either party may apply for the bond to be released and when there is a dispute or no response from the other party, the bond dispute will be referred to the commissioner for determination. This new process will reinforce the fundamental rule that the bond is the tenant's money, held for the benefit of the landlord, who needs to establish their entitlement to claim any part of it.

It is no secret that rents have been increasing and many tenants find it challenging when their rent increases every six months. This bill will help those tenants by reducing how often rent can be increased from once every six months to once every 12 months. Furthermore, tenants who roll onto a new lease in the same property will now be considered as having a continuous tenancy agreement, so that their rent cannot be increased within 12 months of the previous increase, even if a new lease has begun. This reform will create certainty and stability for tenants to plan their finances and will bring Western Australia into line with most interstate jurisdictions.

Another reform that will improve rental price stability and certainty is prohibiting the solicitation of rent bidding by landlords and property managers. Rent bidding, which refers to tenants offering increasing amounts of money to secure a rental property, is a problem that we have heard a lot about recently because it drives up rental prices and contributes to rental unaffordability. To help prevent rent bidding, this bill requires that rented premises be advertised or listed for rent at a fixed amount only and not in a range, and that landlords or their agents may not ask or encourage tenants to offer above the advertised rent. Penalties apply for breach of this provision to reflect its seriousness.

As I stated earlier, tenants are increasingly renting for longer and more are renting for life. This means that tenants need to be able to feel at home in their rental premises, because for many, this will be their home for a number of years. This bill introduces two important reforms that will allow tenants to make the rental premises more like home. It will be easier for tenants to make minor modifications to the rental premises, with the consent of the landlord who will be able to refuse only in certain circumstances. This reform will allow tenants to do small things to help them feel safe and comfortable, like installing a flyscreen or a vegetable garden. Importantly, landlords will be able to refuse or place conditions on the making of a modification where it is appropriate to do so. For example, the landlord may require that certain modifications be undertaken by a qualified tradesperson or may refuse where making the modification would disturb asbestos. Other more discretionary reasons for refusal, such as that making the modification would cause additional maintenance costs to the lessor, would require the landlord to make an application to the commissioner confirming the refusal. I want to assure landlords that tenants will not be able to make changes to the rental premises without permission and will be required to restore the premises to their original condition unless the landlord agrees otherwise.

We have all heard heartbreaking stories in recent times of tenants having to give up their pets in order to find a rental property. Under these reforms, which will no longer be the case. Tenants will be able to keep pets in the rental premises unless the landlord has a good reason to refuse. A landlord may refuse the tenant's request to keep a pet without an application to the commissioner for certain reasons, such as keeping pets is not permitted under strata by-laws. Other reasons for refusal will require an application to the commissioner, for example, that the premises are not suitable for keeping a pet. As with minor modifications, landlords will be able to impose conditions on consent, like the number of pets and where the pet may be kept.

The Cook government has heard landlords' concerns that the pet bond, which can only be used for fumigation, needs to be expanded in scope to be used for things such as damage or extra cleaning caused by the tenant keeping a pet. These reforms will allow the pet bond to be used for these purposes, as well as fumigation.

In the current tight rental market, the sad reality is that some tenants feel afraid to assert their rights for fear that the landlord will take retaliatory action, such as giving a breach notice, increasing the rent or taking action to terminate

the tenancy. This bill introduces strengthened provisions whereby the tenant may apply to the Magistrates Court for relief when the tenant reasonably believes that the lessor has acted in a retaliatory way and that action is wholly or partly motivated by the tenant or their representative exercising their rights or making a complaint. This provision will empower tenants to assert themselves in the circumstance that their landlord may have done the wrong thing.

Residential tenancies fulfil a vital role in our community, especially for its vulnerable members who are struggling to find affordable housing. Recently, we have seen the rental market become more challenging and more expensive. We see a need for rental price certainty and stability. We see tenants with pets forced to give them up for adoption to find a new rental home. We see tenants wanting more freedom to feel at home in what may be their long-term residence. The amendments in the bill empower tenants to achieve these goals while balancing the need for the landlord to maintain control of their asset.

I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms M.J. Davies**.

CASINO (BURSWOOD ISLAND) AGREEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Mr R.R. Whitby (Minister for Racing and Gaming)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the Minister for Racing and Gaming.

Second Reading

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Racing and Gaming) [12.53 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The *Perth Casino Royal Commission: Final report* was tabled in Parliament on 24 March 2022. It is a priority of the state government to give effect to the recommendations of the commissioners as supported by the state government response tabled on 16 March this year. With regard to the funding of the activities of the regulator, the Gaming and Wagering Commission of Western Australia, the report identified several key matters, which I will summarise.

The Casino Control Act commenced on 1 July 1984 and provides the legislative foundation for the state to enter into a casino complex agreement, a “state agreement”, to develop a casino, and operate a casino under a licence, in accordance with the terms of the state agreement. The parties to the agreement are the minister of the Crown for the time being charged with the administration of the Casino Control Act acting for and on behalf of the state of Western Australia, Burswood Nominees Ltd and Burswood Resort (Management) Ltd. The Gaming and Wagering Commission is not a party to the state agreement and so it is not able to directly influence the casino gaming licence fee. The Perth Casino Royal Commission concluded that this is an appropriate arrangement because the regulator should not be able to unilaterally determine the casino licence fee that funds the regulator, and nor should the regulator be involved in negotiating with Perth casino about that fee.

The Casino Control Act makes provision for the funding available to the Gaming and Wagering Commission to administer the act, which consists of “moneys from time to time appropriated by Parliament”, “casino gaming licence fees” and “all other moneys lawfully received by, made available to, or payable to, the commission”. It also provides that a public company entering into a state agreement with the minister must undertake to pay tax to the state, and that the agreement may provide for the review, by the minister, of both the rate of tax and the amount of the licence fee.

The act provides that the casino gaming licence fee is to be paid directly to the commission, to be used for its costs in administering the Casino Control Act and regulating the casino. The Casino Control Act does not specify the manner in which casino gaming licence fees and tax rates should be calculated, or the factors that should be taken into consideration when they are reviewed. The state agreement sets a base fee and provides for an annual increase of the fee in line with CPI. The Perth Casino Royal Commission found that this has resulted in an imbalance over time; that is, changes to the state agreement in the interest of growth and diversification of casino gaming, with corresponding increases to the casino’s gaming revenues and tax revenue have occurred. However, commensurate increases to the casino gaming licence fee to augment regulatory effort to match increased and evolving gaming activity and the associated risks have not occurred. The annual licence fee was last adjusted by the second supplementary agreement to the state agreement in 1990. At that time, the “base rate” of the annual licence fee, referred to as the “Annual Specified Amount” was increased from \$400 000 to \$1.4 million. In line with that fee and the CPI increase calculation, the annual fee payable in the coming year would be \$3 494 834.

The bill before Parliament today ratifies the seventeenth supplementary agreement to the state agreement contained at schedule 1 of the Casino (Burswood Island) Agreement Act 1985 which was agreed to by the parties and executed on 9 November 2023. The seventeenth supplementary agreement amends the state agreement to achieve two important outcomes. Firstly, it increases the “base rate” of the annual specified amount of the casino gaming licence fee to \$12 million from the next payment anniversary date, which is 24 December 2023. It is the government’s view that it is no longer appropriate for the significant shortfall in the costs for the Gaming and Wagering Commission

to regulate the casino to be supplemented by consolidated revenue and that the casino gaming licence fee should be adjusted to achieve full cost recovery. This increase will allow the regulator to fund an uplifted program of regulatory activity for casino operations resulting from the findings and recommendations of the Perth Casino Royal Commission.

While the annual CPI calculation increases to the casino gaming licence fee continues to apply, the second significant outcome of the seventeenth supplementary agreement is that it provides for the minister, having regard to the reasonable cost of the commission, to adjust the casino gaming licence fee. This amendment reflects the findings of the Perth Casino Royal Commission that the funding of the regulator in a set amount adjusted by CPI may not ensure adequate funding for the regulator, where the nature of the operations at Perth casino is changing and increasing in complexity over time.

The Perth Casino Royal Commission concluded that there is a need for the periodic review of the casino gaming licence fee in order to ensure that it is sufficient for the purpose of casino regulation and that the regulator should advise the minister about its conclusion on the sufficiency of the casino gaming licence fee. This amendment is specifically provided for under the Casino Control Act and allows the minister to make appropriate changes to the casino gaming licence fee without the requirement for further negotiation with the casino operator.

Finally, the opportunity has been taken to make minor administrative amendments relating to outdated terminology and contact information for service of notices. Although these funds can be applied only to the costs of administering the Casino Control Act and regulating the casino, it is a substantial step in ensuring appropriate oversight of Perth's only casino.

The government is very proud to have achieved this important step in securing adequate funds for the Gaming and Wagering Commission to make significant improvements to its regulatory resources. I commend the bill to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Ms M.J. Davies**.

GUARDIANSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (MEDICAL RESEARCH) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from 21 June.

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.00 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on this excellent piece of legislation, which I am fully in support of, and I thank the Attorney General for his tireless efforts in bringing this legislation back before the Parliament. As every member in this chamber knows, I am passionate about putting in place the architecture, regulatory framework and environment in which our world-class WA medical researchers can continue to discharge their passion and commitment so that we can maintain our world-leading health system in Western Australia. We would not be able to maintain that world-leading health system were it not for the work of those medical researchers. That work has been under some duress as a result of a sunset clause that had been inserted into a previous version of this legislation—a sunset clause that we now have to deal with under this legislation—which called into question the viability of research projects being undertaken.

Through my previous contributions, people know how proud I am of the work that this Cook government, and the former McGowan Labor government, has done to elevate and promote medical research in Western Australia. Since 2017, the sustainable health review, which mentions research more than a hundred times as a key priority for any future government, but particularly for a future WA Labor government, has been part of the indelible architecture of our health system. At a cabinet level, for the first time, we have a minister responsible for medical research. As a result of the work undertaken by the Premier when he was Minister for Health, we have had the introduction of the future health research and innovation fund. The then McGowan and now Cook Labor government has put medical research front and centre of our efforts to make sure that our world-class health system continues to evolve, adapt and respond to challenges.

I will outline the history of this legislation. The previous government attempted to amend the Guardianship and Administration Act. A report was completed in 2015. Unfortunately, because of that government's ambivalence to medical research, former Attorney General Michael Mischin did not progress that report.

Dr A.D. Buti: They did nothing.

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: Missing in action, some might say. No progress was made on that report, which would have had the support of the then Labor opposition, because we know how important medical research is.

Let us fast forward to 2017. We had the state election and the change in government in 2017, and we had Hon Roger Cook as Minister for Health and Hon John Quigley as Attorney General. Through their concerted efforts, they were able to take up the work that the public servants, researchers, academics and stakeholders had done—albeit in the context of COVID and therefore passed as a matter of expedition—and were able to introduce sound, sensible, well thought through, well-argued and well-reasoned amendments to the Guardianship and Administration Act that would expedite critical medical research.

Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming weight of evidence that supported the introduction of that legislation, in order to get that legislation passed, because we did not have the numbers in the upper house, the government of the day had to agree to an amendment to introduce a sunset clause. That sunset clause now exists; like a sword of Damocles, it is hanging over our hardworking medical researchers, who are unsure about what the future might hold for them. That sunset clause was the work of none other than Michael Mischin. I might have said subsequently, because I have raised this issue before, that perhaps the architect of that was Hon Nick Goiran, but I was wrong; the architect was Hon Michael Mischin. Today, we are in a situation whereby this is the latest piece of the puzzle that the Cook Labor government is introducing in order to facilitate and expedite medical research.

Let me go through some of the things that I have already flagged. Members will recall that during my first term as the member for Mount Lawley, I had the opportunity to travel to Israel with the then Minister for Health, now Premier, Roger Cook, specifically with a view to determine how we could increase innovation translation and venture capital funding for our medical research ecosystem here in Western Australia. As members know and as I have said often, we have world-class researchers and world-class research institutes in WA. Consequent upon that travel, the then Minister for Health returned to Western Australia and advocated in the cabinet to the Treasurer and the Premier for the establishment of a future health research and innovation fund. Just this morning, I had the opportunity to attend a terrific conference that is taking place in the member for Scarborough's electorate at the Rendezvous Hotel. The conference is being held by the Society for Mental Health Research, which is an incredible organisation. This is what the society says on its website about medical research. I am quoting Professor Stephen Wood, who is listed as the president, although that might have recently changed. He said —

Research is fundamental to developing and implementing effective mental health interventions and initiatives to address these issues.

That is, issues of mental health. He continues —

Thanks to medical research, mortality and recovery rates in cancers and cardiovascular diseases have significantly improved, there are earlier and improved diagnostics and safer, more personalised treatments that have transformed the lives of people living with these diseases.

The Society for Mental Health Research is on a mission to promote the same sort of success in the field of mental health. It was an incredibly rewarding experience to see early and mid-career stage researchers coming together to collaborate at the society's forty-third national conference with a view to identifying people and place and how we can tackle the mental health challenges that are presented in a post-COVID environment. I was very honoured to open that conference today. While I was there, I was able to talk about the sustainable health review, which I will come back to shortly.

I want to talk about the work of the future health research and innovation fund. I acknowledge the chair, John Van Der Wielen, and the work he does in that difficult and rewarding role. The fund was established by the WA government to improve the health and wellbeing of Western Australians, improve the efficiency of the WA health system, increase the economic prosperity of WA and advance our state's standing as a centre of excellence in health and medical research, innovation and commercialisation. Since the fund was established, more than \$100 million in grants have been awarded to support health and medical research and innovation in Western Australia. We can expect to see more exciting programs and initiatives funded, with approximately \$250 million available as part of the FHRI fund over the next four years. In fact, just yesterday, the Minister for Medical Research announced that the FHRI fund has awarded grants of more than \$9.9 million for innovation research, of which a substantial proportion has been dedicated to mental health research. The FHRI's innovation challenge in child mental health was launched in 2021 and has now come to an end, with the announcement of three program winners awarded more than \$4.4 million. I will identify those three programs so that people can see how important this medical research is and how it touches the lives of everyday Western Australians. The first program involved a simple genetic test to reduce medication variations for children and youth living with mental health conditions. The second was a child and youth mental health project to improve treatment access in rural and regional WA, something that I know the member for Moore is passionate about, in collaboration with health service providers. The third was an innovative digital and culturally appropriate app to help improve hearing and mental health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These three terrific projects, involving cutting-edge medical research, will only benefit the consumers of health services in Western Australia.

The future health research and innovation fund's distinguished fellows program has also awarded grants to two outstanding and innovative researchers to lead substantial and high-quality research programs in WA. One of those recipients, Associate Professor Kathryn Modecki, is a world-class mental health researcher. She will share her experience with participants at the conference and will talk particularly about advanced quantitative methods and family mental health. She is listed as the keynote speaker for Friday. Even today, we can see that the steps taken by the then McGowan and now Cook Labor governments to promote, prioritise and encourage investment in medical research are bearing fruit and coming to fruition.

As I said, I have been concerned about this issue. I beg the Attorney General's forgiveness for hassling him on so many occasions to check on the progress of this legislation, but my constituents and the stakeholders who contacted

me were anxious to make sure that the legislation would be introduced, be passed and take effect before the irresponsible sunset clause that the opposition put in comes into effect in April next year. I have already corrected the record insofar as the former Attorney General is concerned, and I hope that that satisfies Hon Nick Goiran in the other place. The Attorney General will remember that I raised this matter as a grievance back in November last year. In fact, on that occasion I was able to highlight the great work that Spinnaker Health Research Foundation was doing. For those who do not know, Spinnaker is the medical research unit that is attached to the South Metropolitan Health Service. Each of our HSPs has a research institute attached. Great work is being undertaken by Spinnaker and its CEO, Dana Henderson, and chair, Andrew Friars. I also want to acknowledge the chair of the South Metro Health Service, Associate Professor Robyn Collins. When I raised this grievance, I acknowledged the work they had done. I also want to acknowledge the work done by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, which regularly engages with the WA government. The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine has been instrumental in assisting the Minister for Health in tackling ambulance ramping and the challenges presented by the post-COVID environment in which all health systems are operating.

I pay particular gratitude to the chair of the college; Peter Allely, who has frequently worked with the minister; and Daniel Fatovich, who is in the Speaker's gallery, for the work they have done. I also acknowledge Professor Tony Celenza and, from my own electorate of Mount Lawley, Stephen Macdonald. They are great advocates. It is fair to say that they have been on my case to make sure that we get this done! These people had raised their concerns about needing to ensure that the legislative framework is in place to guarantee that the work of the people whom they represent—the early career, mid-career and experienced researchers—can continue, not just for their benefit but for the benefit of the entire community of Western Australia. When I raised this grievance with the Attorney General, I made the point that even within the time that the original iteration of the legislation had been operating—between 2020 and 2022—we had already seen some terrific results as a result of the change in the research landscape. The example I gave was a comparative effectiveness trial that found that outcomes were much more positive for patients over 65 years who did not receive treatment involving medicine than for those who did. WA is now one of the leading sites around the country for this trial. This research will save and improve thousands of lives around the world every year.

While I was making my grievance to the Attorney General, I also raised issues that had been brought to my attention by eminent jurists, including none other than Hon Eric Heenan, QC. He was among the authors of an article headed “Keeping ethics at the forefront of medical research: The Guardianship and Administration Amendment (Medical Research) Act (WA) 2020”. I know that Hon Justice Heenan has also raised this legislation with the Attorney General. The voices on the side of the debate that supported the initiative undertaken by the McGowan government with the now Premier, the then Minister for Health, leading the charge with the Attorney General—the legislation that was introduced in 2020—are the same voices who expressed their concern to me about the sunset clause that had been imposed by the Legislative Council. We can understand why. The development of this legislation was not rushed. It did not happen overnight. It was deliberate, thoughtful and long in the planning. In fact, it had been on the desk of Hon Michael Mischin, but nothing had happened. The introduction of the legislation did not prompt anxiety, even though it was introduced in the midst of the COVID pandemic.

It is fair to say that my criticism of Hon Nick Goiran in my grievance to the Attorney General prompted a response. This legislation was introduced in the Legislative Council and we are now dealing with it in the Legislative Assembly. I was interested to read Hon Nick Goiran's response, because he quickly rushed to his own defence, saying that he was now supportive of this legislation and saw it as an important development, and that it was disingenuous for me to suggest that he was opposed to the legislation. I note that his contribution was made on 16 March, just so members can refer to it in the *Hansard*. The difficulty I have with that proposition is that when he said that he was speaking in support of the legislation, Hon Nick Goiran in fact spent a large proportion of his contribution criticising the legislation.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr S.A. MILLMAN: He said that he supports the legislation, but we need to look at the context in which he said that. We cannot just look at the fact that he said that he supports the legislation; we need to look at everything he said. He criticised the legislation. It is as though he wanted to say that he did not support it but was required to say that he did. It would be great to see him express some unequivocal support for the legislation rather than the bet each way that we saw in his contribution back in March. Fair cop, he was not the shadow Attorney General at the time the sunset clause was introduced. He was the shadow Attorney General at the time that I made the grievance and I thought that he would perhaps stay the shadow Attorney General. There was no point in me condemning the actions of the former shadow Attorney General, Hon Michael Mischin. As far as his contribution to public life is concerned, I think the Liberal Party determined what it thought when it put him last on its upper house ticket for the North Metropolitan Region. Even though he stood for re-election, he had no prospect of success. There was no point in me condemning Hon Michael Mischin because the Liberal Party had taken care of that for me without any hassle. As for Hon Nick Goiran, he was the shadow Attorney General at the time. Perhaps appropriately, rather than having Hon Nick Goiran, a lawyer, as shadow Attorney General, the member for Vasse prefers that a non-lawyer be the shadow Minister for Justice, being Hon Tjorn Sibma. He also made a contribution in response to my

grievance, I suspect to ensure his preselection. I think Hon Tjorn Sibma will do well. It speaks volumes that the Liberal Party would rather have a non-lawyer as their shadow Minister for Justice than have Hon Nick Goiran as its shadow Attorney General.

I will come back to the legislation. I come back to this point, because I was talking about the shadow cabinet. When members think about the fact that we have had now Hon Stephen Dawson as Minister for Medical Research, a minister whom I know is passionate and excited about this particular portfolio, and before him the Minister for Health was also Minister for Medical Research and before that Roger Cook was Minister for Medical Research, we can see that the McGowan Labor government, since its election in 2017, and now the Cook Labor government, has always put a great priority on medical research. It is a shame that the opposition does not have a shadow Minister for Medical Research. It would be a great move on its part if it were to embrace the importance of medical research. Opposition members talk a lot about how important the health system is to them. They should understand, as anyone who has any experience in this field of endeavour knows, that you cannot continue to maintain a world-class health system unless you have the world-class medical research that underpins that. If the Liberal Party is genuine about its commitment to medical research, which it says it is, but actions speak louder than words, perhaps it should introduce a shadow Minister for Medical Research.

The final point is that this is something the government has always been committed to. I want to refer back to the sustainable health review, which is the blueprint for the Cook Labor government and before that the McGowan Labor government, to address the disastrous state of public health in Western Australia that we inherited from the former Liberal–National government. As I said yesterday when I was talking about vocational education and training, a lot of the problems that we have inherited are flowing into the system now. They have been a long time coming to maturity. We were left with a legacy of neglect from the previous Liberal–National government. Opposition members will argue next year that we have been in office for eight years and so every problem that is presented in the community should have been addressed by now, but that fails to understand and appreciate the fact that a lot of these issues take a long time coming through into the system. I come back to the sustainable health review, which was our first effort to really put our health system on a solid foundation, because medical researchers will tell members that we cannot have a children’s hospital that has asbestos in the roof and lead in the water. That is one of the good things about having medical research. We know that asbestos in the roof and lead in the water is no good for you. The sustainable health review was one of the initiatives that we put in place to make sure that we put our health system on a solid foundation. As I said before, the emphasis in that document on research was right at the front. More than 100 times in many of the strategies and the enduring recommendations that had been put through refer to research funding, research translation, alignment, collaboration, working across jurisdictions, working between health service providers and working with consumers and clinicians—research, research, research. We cannot have that ecosystem and a research-orientated environment unless we have the legislative framework in place that encourages, promotes and fosters that research endeavour. That is why I have spoken often about this legislation and our medical research fraternity. I am incredibly grateful for the work they do serving the community of Western Australia and for the work they did to help us steer through the COVID pandemic, but I know we have to make sure that we take away the barriers that prevent them from doing world-class research and great work. Let them go to it. Let them direct their energy, effort, passion and commitment for the benefit of all Western Australians. That is why I have absolutely no hesitation in supporting this legislation. I commend them for their work and I commend the Attorney General for bringing this legislation before the Parliament. I hope that this legislation will mark the moment in time when the Liberal and National Parties recognise the importance of medical research and perhaps will have a shadow Minister for Medical Research. With that, I commend the legislation to the house.

MR J.R. QUIGLEY (Butler — Attorney General) [1.24 pm] — in reply: I rise to thank members for their contributions to the Guardianship and Administration Amendment (Medical Research) Bill 2023. Members will recall that we last considered this bill in June before the house rose for the winter recess, it having been introduced and thoroughly scrutinised by the other place in March. When we last spoke about this bill, the Leader of the Opposition indicated his support for it and noted there had previously been extensive scrutiny of the bill’s purpose and intent in the other place. We had discussed at some length the impending sunset clause that affects the current ability for researchers to enrol people in urgent research in specific circumstances but it bears repeating. If this house does not consider and pass this bill before April next year, new research projects under part 9E of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 would not be able to commence in Western Australia and would have missed out on more vital medical research funding. Although the fact is that the bill will pass, the longer we wait, the more we prolong any uncertainty and potential reluctance for researchers to invest their time and expertise in our state.

Having made both those points, I will now turn to respond to the comments made by members when we last debated this bill. Firstly, I thank the member for Riverton for his contribution to the debate on this bill and in particular for sharing with the house his valuable insights from his perspective as a very experienced doctor. The member touched on the practical difficulties facing medical researchers, who often go above and beyond to provide the best care to patients in emergency situations. Contributions from members with practical experience like this always serve to remind us of the importance of our work here in Parliament.

I also acknowledge the member for Cockburn's comments on the bill, in which he outlined the importance of medical research and the public health system and how it drives innovation in all fields of medicine and health care. I noted the member for Mirrabooka's comments on the history of the bill and appreciate her indicating her support for the legislation. I thank the member for Mount Lawley for his fine contribution in which he outlined his support for the bill. The parliamentary secretary's contribution to the debate on this bill that I have introduced were always considered and erudite, and I take this opportunity to acknowledge his analysis of the bill's genesis and provisions.

I now turn to the contribution of the opposition. I again thank the member for Moore for his comments and his support for this bill. During his speech on the bill back in June, the member for Moore noted the important ethical considerations that underpin the bill's genesis and the cautious and conservative approach that the legislation takes to medical research. As the member pointed out, the legislation was initially part of a package of urgent legislation passed by the former Parliament during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. It was amended in the Legislative Council, resulting the addition of the recurrent review clause and a sunset clause that we are dealing with in this bill. I note that those amendments were supported by the government. Following its passage, the 2020 act was subject to a review by the Standing Committee on Legislation in the other place. That committee undertook extensive consultation and produced a comprehensive report. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work done by that committee in respect of the 2020 act that has led us to the bill before the house today. Following that, the Department of Justice conducted the first statutory review of the 2020 act. The review was governed by the project reference group, which comprised a number of subject matter experts, resulting in the production of a widely disseminated discussion paper and a review report that I tabled in this place in February this year alongside the introduction of this bill. The recommendations in that report are reflected in this bill.

I also take this opportunity to remind the house that the next review of this important legislation is scheduled to commence in April 2024, and then in 2027 and so on at three-yearly intervals. I hope that these recurrent review requirements give some comfort to the Leader of the Opposition, and, indeed, all members, that this bill will strike an effective balance between protecting those vulnerable members of our community and permitting medical research to continue in Western Australia. It will be continually revisited to ensure that the act is acting appropriately. I commend the bill to the chamber.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by **Mr J.R. Quigley (Attorney General)**, and passed.

**CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AMENDMENT
(PROTECTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ANIMALS) BILL 2023**

Second Reading

Resumed from 30 August.

MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach) [1.31 pm]: Good afternoon. I rise in support of the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. Protecting animals in law enforcement is not just a moral imperative; it is also a critical aspect of ensuring the effectiveness of our agencies. Among the various animals employed in law enforcement, horses and dogs play particularly significant roles serving as vital partners in crime prevention and detection. This speech will explore why it is essential to protect these animals in law enforcement, focusing on their contributions in roles such as bomb detection, drug detection and general duties, and, more recently, as care animals.

Our law enforcement agencies have long recognised the value of animals in their operations. These highly trained and dedicated animals such as horses and dogs serve as indispensable partners in maintaining public safety, enhancing officer capabilities and saving lives. However, their service comes with risks, making it imperative to establish strong protections for these loyal companions. I will speak to the multifaceted reasons why we must prioritise the wellbeing of animals in law enforcement with a specific emphasis on horses and dogs and their roles in emergency services.

I have seen horses attacked with darts and ball bearings thrown under them to hurt their hooves in the attempt to bring down their riders. I remember watching a particularly vile individual extinguishing a cigarette on the hind quarter of a horse in an attempt to get the horse to throw the rider. I have witnessed a dog handler in tears holding his dog in his arms after it was attacked with a knife whilst protecting the officer. I am glad to tell members that the dog survived.

Horses have a rich history in law enforcement dating back to ancient civilisations. I believe the Western Australia Police Force mounted section is nearly 100 years old. Today, it continues to serve a critical role in various capacities, including crowd control, search and rescue and patrolling urban and rural areas. However, their significance extends beyond traditional duties, making their protection essential.

I remember an overnight camp in Toodyay during the Avon Descent, which starts in Northam, many years ago when a large group of mounted section police and their horses were used to apprehend disorderly offenders and drunken individuals. An officer feels a sense of courage from the warmth of a giant horse's skin on their left shoulder when charging into a violent crowd. They grow within themselves. It is a unique feeling. I have experienced it. It is one I have not felt since leaving the job and may never experience again. This is one of my memories about our police horses that I hold with such fondness. They give you a sense of safety when they are standing behind you. I do not think any other member of the house has ever experienced that.

Horses are invaluable in managing large crowds during protests, parades and public events. Their imposing presence and mobility allows law enforcement officers to maintain order while minimising physical confrontations. Horses are well suited for search and rescue missions in rugged terrains that vehicles cannot access. We saw that recently when the mounted section was used to search for young Cleo up in Carnarvon. They are brilliant. Their agility and endurance can make a difference in locating missing persons or providing aid in disaster-stricken areas. Police horses often engage in community policing, fostering positive interactions between officers and the public. Their agility and endurance can make a difference. This builds trust and bridges gaps between law enforcement and the communities that they serve. I can remember seeing a particular patrolling incident when the horses were working in Morley. I watched people bring out drinks for the riders on a particularly hot day. The community loves our horses.

When I was working at Morley police station, we had a major issue with daytime burglaries. I set about an operation to stop the onslaught. That operation was led with horses from the WA police mounted section. Within 24 hours, we went from in excess of 50 burglaries to nil. Further to that, we apprehended three offenders with the help of the mounted section and its horses. When horses work, they have a reassuring effect on our community. I have seen them deployed into highly agitated communities, and, within hours, the heat is taken out and a sense of calm returns.

Equine therapy is something new. Equine therapy programs for veterans and individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder have demonstrated the therapeutic benefits of horses. These programs aid law enforcement personnel in dealing with the mental and emotional toll of their duties. This has been recent. Those involved in the mounted section have known about this for a very long time. Despite these invaluable contributions, horses in law enforcement face numerous challenges, including the risk of injury in crowded situations, as I mentioned earlier, and there is a need for appropriate care and retirement plans for these animals. I will move on.

Dogs have been companions to humans for thousands of years and their integration into law enforcement is a testament to their intelligence, loyalty and adaptability. I was around when the first dogs were introduced into the Western Australia Police Force. As a result, I have witnessed their impact on policing over the last 30 years. Within the realm of Western Australian law enforcement, dogs are primarily used in bomb detection, drug detection and general duties. Bomb detection dogs, also known as explosive detection dogs, are trained to identify and alert their handlers to the presence of explosives. Their keen sense of smell and ability to trace even tiny amounts of explosive materials is invaluable in safeguarding public spaces and preventing potential disasters. A good explosive detection dog has the value of around half a million dollars.

I have a quick story. Members will laugh about this with amusement and embarrassment. One of the New South Wales Police Force explosive dogs ran off during one of the recent New Year's Eve firework displays. Basically, he was scared of firecrackers! He was missing for several days before he was found. This was an explosive detective dog that was scared of firecrackers. I laugh!

Dogs are instrumental in locating illegal drugs. They are a critical component in our war on drugs. Their protection and speed in detecting narcotics help law enforcement agencies in apprehending drug traffickers and keep harmful substances off our street. They can find speed anywhere. They are phenomenal. It is not that bad here in Australia, but I am aware that in America, the drug cartels put bounties of millions of dollars on arranging the demise of drug-detection dogs. We have not seen that here in Australia, but I have no doubt that with the calibre of the dogs we have, it will come in the future.

General duties dogs encompass a wide range of roles, including search and rescue, apprehending suspects and tracking. Their versatility and adaptability make them indispensable partners in law enforcement. I have seen dogs track in excess of 30 kilometres in a night and apprehend an offender from a stolen motor vehicle. They are phenomenal. The need to protect dogs and horses in law enforcement is evident with the risks they face during their duties, such as potential exposure to dangerous substances—I have seen acid thrown at animals—physical injuries during operations, and the toll of a high-pressure environment on their wellbeing.

Police dogs save lives. To prove that statement, I will give an example of when one saved my life. I was working in the vehicle crime unit, which was tasked with apprehending car thieves and offenders who used vehicles in the execution of violent crimes. On one particular night, we had been chasing a particularly talented car thief who was stealing high-performance vehicles. My partner and I tracked this individual to a location near Coogee. We lost him in the residential area and, as a result, we called on one of the first police dogs, Rex, and his handler. In the ensuing hours, between my partner, me and Rex, we ended up cornering the offender in a garden shed. I went to follow the offender into the shed, but as I entered the shed he had armed himself with a set of long-bladed garden

shears and attempted to attack me. Not being proud, I took the better course of valour and retreated out of the shed. I took up a position and called for help. Rex and his handler appeared in seconds. After some advice from Rex's handler, I climbed up onto a neighbouring pergola for safety and to watch Rex go to work. I observed his handler call out to the offender on numerous occasions, asking him to come out, but he refused, becoming more agitated as he realised he could not escape. The handler let Rex go. Rex raced into the shed without any fear or hesitation. Over the next 30 seconds, the shed walls bent and bellowed and rocked side to side like a cartoon. There was screaming and barking and the offender ran out with Rex hanging onto his backside, taking him to the ground. I remember jumping down from the pergola and handcuffing the offender and looking down the side of the house. There was Rex, prancing down the footpath like he was a clever dog, with his handler playing with him. I recall, on reflection, what a loving bond the pair had. I believe 100 per cent that there is an ethical argument for protecting animals in law enforcement, and it is paramount. Those animals serve willingly, often placing themselves in harm's way to ensure public safety and to protect our police. As a society, we have a moral obligation to ensure their welfare and provide them with the care and respect that they deserve.

Animals in Western Australia significantly enhance the effectiveness of our officers and agencies. Their unique capabilities, such as the acute olfactory senses of the dogs—basically, they can smell anything—and the mobility of horses, provide our law enforcement with tools that cannot be replicated by technology alone. I can assure you; no dancing robot will ever replace them. Our police and other agencies that work alongside animals, especially dogs and horses, enjoy improved public relations. The positive interactions between officers and their animal partners can help bridge the gap between law enforcement and the communities they serve, fostering trust and cooperation. This is real community policing. Officers who work with animals in law enforcement often form deep bonds with their partners. The emotional support and companionship provided by animals can help officers cope with the stress and trauma associated with their work.

The financial investment in training and maintaining animals in law enforcement is substantial. Protecting those animals ensures that taxpayers' investments are maximised, as healthy animals that are well cared for are more likely to have longer and productive lives. While the case for protecting animals in law enforcement is clear, several challenges must be addressed to ensure their wellbeing. I know WA police invest in rigorous training for officers working with animals to mitigate risks and ensure the safety of both officers and animals. The investment in dog handlers and officers in the mounted section is significant. I believe it costs in excess of \$250 000 to train a handler and a general purpose dog. I believe we currently have 16 working dogs. I am not 100 per cent sure on those numbers, but it is around that figure. I know it is harder to become a dog handler or a mounted officer than it is to become a detective, and not all applicants are successful.

Adequate veterinary care is essential to maintaining the health and wellbeing of animals in law enforcement. Routine check-ups and immediate treatment for injuries are crucial. Establishing retirement plans for animals is vital. Our horses go to agistment; we find good homes for our dogs. The retirement plans should include sustainable housing, medical care and provisions for adopting retired animals into loving homes or retirement facilities. Engaging with the community to raise awareness about the importance of animals in law enforcement can garner support and resources for their protection.

The protection of animals in law enforcement here in WA, particularly horses and dogs, is a moral and practical imperative. The animals serve as loyal, dedicated partners, enhancing the capabilities of our police, while fostering positive relationships with the communities they serve. I remember in the past, one of our beloved horses died suddenly and there was outrage about the way the animal was disposed of. I remember the anger of the rank and file within the police towards the inspector, who made the decision based on cost, rather than an appropriate and respectful burial for the animal. As a society, we must ensure their wellbeing, by providing them with the care and protection they need to continue their invaluable service. By addressing the challenges they face and implementing robust protection measures, we can honour the contributions of those remarkable animals and uphold the principles of justice.

Members, I have PTSD. I have a disability. For the last three years I have been training Chey, in partnership with Charlotte Smithson, one of the finest animal trainers in Perth.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr M.J. FOLKARD: I have been training as Chey's handler, to qualify him as a service dog and to help me with my PTSD. Chey passed his assessment three weeks ago, and has qualified as an assistance dog. I may bring him into the house over the next couple of weeks. Chey was one assessment away from passing his public access test, which will qualify him to be a service dog, allowing him to enter any place and to accompany me in any place at any time. He is of great assistance to me. When I have a bad day, the pressure therapy he does for me is outstanding, and I believe his help has kept me as a functioning member of Parliament.

In conclusion, can I say: animals in policing work. Animals used in the rehabilitation of those with PTSD work. Animals in our community make us safe and strong, and we have an obligation to protect them. With that, I commend the bill to the house. Thank you.

MRS M.R. MARSHALL (Rockingham) [1.49 pm]: I would like to acknowledge the member for Burns Beach for that contribution and for sharing his personal and interesting stories. I am sure we all appreciate Rex; I hope he got some extra pats and treats after that incident! I, too, rise to support the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. I would like to thank the Minister for Police for introducing this legislation that, once passed, will introduce new offence, penalty and court-ordered restitution provisions for assaulting, injuring or killing law enforcement animals.

I think this one is a no-brainer. The brave and loyal animals that serve alongside our law enforcement officers risk their lives to ensure the safety and security of our communities. We should reciprocate that loyalty by providing them with the legal protection they deserve. Predominantly dogs and horses, police animals play a crucial role in crime prevention, search and rescue operations, and maintaining public order. Their acute senses, unwavering loyalty, and unmatched agility make them indispensable allies for our law enforcement agencies. Police dogs, for example, are trained to detect drugs and explosives, and to track down suspects and runaway criminals. Their exceptional sense of smell makes them an essential asset in locating missing persons and solving crimes. Similarly, police horses provide a powerful and visible presence in crowd control situations, ensuring the safety of both officers and the broader public. I can think of many occasions where police horses have provided a safe presence at events I have attended, including school leavers, which I would have been at this time 12 years ago.

Our law enforcement animals are not mere tools; they are living beings that form a deep bond with their human counterparts. Unfortunately, in the course of their duties, police animals are often subject to assault when used to apprehend offenders. Over recent years, we have seen or heard about assaults, injuries and even killings of these animals. These acts not only endanger the lives of these animals but also hinder the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in carrying out their duties. Like many people in our community, I was deeply disturbed to see the footage of an anti-lockdown protester punching a police horse in 2021.

Across the country, assaults on police dogs, in particular, have become more frequent. Offenders are aware of the integral role police dogs play in apprehending criminals, so they deliberately target them to avoid capture. I am certain that any resulting injury or loss of a law enforcement animal would affect the morale of the entire law enforcement unit and also undermine the safety of the community they serve. Unfortunately, the current laws do not provide adequate protection and deterrents. Penalties for such offences are often minimal, and court-ordered restitutions do not reflect the true value of the animal or the impact of its loss on law enforcement operations.

According to statistics from the Western Australia Police Force, there have been 32 charges relating to 26 assault incidents against law enforcement animals since January 2015. Currently, there is no specific sanction for a person who assaults, injures or kills a law enforcement animal. In the past, WA police have charged such offenders under the Criminal Code for obstruction of a police officer or disorderly behaviour in public, and the fines in those cases have tended to range from \$200 to \$1 500. To highlight the severity of this issue, I would encourage members to consider the case of an offender who injures or kills a police dog. The penalties under current laws may be limited to a fine or a short prison sentence, which hardly aligns with the gravity of the offence. Additionally, the financial compensation awarded as restitution may not cover the costs associated with acquiring, training and maintaining a highly skilled law enforcement animal.

The Prisons Act 1981 and the Young Offenders Regulations 1995, which are still in force, provide that if an inmate assaults a prison dog carrying out its duties, that inmate is deemed to have assaulted the officer handling the animal. However, these provisions do not extend to police and other law enforcement animals. To address these inadequacies, this bill will introduce new offence, penalty, and court-ordered restitution provisions specifically tailored to crimes against law enforcement animals.

I believe that this is an important piece of legislation, for four compelling reasons: deterrence, recognition of sentience, protection of law enforcement operations and financial compensation. These stricter laws will serve as a deterrent by discouraging individuals from engaging in acts of violence against our law enforcement animals. The fear of severe consequences is a powerful motivator and it is crucial that our legal system reflects the gravity of these offences.

Our laws must acknowledge the sentience of law enforcement animals. These animals experience fear, pain and distress, and our legislation must reflect this reality. By recognising their status as more than mere property, we affirm our commitment to treating law enforcement animals with the respect and consideration that they deserve. Law enforcement animals are essential to the success of many police operations. An attack on these animals is not just an attack on them individually, but a direct assault on the effectiveness of our law enforcement agencies. Stricter laws will ensure that the loss or injury of a law enforcement animal is met with appropriate legal consequences and will safeguard the integrity of police operations. The court-ordered restitution should be proportionate to the value of the law enforcement animal and the impact of its loss on law enforcement operations. This includes accounting for the cost of acquiring, training and maintaining these animals. Adequate financial compensation is not only a matter of justice, but also ensures that law enforcement agencies can continue to support and invest in these valuable assets.

This bill will create a two-limb offence provision: firstly, assaulting, injuring or killing an animal that is being used by an officer; and secondly, assaulting, injuring or killing an animal on account of it being an animal that is used, trained or maintained for use by officers. The penalty is seven years' imprisonment, with a summary conviction of three years and a fine of \$36 000. In circumstances of aggravation or killing an animal, the imprisonment term is 10 years. The bill will also empower courts to make an order for restitution for the reasonable costs of the treatment, care, rehabilitation, retraining or replacement of a police animal that has been assaulted, injured or killed.

As I have outlined, law enforcement animals provide an invaluable service to our great state. I would like to take this opportunity to also show my appreciation and support for other service animals—in particular, Angus and the Dogs for First Responders group. A Rockingham constituent and friend of mine for many years, Karen Hollings, recently established the Dogs for First Responders group, which aims to prevent the mental health deterioration, self-harm, PTSD and suicide of first responders by using an additional and alternative form of specialised support with therapy dogs and experienced first responders. I am sure we can all agree that those who serve our state on the frontline, be they paramedics, fire and emergency servicemen and women or police officers, are some of the best people imaginable, who work in tough conditions and experience a significant toll on their mental wellbeing.

Dogs for First Responders is a frontline mobile service that provides canine-assisted mental health first aiders, who provide opportunities for first responders to decompress and talk about their thoughts and feelings in a non-judgemental way and in a safe space, with people who have walked the same path and who get it. Having met Karen and Angus many times and heard their success stories—where sometimes a first responder just needs a hug from Angus to feel the benefits on their mental health—I have a stronger appreciation for service dogs and the valuable tool they are in our community. I have also heard success stories from the other side, having spoken with first responders. I would particularly like to give a shout-out to a paramedic and friend, Crystal, who is one of the best people on this planet, but who recently shared a story with me about being on shift at Fiona Stanley Hospital when she was encouraged to go outside to the car park to meet with Angus and the Dogs for First Responders team. She shared that that five-minute interaction had an invaluable calming effect on her mental health by allowing the joy of interacting with an animal and the feeling of being recognised and supported for the work she does.

In conclusion, the introduction of new offence, penalty, and court-ordered restitution provisions for assaulting, injuring or killing law enforcement animals in Western Australia is not merely a legal necessity, but a moral imperative. These animals—our unsung heroes—deserve our protection and recognition for the sacrifices they make in ensuring our community safety and security. By enacting these stricter laws, we send a clear message that crimes against law enforcement animals will not be tolerated. I thank the minister again, and I commend this bill to the house.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 6776.]

VISITORS — BELDON PRIMARY SCHOOL AND RON AND NOLA McNALLY

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.00 pm]: I would like to welcome some guests to the gallery. On behalf of the member for Hillarys, I welcome the year 6 students from Beldon Primary School to the Speaker's gallery today; welcome to all of you. On behalf of the member for Dawesville, I also welcome Ron and Nola McNally from Dawesville. I think we have some other guests coming a little later.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

HOUSING — CENTRE FOR NATIONAL RESILIENCE

911. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

I refer to the Wanneroo residents forced to flee their homes as a result of the bushfires raging in Perth's north and who sought refuge in the 500-bed Bullsbrook quarantine facility following an agreement brokered between the state and federal governments. I also note the current housing crisis gripping our state with a 0.7 per cent rental vacancy rate in Perth and more than 30 000 people on the social housing waiting list. Has the Premier approached the federal government about using the facility as a temporary housing solution for Western Australians unable to put a roof over their heads?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

The experiences of the east Wanneroo residents in the face of what was an extraordinarily fierce bushfire must have been incredibly harrowing. Many of them lost property and some have lost homes. That would have a devastating impact on their lives. I am very proud that we have a government that leads an extraordinary core of emergency services personnel who were able to not only provide a response in relation to the bushfire emergency, but also wrap their arms around these families and provide them with temporary accommodation and assistance, particularly through the Premier's relief payment. On the initiative of my government, we approached the federal government about using the Bullsbrook facility to house, on a temporary basis, firefighter personnel and families

that were temporarily displaced. I want to place on the record our appreciation to Prime Minister Albanese and Minister Gallagher for moving heaven and earth to just make it happen. They really did us proud in helping us stand by the people of east Wanneroo.

The Bullsbrook facility was a very short drive from the actual fire zone. From that perspective it provided a unique opportunity to utilise that facility—which is extraordinary, too, by the way; it is the most amazing facility—to provide temporary accommodation. Even when it came to small domestic animals, it was able to accommodate them as well. It was a unique set of circumstances. It was close by; these people do not need supports beyond their basic means such as food, accommodation, washing their clothes and so on, but otherwise they were in good spirits and continue to live independently. It was a very unique set of circumstances and we are very pleased to have used the facility.

In relation to the question from the member, it would not be a suitable facility for long-term housing accommodation. It would not be a suitable facility, particularly for people who are homeless, given the level of supports that they would need. One of the things that struck me about the Bullsbrook facility is just how isolated it is. That was by design; it was to be a quarantine facility. We did not want COVID leaking out of it, so to speak. It was wonderful that we were able to use that facility for this very unique set of circumstances. It would not be suitable as a homelessness facility, and we have not made a request on that basis.

HOUSING — CENTRE FOR NATIONAL RESILIENCE

912. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. The facility itself is on Tonkin Highway, a bit over a half an hour out of the CBD, and if transport is an issue, why will the Premier not get the Minister for Transport to put a bus on?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please. Members!

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Madam Speaker, I appreciate from the Leader of the Opposition that what he is describing simplistically is —

Ms S. Winton interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Wanneroo, your interjections are becoming repetitive. Please allow the Premier to speak uninterrupted.

Mr R.H. COOK: The member for Wanneroo is going back to her old ways!

My government is doing everything we can and throwing everything at it, to quote the Minister for Housing, in relation to housing supply and homelessness support. We have invested \$2.6 billion in housing and homelessness initiatives as part of our evidence-based Housing First approach. This will deliver 4 000 homes. A total of 1 600 social homes have already been built with another 1 000 under construction. In this year alone, \$225 million has been allocated to support homelessness initiatives, including supporting more than 130 organisations to deliver critical homelessness services. As many members will be aware, we brought in nation-leading planning reforms and we have done a range of things such as our headworks grants funding arrangements. We continue to look at ways that we can increase the availability of land and bring that on sooner. We are doing everything that is possible for housing in Western Australia. Our \$10 000 short-stay housing accommodation initiative is providing incentives to people who are using short-term accommodation rental services and it will bring more houses into the market to make sure that we ease the pain and the strain on our housing industry and housing market at the moment. We are doing the things that count. We are doing those things that will be effective.

We appreciate that the simplistic argument that the Leader of the Opposition raises may be attractive to him, but they are not solutions for what is a complex problem.

ENERGY — COST-OF-LIVING RELIEF

913. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Premier:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to reducing the cost of living and keeping electricity bills affordable.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house as to how this government is supporting households feeling the cost-of-living pressures leading to the festive season?
- (2) Can the Premier outline how this government will supply Western Australians with clean, reliable and affordable energy for generations to come?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) As members would know, my fundamental priority is to keep the economy strong and help those who are doing it tough. The issues that many members of the community face today are an example of the opportunity that we have to assist people with the cost of living. It does not matter whether it is in relation

to interest rates or other cost-of-living pressures. We know that people in the community are doing it tough. Last week was a scorcher; it was a hot week. Air conditioners would have been cranked up. We know that there are pressures on people's power bills as well. That is why it was wonderful to visit Jeanette and Lindsay McLeod on Sunday afternoon to talk to them about the next stage of our cost-of-living initiatives, which is the second stage of our household electricity credits. More than 1.1 million households will benefit from the \$400 household electricity credit. The first instalment of \$200 was delivered in July. I am very pleased to say that from 1 December, \$200 will be taken off every household's electricity account. There is no better time for it. Not only is it hot, but Christmas is coming. As Jeanette McLeod said, and I was really impressed with this, "Being able to direct that \$200 away from my Synergy bill towards my six grandchildren—that is an absolute bonus because that is where it should be going." I love that sentiment. We want grandkids and every kid in Western Australia to have an extra special Christmas this year by benefiting from the \$200 household electricity credit. As Minister Johnston recently explained, last week, our electricity demand hit its peak. A record 4 037 megawatts of generation demand came onto the grid. I want to commend the minister and his team for making sure that the grid was able to deliver for Western Australian consumers.

Last week, at the energy transition summit, I announced an investment of \$708 million towards expanding and improving WA's main electricity grid. This is the biggest investment in the south west grid in over 10 years. Of this investment, \$575 million will build high-capacity lines between Perth and Three Springs, a new 330-kilovolt double circuit transmission line between Malaga and Pinjar and new 132-kilovolt lines, and reinforce our existing infrastructure in the northern suburbs. If any members want to know what I said just then, do not ask me; talk to the Minister for Energy!

Why is this investment in the connected system necessary? It is because it is fundamental to harnessing renewable energy and ensuring that we can go on a clean renewable energy transition. With wind and solar that are the envy of the world, the midwest region has the capacity to propel WA to become a global leader in clean energy solutions. The upgrades to the grid mean that we can draw upon that huge wealth of renewable energy potential in the midwest and make sure that we can decarbonise our south west grid and make our way forward to retire our coal-fired power stations by 2030. We are the only state in Australia that will retire all its coal-fired power stations by 2030. It is a challenge and an opportunity of which we are very proud.

There were further investments towards planning and early works in procurement of long-lead items for the next stages of the south west grid upgrade. It includes outcomes such as upgrades that will allow us to bring renewable energy into the industry hubs in Kwinana and Collie. These are all important investment and planning opportunities to make sure we can take Western Australia on a clean energy future, because at the end of the day, we want Western Australians to enjoy clean, affordable, sustainable electricity so we can continue to enjoy the standard of living we have today.

Visitors — North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils

The SPEAKER: Before I give the call to the Leader of the Liberal Party, on behalf of the member for Central Wheatbelt, I would like to welcome a delegation from the North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils, otherwise known as NEWROC, who are in the public gallery. Welcome to Parliament today.

MENTAL HEALTH — AT-RISK CHILDREN

914. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Mental Health:

I refer to the increasingly frantic lengths that parents are being forced to undertake to get appropriate mental health support for their at-risk children. Does the minister believe it is acceptable for a mother to have to email Perth Children's Hospital vision of her son's attempt to end his own life to receive assistance, or for another family with a 10-year-old son to be turned away from hospital five times, despite him attempting suicide several times and being a danger to his family?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I would remind the Leader of the Liberal Party that she is not an expert in mental health diagnoses or intellectual disabilities or behavioural disorders. Neither am I. That is why it is not appropriate for us to second-guess clinical decisions. The Leader of the Liberal Party raised a particular circumstance. The family is well known to Perth Children's Hospital; their son has been seen and assessed multiple times, and the hospital has determined that it cannot provide him with the most appropriate care and that the National Disability Insurance Scheme is the framework under which he can be better supported.

I think the member needs to be very cautious about second-guessing clinical decisions. I have enormous sympathy for the family and many other families who have highly complex children with behavioural issues, and we are seeing more and more of them. It is the role of the National Disability Insurance Scheme to support those children and their families. It is appropriate that they are seen by the appropriate consultants and that they are assessed, and that has happened every single time that has been presented.

We have significantly expanded mental health supports under this government and we continue to significantly expand mental health supports for children and adolescents, understanding the increasing complexity of the cohort. I understand that parents are desperate and feel like it is a last resort. I understand that, but many considerations are made when making a recommendation to admit a child into an inpatient mental health unit. I am not there on the ground and I am not an expert, and I will not be second-guessing those considerations.

My understanding is that the family was provided with an appointment with a paediatrician I think today or yesterday. The Child and Adolescent Health Service has been reaching out to that family to provide support and to help engage other external providers to put some supports around that particular family.

Certainly, mental health is different from behavioural issues. They are different. We are putting significant resources into supporting youth with mental health issues, and the NDIS has been significantly expanded to support children and their families with behavioural and intellectual issues.

MENTAL HEALTH — AT-RISK CHILDREN

915. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Mental Health:

I have a supplementary question. When will the outstanding recommendation for reconfiguration of ward 5A be complete?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

The Leader of the Liberal Party is conflating two completely different issues; that is fine.

The SPEAKER: Minister, if that is the case, then the supplementary is probably out of order, if it does not relate to the first question.

WESTPORT

916. Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to planning and building the generational infrastructure required for the years to come.

Can the minister outline to the house how this government's Westport project will provide the essential support for Western Australia's strong economic growth in the decades to come, and can the minister inform the house how this government's commitment to transformational infrastructure projects such as Westport and Metronet compares with the short-sighted priorities of the Liberal and National Parties?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

As we know, the state Cook Labor government has a plan to build a new port in Kwinana. It is a once-in-a-generation, once-in-a-century decision.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: This plan is all about making sure that Western Australia is prepared to continue its role as the trading capital of the nation. We represent over 40 per cent of the nation's exports and our container trade continues to go from strength to strength. We set about doing a very detailed plan to facilitate a new port in Kwinana. Today, we released an outline of where the new port will be and how it will operate. There will be a container terminal parallel to the shoreline on the site currently occupied by the Kwinana Bulk Terminal. A new Kwinana bulk terminal will also be built. There will be a new breakwater to provide enhanced protection for the port, major upgrades to the freight roads leading to and from the new container port including Anketell Road, and duplication of the freight line between the container terminal and Cockburn, and, significantly, the plan identifies the three intermodal terminals that will be upgraded or created to support movement of freight. This is a long-term plan to make sure that Western Australia continues to be an efficient trading state across the nation.

Of course, all the work that has been undertaken has been to assess the different options that were put forward. We had to assess exactly where the port should be located. There was a multi-criteria analysis to ascertain the economics and environmental impacts, and particularly on this project the location for the new port. We chose the port that would have the least environmental impact in relation to dredging and, of course, impact on seagrass. It also makes sure that we plan the land side. Too many times, work has been done to look at a port's impact on only the maritime or marine infrastructure. This is about the land-side logistics. That includes Anketell west, upgrades to the Kwinana Freeway with the widening of the Kwinana Freeway between Anketell and Russell Roads and the widening and supporting of extra capacity on the road, and it also looks at further planning and the development of Anketell to the east, as well. It is very complicated and sophisticated planning. This is about making sure that WA can continue to create the jobs of the future. We are determining a new port—a port that will serve generations to come and make sure that we have the capacity to continue our role as a major trading state of the nation. We can compare that with the previous government's plan—Roe 8 and 9 and selling the port. That was its plan.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: It was going to sell the port.

Mr R.S. Love: We weren't going to sell it.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Yes, it was. It spent \$25 million. I recall that it created a data room to allow investors to come in and look at the economics of Fremantle port. That is what it was going to do—sell the port and build Roe 8 and 9.

Mr R.S. Love: We were not selling the port.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: That was the former government's plan. It was always its plan. Our plan is to have a port in government ownership. We will create the port of the future to make sure that Western Australia can continue its role as the major trading state of the nation.

Government members: Hear, hear!

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — SILVER CHAIN

917. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the WA Country Health Service taking over the operation of 11 remote area nursing posts currently managed by Silver Chain.

- (1) How and when will that transition occur?
- (2) Can the minister guarantee that no community will see a reduction in services or operating hours as a result of this transition, and that the level of staffing for in-person services will be maintained or increased?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I cannot give the member exact details around timing. What I can tell her is that Silver Chain came to us and handed it over; it did not want to do it anymore. We are in a position in which in order to maintain the service, the WA Country Health Service is going to step in. Like many services across regional and remote Western Australia, they are very expensive to run, but people have a right to access this service. It will be a staged approach around the handover of those sites. I do not have that information in front of me, but it will be a very staged approach. The aim, of course, will be to maintain services. Hopefully, all those staff will want to come over to WACHS, bearing in mind that some of those staff have worked for Silver Chain for some time. It will be their choice about whether they want to come over. The approach we are taking is to maintain that service by filling the gap as the private provider no longer wishes to remain. We will do that with a staged and steady approach.

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — SILVER CHAIN

918. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question.

Thank you, minister. Given that regional health services are already stretched in their capacity to staff services, can the minister guarantee that the FTE allocation will remain the same or be increased for all those services?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

I can certainly say that that is the aim. That is certainly the aim. There has been no reduction in WACHS services when we have been able to provide the staff. Some of these towns are very small, with a very limited population. It will be a determination about whether a staff member wants to come over to the public health service. The aim is to maintain the service. That is why we took it over.

HEALTH — ELECTIVE SURGERY

919. Mr Y. MUBARAKAI to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's initiative to address elective surgery waiting times in Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on this government's reforms to the delivery of elective surgery and elective procedures in Western Australia?
- (2) Can the minister outline how these reforms will optimise the delivery of emergency care for all Western Australians?

Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Jandakot for the question and for highlighting to the chamber an issue that affects many Western Australians. I was very pleased to be with the Premier earlier this week at Osborne Park Hospital to outline the government's commitment to maintaining what we are seeing in elective surgery—that is, a sustained surge of activity. This year, in three particular months, we have performed a record number of elective surgeries across the health system. We have never done that many in those months ever

before in the system. That is an outstanding result post-COVID. We know that there are now 8 600 fewer patients on the waiting list than in May last year. That is across both elective surgery and elective procedures. As I said, this is an absolutely unprecedented level of activity across our hospitals. It is what happens when we make smart and strategic investment decisions and work in a coordinated way across the health system. It is a result of increased FTE. It is a result of 571 new beds since the 2021–22 budget, which is the equivalent of a new tertiary hospital. We know that elective surgery patients have the same demands on resources as those waiting to come into the hospital through the emergency department. Whether patients are waiting to be seen or want to come in for surgery, we need beds and staff. That has also been in lock step with the ramping taskforce and the almost \$500 million worth of investment to make sure that we maximise the efficiency and work of the health system to see more people. Very creative things are being done through maintaining theatre use, weekend lists, twilight anaesthetics and managing appointments more efficiently. We are also ensuring that people are reassessed regularly so that they can be bumped up to category 2 or 1 if necessary and there is capacity to bring those forward.

I was incredibly disappointed to again hear the Leader of the Liberal Party undermining the health system and health workers, because this is a result of their work. She made some incredible claims. Apparently, the elective surgery waitlist has increased by 50 per cent during our time in office. I challenge her to show the data.

Ms L. Mettam: It's on your website.

Ms A. SANDERSON: No, that is not what it shows.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms A. SANDERSON: That is not at all what it shows. The Leader of the Liberal Party ignores the context of COVID and the incredible recovery that our health system has made. Over that period, there were small year-on-year increases, in keeping with every other jurisdiction in the world. No other jurisdiction is making inroads into elective surgery lists like we are in Western Australia. We are absolutely outperforming other states and territories. That is a huge testament to the leadership and staff on the ground. There is confusion about how it works. I sometimes wish that the Leader of the Liberal Party would pick up the phone to former colleagues who have been in this portfolio and ask what it means, what is reportable, what is non-reportable and how the lists are managed. If she asked the questions, she would get the information. She could then make a clear assessment of what is actually a fantastic outcome for Western Australians. We report exactly what is required through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare nationally. It is exactly what was reported under previous Liberal governments and under every single health minister before me. Claims that there is some kind of hidden waitlist or that there has been a 50 per cent blowout are absolutely and completely wrong, and show that she does not know what she is talking about.

IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES — STATELESS DETAINEES — RELEASE

920. **Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:**

I refer to the answer provided by Hon Don Farrell during federal question time that prior to the High Court decision releasing stateless criminals into the community, senior Australian Border Force officials had briefed local police counterparts on the possible implication of their release.

- (1) Can the Minister for Police confirm what date the Western Australia Police Force was formally advised?
- (2) Given the minister's answer in the other place on 14 November that stated notification was received on the day of the High Court decision, is it the Minister for Police or Hon Don Farrell who has misled Parliament regarding when the minister was first advised of this issue?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. The answers I give in the upper house are provided by the Western Australia Police Force. The question was: when was the Western Australia Police Force notified? That was the answer.

IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES — STATELESS DETAINEES — RELEASE

921. **Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Police:**

I have a supplementary question.

Why were appropriate measures not put in place before the detainees were released, given the advance briefing?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

The member may have misunderstood my answer. I said the answer I gave in the other place, which the member suggested was we were told on the morning, came from the Western Australia Police Force. That is when we were told.

LIQUOR RESTRICTIONS — CARNARVON

922. Ms L. DALTON to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to keeping Western Australians safe in their local communities.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the recent introduction of liquor restrictions in Carnarvon is improving outcomes in the community?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how members of the Carnarvon community have responded to the new restrictions?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Geraldton for that question and her advocacy and concern about the harm that alcohol abuse does in our community. The member is right. We had a real issue in Carnarvon earlier this year. It was of extreme concern. Members may recall that some of the numbers coming through showed that alcohol consumption was almost 2.5 times higher than the overall Western Australian rate of adult consumption of alcohol. Deaths attributed to alcohol were 151 per cent higher in Carnarvon than the rest of WA. Alcohol-related hospitalisations were 82 per cent higher in Carnarvon than the rest of Western Australia. Alcohol-related crime said were 16.2 times higher than the metro area, and alcohol-related family assaults and family and domestic violence related to alcohol was eight times higher than the case in the metro area. What was going on with alcohol abuse in the town of Carnarvon was a pretty grim picture.

The first thing I did in February against this backdrop was to go and see the liquor accord. The very first engagement I had with the community was with the business community, the licensees and the liquor accord. I can tell members that my experience—the member for North West Central was in the room at the time; she was there, too—is that it was very disappointing that the liquor accord there was basically dysfunctional and incapable of making a decision to protect the community. There was a severe lack of leadership in relation to what had to be done. There was excellent leadership from Eddie Smith, the shire president and from the police, community services and hardworking often women who pick up the pieces, but there was no leadership amongst the licensees in that community who were prepared to make the decision to protect their own community. It was a pretty appalling situation. I engaged with them. I heard what they had to say. I spoke to them. My message to them was pretty clear that if they did not step up and do something, the director of Liquor Licensing would, no doubt, do something very soon—and, indeed, that is what happened in May. Some of the toughest restrictions were introduced, including the ban on the sale of takeaway liquor on Sundays and Mondays and other volume restrictions and time restrictions on the purchase of takeaway alcohol.

Six months later, last week, I went back to Carnarvon for a check on the ground to see how things were going. I took my colleague Hon Peter Foster, and I visited and met with the incredibly hardworking Eddie Smith, the shire president, who, by the way, was attacked by certain people in that community over these restrictions in a pretty appalling way. He had to put up with a lot of nonsense. It was good to see that he was returned at the recent elections with an increased majority. Good on Eddie Smith. I met with the police who are now taking a proactive attitude to crime, not reactive and not picking up the pieces from violence in the town. They told me that Sunday went from one of their busiest days to one of their slowest days. It is a complete turnaround in what has happened in that community. It was very, very encouraging. To quote *The West Australian*, whose journalists accompanied me to Carnarvon —

Crime and antisocial behaviour in Carnarvon have plunged ...

...

... the streets are no longer strewn with broken glass ...

The town is no longer a nightmare where people could not get a full night's sleep.

Eddie Smith, the shire president, said he went to an emergency department on Saturday night and he got straight in—unbelievable! There is little doubt that crime and antisocial behaviour in Carnarvon has plunged significantly since these restrictions were put in place. We estimate a reduction in crime in the order of about 40 per cent. It proves that our actions as a government by taking responsibility and the director of Liquor Licensing stepping in has had an overwhelming positive impact on the town. It reflects on my disappointment that the local liquor accord and licensees—certain licensees in the town—were simply incapable or unwilling to make decisions that would benefit and protect the town. I can remember even the lightest touch changes proposed by that liquor accord that really would not have had an impact were still opposed by certain members of the liquor accord. We know who they were. We saw who they were. They were opposed to even the lightest touch. That liquor accord was going nowhere. It was dysfunctional. It was not doing what the community required. Eddie Smith, the chair of the liquor accord, gave up in frustration, and I do not blame him. He has been leading the charge for these changes in supporting them and I support the shire president.

The director of Liquor Licensing will continue to monitor how these changes have helped the community in Carnarvon. There may be the ability in future to seek public feedback and make necessary adjustments based on that community feedback, but, overwhelmingly, every element of the community that I consulted said these had changed Carnarvon for the better and had had a much better impact than anybody suspected they would. It is an example of this government standing up and dealing with the situation, which was very serious at the time, in terms of minimising the appalling impact of alcohol abuse. I thank the member for the question and I am very pleased to report what has now happened in Carnarvon.

LIVE EXPORT — NORTH EASTERN WHEATBELT REGION OF COUNCILS REPORT

923. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I refer to a report commissioned by the North Eastern Wheatbelt Region of Councils, a voluntary group of seven local governments in my electorate of Central Wheatbelt, revealing that the impact of the Albanese government's ban on live sheep exports for this region will be at least \$128 million in economic loss.

- (1) Does the Premier agree that it is unreasonable for these communities to lose up to nine per cent of their economic base because of a political decision by the federal Labor government?
- (2) Will the Premier meet with representatives from NEWROC to discuss this report and why its analysis is more comprehensive than the work done by his state government on the true impact on this disastrous decision by the federal government?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It is an important one about how we go about supporting our farmers who continue to do an amazing job on behalf of the economy of Western Australia—and we stand with them. Our own analysis demonstrated that there would be a loss of around about 400 jobs and that it would have an impact on that particular part of the industry of around about \$132 million if we took that completely out of the system—that is, live sheep exports. Obviously, we anticipate that the industry will adapt. We know that one thing our farmers have is an extraordinary strength of character and resilience. From that perspective, we will continue to stand by them in relation to any impacts that might occur to ensure that they know we have their backs. That is what Minister Jarvis, as the Minister for Agriculture and Food, has been taking to the federal government in relation to this issue. That demonstrates our commitment that we believe the welfare arrangements that are in place, the checks and balances that have been put in place as a result of the reforms around that are sufficient. The federal government has a mandate, and we acknowledge and respect that, but we believe this will be an unnecessary burden and one that it should reconsider.

LIVE EXPORT — NORTH EASTERN WHEATBELT REGION OF COUNCILS REPORT

924. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Premier, the second part of the question was: will the Premier meet with representatives from NEWROC to discuss this report and why its analysis is more comprehensive than the work that has been done by his state government on the true impact of this disastrous decision by the federal Labor government?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

I stand ready to meet with any members of the Western Australian community. One of the hallmarks of my leadership is that I take the opportunity to talk to people every day of the week.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr R.H. COOK: I will endeavour, where possible, to make sure I make myself available to everyone. In relation to the veracity of their report versus our report, member, that is just negative nonsense. Our report demonstrates just as much as this other report, in large part, that it will have a detrimental impact. That is something that we all acknowledge. It is not a matter of one report versus the other. We are on a single ticket here. Western Australian government and Western Australian farmers believe that the decisions the federal government is currently negotiating over are unnecessary. We stand by the farmers and by the community of Western Australia in relation to this issue.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY — TRAINING

925. Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY to the Minister for Training:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's significant investment in innovative training initiatives to address skill shortages facing local economies.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how these new initiatives such as the free bricklaying job-ready program are boosting the pipeline of skilled workers in the building and construction industry?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how these programs are allowing the construction of more homes for Western Australians?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. Suffice to say that the Cook government’s investment into training is “paving” the way for building and construction careers and “cementing” a boost for the housing supply across the state. Just last week, I met a group of bricklayers in training. I was at North Metropolitan TAFE’s Clarkson campus with the local member, Mark Folkard. Those bricklayers in training told us that after completing the bricklaying job-ready program, they had all secured apprenticeships, helping to meet the strong demand for bricklayers in the local building and construction industry.

The job-ready program is part of the Cook government’s fee-free training initiative, and was developed in consultation with Western Australian industries to deliver short, sharp training and some wraparound support for entry-level job seekers and others who want to get a taste and try to get their foot in the door with different industries. It has been an incredible success. On completion of the job-ready program, which can be as quick as three weeks, participants are directly connected with opportunities to transition into employment, to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship with a participating employer or to go into more formal training if they want to increase their skills. Since its inception, the job-ready program has had over 2 500 participants, about half of whom have secured employment in the industry that they have worked in or gone on to further training. I am pleased that about 440 of those commencements have been in the bricklaying job-ready program.

As members know, we are doing everything we can to boost housing supply and affordability in Western Australia. My job in that equation is to make sure we have the skilled labour to do the work, whether that is entry-level bricklaying or the finishing trades with cementing, tiling and the like. We are doing everything we can across the continuum. The job-ready program is available across a range of different industries to ensure that Western Australians, particularly people from the vulnerable cohorts—those who have not had any experience, or a good experience, in the workforce—can access affordable training to help them get jobs. To date, about one-third of participants have been women, about 30 per cent have been under 25 years of age and 19 per cent have been Aboriginal. Pleasingly, a quarter of the participants have undertaken training in regional areas.

One of the people we met during our visit to the Clarkson campus was 17-year-old Dylan Campbell, who had completed the job-ready program —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Ms S.F. McGURK: Dylan had completed the job-ready program at Clarkson TAFE. He went on to do a pre-apprenticeship and is now three months into his apprenticeship with ABN Group. It was great to meet him. Dylan said he was in school but he was not enjoying it. I do not imagine school enjoyed him, either. He said that he was not going anywhere, so he got into the job-ready program. He said, “Once I started laying bricks, I realised that I loved it. You get to just look at what you’ve done and after you’ve finished doing a job, it just makes you feel good.” He gave a shout-out to the partner organisations, the Housing Industry Association and Brick and Block Careers, that are helping to deliver the program. He acknowledged Rebecca at Brick and Block Careers who helped him with his job-ready program, and Dee at ABN Group who helped him to get an apprenticeship.

It was a hot day out in Clarkson laying bricks. I had a go at it.

Mr D.A. Templeman: How did you go?

Ms S.F. McGURK: Not very well. I joke, but I think I need a TAFE course in all these things. I came home with some very credible cement on my trousers; it was good.

It was great to meet Dylan. It is great to meet the people who support young people like Dylan to get a foot in the door to industries and who love their new careers, traineeships and apprenticeships. In the end, we will have more skilled Western Australians producing housing in our state.

The SPEAKER: The member for North West Central with the last question.

AT-RISK YOUTH — SAFE HOUSE — CARNARVON

926. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to my repeated calls over many months for a 24/7 safe space or safe house for at-risk youths in regional areas, reinforced by the Carnarvon —

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ms M. BEARD: — community in an article on the front page of *The West Australian* as a key priority —

Mr R.R. Whitby interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry. Members, particularly ministers, this question is addressed to one minister and I would like to be able to hear the question.

Ms M. BEARD: This is a key priority to keep children safe and off the streets and ensuring that they get to school the next day.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the provision of a safe place in Carnarvon is a priority for her government, has received appropriate funding and is underway?
- (2) Will this facility be prioritised and also provide support for family and domestic violence services for those women with boys over 12 years of age and unable to stay at the refuge?

Ms S.E. WINTON replied:

- (1)–(2) Before I start, I ask the member: has she actually written to me? She said she was concerned for a few months, so just to clarify —

The SPEAKER: Sorry. Minister, you can ask yourself rhetorical questions, but you cannot expect to ask questions. If you would like to ask questions, you need to go into opposition.

Ms S.E. WINTON: Thank you. I like the view from here much better, thank you, Speaker.

I ask that question because the member in asking the question suggested that she has been advocating for this for months. I am trying to understand whether I have missed something in my office in terms of her advocacy for this issue. I stand to be corrected, but I do not think I have heard from her. Certainly, she has not tried to engage or advocate with me directly, like many members in this place do, particularly during parliamentary sitting weeks. As minister's know, we are constantly corralled and hit-up by local members, as we should be, as they advocate for important issues in their electorate. I would like to think I make myself available to all members of Parliament, including the six opposite.

I am an absolutely big supporter of local solutions for local communities because we know it works. I have gone right around the state and of the various programs that I have seen, the ones that are most successful are the ones that are run locally with local people in charge. I know that works. I have spent a fair bit of time living in regional and remote communities. Regional people do things better than anyone else to solve the problems in their communities. When local suggestions come up as solutions to local problems, I am always keen to listen to them, but we also have to remember, particularly when we are talking about children, that they need to be lawful, they need to be appropriate and they need to have national safe principles attached to them so that we adhere to the recommendations of the royal commission. These are really fundamental and important issues. That can be a bit detailed, but they are really important things to consider when we hear from local communities that want to run local projects.

Unlike the member for North West Central who has changed her colours, there is a local champion up there in Eddie Smith. In fact, I think I spoke to him on the phone about this issue less than two weeks ago when he raised it with me. He actually picks up the phone and talks directly because he is solution-driven rather than seeking a headline. When I spoke to him, there was a fair bit of confusion because he mentioned that he had forwarded me a letter and then he realised he actually did not forward me a letter, but it has recently arrived. There has clearly been some miscommunication and the Department of Communities is reaching out to the Carnarvon Family Support Service—which is particularly keen on running a safe space as the member described—to really clarify what has actually happened. The letter that Eddie wrote suggested that the service had funding and a property. I am not absolutely clear whether that is the case. My advice today is that it does not actually have any funding, but never mind the truth getting in the way of the details. Given that there has been a fair bit of miscommunication, I have reached out to the Department of Communities to clarify the situation and see what the proposal is up to and we will go from there.

I also want to stress that the Minister for Racing and Gaming gave a really good account earlier of the significant impact that has been achieved in the town of Carnarvon with the alcohol sale restrictions. What has been really critical to that change is the sense of space and opportunity that it has provided to all the service providers and people who work on the frontline to actually support young people. Like the minister clearly outlined, I am not sure what the member's intent is with her community. She has not been supportive of initiatives like the one that the minister outlined, even though it is clearly making a difference to the very things that she is trying to advocate for right now.

AT-RISK YOUTH — SAFE HOUSE — CARNARVON

927. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Child Protection:

I have a supplementary question. Regardless of where this is at, will the minister guarantee the community that a safe space will be provided as a matter of urgency for these children?

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order please, members.

Ms S.E. WINTON replied:

What I will guarantee the member, as the local member, and the community of Carnarvon is that as the Minister for Community Services; Child Protection; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and Early Childhood Education, I will continue to work with the community on all the initiatives that they might come to me with to provide local solutions. I will continue to support existing programs like Target 120, targeted child protection and intervention services through the Intensive Family Support Service team; youth targeted Community Connect programs that actively engage with young people and transport them to safe spaces; the cadets at Carnarvon Community College; outreach and drop-in supports at Carnarvon youth services; the Carnarvon sexual assault response service; the Carnarvon financial counselling service; the Carnarvon information referral service; the Gascoyne Women's Refuge and the Murchison public tenancy support service. They are all local legends and are doing it much easier because of the efforts that we have made in restricting alcohol in the member's town.

Mr R.H. Cook: What a great way to finish!

The SPEAKER: Yes, well done, ministers.

Several members interjected.

Ms R. Saffioti: You've got some sarcasm today, Speaker.

The SPEAKER: It never works in the *Hansard* record, by the way. People will think it was a genuine compliment.

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AMENDMENT (PROTECTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT ANIMALS) BILL 2023

Second Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [2.54 pm]: I rise to contribute to the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. From the outset, I am the opposition's lead speaker for this bill in the Assembly. The shadow minister for the opposition is in the other place. I wish to highlight my support for this bill, which seeks to strengthen the protection of animals that assist officers to perform their duties, and in doing so, will introduce new offences in Western Australia for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal.

The proposed offences outlined in this bill are designed to ensure that animals used by police officers, as well as other public officers who have powers under the Criminal Investigation Act, are afforded the same level of protection as their human counterparts. This is a significant development in the fight against animal cruelty and sends a clear message that such acts will not be tolerated in Western Australia.

These changes were previously proposed in the 2018 report entitled *Statutory review of the Criminal Investigation Act 2006*. In the report, the review group stated that it supported the proposal to amend the CIA to provide that if an animal being used by an officer under section 17 of the CIA is assaulted or obstructed, then the person who assaulted or obstructed the animal is deemed to have assaulted or obstructed the officer handling the animal. Likewise, the WA Police Union called on the state government to impose harsher penalties for offenders found guilty of assaulting a police animal as part of its pre-election campaign.

The contribution of animals to law enforcement cannot be overstated. We have already heard from members in this place about that. They are not simply pets—although we hold pets very dearly—they are highly trained professionals that work in partnership with their human colleagues to safeguard the community. They are an integral part of the law enforcement team. It is important to note that the offences outlined in this bill are not limited to police dogs alone, but also cover other animals that are used by officers in the execution of their powers, duties or responsibilities. This means that animals such as horses, which are often used in crowd-control situations, will also be protected under this new legislation. The introduction of these new offences will provide a much-needed deterrent to those who would seek to harm animals that assist officers in carrying out their duties. It will also serve as a reminder to the public that animals play an important role in law enforcement and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

First and foremost, I think I speak for everyone in this chamber when I highlight that animals that work alongside our law enforcement agencies play a vital role in ensuring the safety and security of our communities, and the benefits they bring to our society are immeasurable. Police dogs, in particular, have proven to be an invaluable asset in the fight against crime. They are highly trained to detect drugs, explosives and other contraband. Their sense of smell is so superior that they can sniff out illegal substances even when they are well hidden. Dogs are also used in tracking and search-and-rescue operations, in which they can locate missing persons or suspects who have fled the scene of a crime. Horses are also used by law enforcement agencies for crowd control and patrolling. Mounted police officers have a commanding presence and can quickly respond to any situation that arises. They are especially useful at large gatherings or protests where a visible police presence is necessary to maintain order.

Currently, the use of animals by police officers and other public officers in WA is governed by section 17 of the CIA. According to this section, the use of animals is allowed as long as the animal has been trained for the specific

purpose it is being used for and the use of the animal is deemed reasonably necessary in the given circumstances. It is worth noting that the power to use animals under the CIA is quite broad. This is because the CIA encompasses various preventive and investigative powers, as well as other matters such as the use of force and maintaining public order. Therefore, the use of animals by police officers and other public officers can be quite diverse and can include a whole range of animals.

The use of animals by police officers is explicitly mentioned in legislation other than the CIA. For example, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1981 provides for the use of animals in drug detection operations. Similarly, the Terrorism (Extraordinary Powers) Act 2005 allows for the use of animals in operations related to terrorist activities. Overall, the use of animals by police officers and other public officers in Western Australia is subject to strict regulations and guidelines to ensure that the animals are used safely and effectively. Such regulations allow for the use of animals in a variety of situations, which can greatly enhance and benefit law enforcement efforts.

Currently there is no specific punishment for individuals who harm or use violence against police animals in the line of duty. In the past, we have seen offenders charged under the Criminal Code with disrupting a public officer or behaving in a disorderly way in public, resulting in fines. However, these penalties do not seem to be enough to deter offenders from committing quite clearly heinous acts.

During the minister's second reading speech, it was made clear that the new legislation will introduce two separate offences. The first of these offences relates to assaulting, injuring or killing an animal that is being used by an officer. This is an important aspect of the new law as it recognises the vital role that animals play in law enforcement. The statistics that have been provided to support this addition are quite concerning. Since January 2015, there have been 32 instances of law enforcement animals being assaulted, and police dogs are frequently attacked while assisting officers apprehending suspects. These attacks not only put the dogs at risk, but also endanger the officers and the public they are trying to protect.

The second offence relates to assaulting, injuring or killing an animal on account of it being an animal that is used, trained or maintained for use by officers. This is an important distinction as it acknowledges that animals that are used in law enforcement are often targeted by criminals.

Both these offences are designed to protect animals that are used in law enforcement and to provide a deterrent against those who would seek to harm them. The penalties for these offences are severe, reflecting the seriousness of the crime. Offenders can expect to face significant fines, community service or even imprisonment.

It is also important to note that the new bill contains provisions to safeguard individuals who engage in actions that lead to the harm or death of a law enforcement animal if they possess a reasonable justification for their actions. The bill outlines various scenarios where such justifications may be applicable, including situations involving veterinarians. For example, a vet who is treating a law enforcement animal may need to take actions that could result in harm to the animal but are necessary for its treatment or wellbeing and are undertaken in the best interests of the animal at that time.

The bill also contains self-defence provisions that are modelled on the principles of self-defence outlined under section 20 of the Animal Welfare Act 2002. These provisions will allow an individual to assert that they acted in self-defence to protect themselves against a law enforcement animal, particularly if the use of the animal is deemed unreasonable under the circumstances. For example, if a law enforcement officer uses an animal in a manner that is not in compliance with the policies, procedures and training of the Western Australia Police Force, an individual may be justified in using force to defend themselves against the animal. This could include situations in which the animal is used excessively or in a way that is not necessary or proportionate to the situation in hand.

Ultimately, the goal of the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023 is to strike a balance between protecting law enforcement animals and ensuring that individuals who may act in self-defence or who have other reasonable justifications are not unfairly penalised. This is an effort to provide clear guidelines and exceptions to offences related to harm to law enforcement animals. The bill aims to promote accountability and responsibility while also recognising the complexity of situations in which animals are employed in law enforcement.

The proposed legislation also includes provisions for issuing compensation orders against individuals who have been found guilty of harming or causing harm to a law enforcement animal. The animals that are employed by law enforcement officers hold substantial value for the state due to the critical tasks they carry out and the substantial resources invested in their training. If an animal sustains injuries, the state may be burdened with considerable expenses related to the animal's medical treatment, care, rehabilitation and retraining. Furthermore, if an animal is killed or rendered unfit for duty, the state may incur expenses associated with acquiring a replacement animal that is appropriately trained for the same purposes.

The bill establishes a mechanism through which the WA Police Force and other agencies utilising animals in accordance with the CIA can seek reimbursement for these costs from the convicted offender. This legislative measure aims to reinforce the safeguarding of animals that play a vital role in assisting law enforcement officers in the execution of their responsibilities.

Finally, I will touch on the release last year of a Corruption and Crime Commission report, *Deployment of police dogs recommendation review*. During his appearance before a parliamentary committee, the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, KC, expressed concerns regarding the use of dogs by the WA Police Force. It was highlighted at that time that officers view these dogs as a level of force situated between tasers and firearms. The commissioner criticised the use of police dogs, particularly against young individuals, and pointed out that although the policies governing their deployment may not have racist intent, they can have racist outcomes.

After conducting an examination of police dog deployments the year prior, the CCC ascertained that approximately 61 per cent of all deployments in the 2020–21 period were targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, it is important to note that these statistics are the result of a simple desktop analysis and do not necessarily reflect the full reality of what occurred on the ground. As I mentioned in the media at the time, characterising the use of police dogs as inherently racist is a stretch. Western Australia faces legitimate concerns related to crime, and it is crucial that we support our police officers in their efforts to ensure the safety of the community.

I firmly believe that the roles that officers play with police canines are continually improved in terms of the way they undertake training and review their processes. Officers find themselves in rapidly evolving and hazardous situations in which they must make crucial decisions within seconds. I do not believe it is racist; in most cases, the officers have no idea who the suspect might be—only that they are a risk to the community. It is also essential to emphasise that last year's CCC review did not uncover any evidence that handlers were culturally targeting individuals in their deployment of police dogs. However, the report recommends that the police conduct further analysis to understand the reasons behind that over-representation. I understand that is ongoing through the review and establishment of clear guidelines and protocols for the deployment of police dogs. Those guidelines are designed to prevent the misuse of police canines and promote their responsible use, as well as safeguard their wellbeing and ensure their effectiveness in various law enforcement tasks.

The benefits of police animals are immeasurable and their role in our communities cannot be overstated. They are loyal, dedicated and effective partners in law enforcement, and I am grateful for their service. I thank the minister for bringing the bill to this place. I, on behalf of the opposition, thank the minister's advisers for the support and briefings that have been provided for this bill. I have questions I will ask during consideration in detail, and I commend this bill to the house.

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [3.10 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. Ahead of the 2017 election, the former Premier made a commitment to the WA Police Union to create an offence for assaulting a police animal. That came from recommendations made in the June 2018 report of the statutory review of the Criminal Investigation Act 2006 and proposed legislative reform in that area. The Western Australia Police Force purchases, trains and uses police dogs and horses to assist it in its duties. Dogs are primarily used for tracking and apprehending offenders and detecting drugs in places and on persons. Horses are often deployed in high-visibility patrolled areas, particularly on New Year's Eve on James Street in Northbridge and in Fremantle. They are also used for crowd control—perhaps in riots. That is what they are trained for.

There is no specific sanction at this stage for anyone who assaults, injures or kills a law enforcement animal. Police have charged offenders under the Criminal Code in the past for the obstruction of a police officer or disorderly behaviour. Fines in those cases have ranged from \$200 to \$1 500. There have been charges under cruelty to animal provisions as well. This bill will introduce a new offence and penalty and court-ordered restitution provisions for assaulting, injuring or killing a law enforcement animal. This will be a two-limb offence provision—assaulting, injuring or killing an animal that is being used by an officer and assaulting, injuring or killing an animal on account of it being an animal that is used or trained and maintained for use. There is to be a penalty of up to seven years, with a summary conviction of three years and a fine of up to \$36 000, which is a substantial increase on previous penalties. The application of the proposed law will, hopefully, ensure that people who commit those offences are actually convicted. There is an extra sentence of 10 years' imprisonment for killing an animal.

As I mentioned, one of the animals police use is a police dog. The canine section opened in 1993. I was surprised when I saw that. I could have sworn I saw police dogs earlier than that, but maybe that was in the movies. In 2017, which is the latest data that I can find, there were 41 dogs. The canine section apprehends violent offenders and detects narcotics, and it lectures on the roles of dogs in policing, responds to antisocial behaviour, searches for and tracks offenders, and joins other agencies like Australian Border Force, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force.

I was provided with a list of offences committed against police canines. There is more than a page of assaults. Some of them are severe, including an offender punching a police dog. The fines and success of convictions has been very mixed.

There is an extra element to horses. In fact, if someone assaults a horse, the behaviour of the horse is unpredictable and it endangers the police officer, bystanders, property and the offenders themselves. I was discussing this bill with a member of the mounted police section at Serpentine Horse and Pony Club a couple of weeks ago. She was talking about horses in James Street. There was a horse that was slapped on the buttocks on a few occasions. We

might think that is a harmless “larrikin” act—the member for Maylands is smiling—but repeated slapping around the head or other offences that we may think are fairly innocuous on their own condition the animal to expect to be slapped in a certain area. It can make the horse reluctant to patrol in those areas. I was told there was a horse that was driven to James Street and refused to get out of the float; it was to the extent that it could not be employed in that area. Police horses cost a lot of money in terms of investment in the purchase of the horse and their training. I have a figure of \$150 000 as a value for a police horse, which is a substantial investment. When horses are assaulted or hear a loud noise, although their training makes them grow accustomed to that, they can kick out. They can kick innocent bystanders. They could kick a window, which results in broken glass. They could kick a car. They could also kick the offender. A police officer told me a story about a drunk offender who grabbed a horse by its tail, and the horse kicked out and apparently missed the offender’s jaw by a matter of inches.

Ms L.L. Baker: What a shame!

Mr H.T. JONES: Yes; it was unfortunate.

It is about protecting not only the animals, but also the police officers attached to those animals. Police officers are told to stay on the horse and not dismount unless they really have to. I am not sure whether anyone has seen the clip, but there is a clip from the United Kingdom in March that shows two police horses. One of the horses was being attacked by a dog in a park in London. The dog was an XL bully, which is a pit bull-type American Staffordshire—a recognised breed in the USA. It was not on a lead, and it was biting the police horse repeatedly and hanging on. The police officer rightly did not get off his horse, but the owner of the dog apparently took about a minute to restrain the dog. In that time, the horse suffered a number of bites and was traumatised, as would be expected. I think the horse was back on duty after a few months of rehabilitation; however, I imagine that if it saw another dog, it would probably be a little cautious. The owner of the dog was convicted in September and pleaded guilty because there is video of it. The sentencing was supposed to be on 16 November, but I could not find out the result.

That leads me on to XL bully dogs, which are becoming a bit more popular in Australia. There are four variations of the American bully: standard, pocket, classic and XL. As I said, they are recognised in the United States but not in the United Kingdom or Australia. They can grow to about 60 kilograms in weight, are heavily muscled and are a man-stopper dog. People need to be very experienced to control them. The reason I bring them up is that the UK is banning the XL bully after a number of incidents and deaths of a few people, including children. In April, a 65-year-old grandmother in Liverpool was killed after she tried to break up a fight between two American bullies. A 17-month-old toddler was mauled to death in her own home by one of the dogs that the family had bought. In 2021, 10-year-old Jack Lis died from severe neck and head injuries after he was attacked by an XL bully in Caerphilly in Wales. The UK government has banned XL bullies. I am not proposing that we ban XL bullies; I do not have the power anyway!

If members look at Gumtree, they will see that the XL bullies’ price range is from about \$6 000 downwards. It is a very expensive dog breed. They are not recognised by canine associations around Australia, and so I wonder why someone would want to pay so much for a dog like that. Anecdotally, they are used for guard duties and in the UK some association has been found with criminal entities. Money laundering is one of the risks of buying and selling dogs of this value. I would ask owners of XL bullies who breed them to be especially cautious of whom they sell the dogs to and to take a look at the temperament of the dogs that they are breeding. They would not want to be responsible for providing someone a dog that later goes on to kill someone. That is not something anyone would want to live with.

I segue to canines and mental health. I acknowledge the service of the member for Burns Beach, who is an army veteran and also a WA Police veteran. He mentioned earlier that he suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and has an assistance dog to help him at times when he needs it. I was happy to see the minister recently announce a helping hound program, which is a psychiatric assistance dog program to improve veterans’ mental health. A couple of veterans in my electorate use dogs for PTSD. They had some trouble with training, and one of them had to get a dog from Queensland. It was very expensive. I am very pleased to see the program that the minister announced, whereby four veterans will be paired with trained assistance dogs to build a capability that does not currently exist in WA.

I recently attended in my electorate the Armadale Courthouse and police complex with the minister. It is an \$88.5 million complex in the heart of Armadale. The member for Armadale is nodding furiously. It is a fantastic facility that houses police officers, custodial officers and court staff in a brand new state-of-the-art complex. It has a gym, which I know the Minister for Police really enjoys. It goes to the fact that the Cook Labor government recognises and appreciates the service of our police officers, providing them the facilities that they deserve in order to perform their roles in a comfortable situation in their office space. Nothing will stop them having to deal with the type of people they deal with on occasion. Again, the member for Burns Beach would have been exposed to some situations that resulted in him being diagnosed with PTSD, but we can provide police with the best facilities to make their jobs as easy as we can.

I want to quickly mention the fires in Serpentine–Jarrahdale on 4 November. More recently, the fires in Wanneroo tragically destroyed a number of houses in the area. Those families will be under a great deal of pain at the moment

with the loss of their properties and the contents of their houses that cannot be replaced. However, earlier, on 4 November, there were fires in Serpentine–Jarrahdale. I want people to appreciate the number of brigades from all over the state that attended the fire. When I was driving through there a couple of days later, units from Mandurah and the Roleystone Karragullen volunteer brigade were mopping up. I will not read out all the units. Basically it is a who's who of volunteer brigades in the state. I know that those brigades also helped out with the fires in Wanneroo. There is a close liaison between the City of Armadale and Shire of Serpentine–Jarrahdale. My electorate straddles both those electorates. There is a close working relationship between brigades and local government areas as well. I want to encourage people, particularly in the Darling Range: we had a very close call with the fire in Serpentine, which could have got a lot worse had the wind been coming from another direction. We would have undoubtedly lost houses in Jarrahdale if the wind was heading that way. I encourage people to have a bushfire plan to make sure that they are prepared in the event of a bushfire. We now know that it can happen in our area. People need to decide what they would do. I would recommend leaving, but if they think they can fight a fire, they must have the right equipment and be prepared to fight.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr H.T. JONES: People need to retain their situational awareness. When the fire happened in Jarrahdale, one of the volunteer fire brigade members went to the Jarrahdale pub and found people drinking in the pub, which probably angered that fire brigade member somewhat. It is not necessarily that they should not have been there, but they were drinking alcohol, which impairs decision-making and their ability to evacuate if they need to.

One final nugget I was told, as an owner of a property with an electric gate, is to make sure to know how to leave the gate open. I have to go to my gate and press a button. There are two options, so I have to remember which one it is. If someone is told to leave their property, they need to leave their gate open to allow the fire brigade to go in and do their job along the fire breaks to protect the property. If someone's gate is locked, the brigade might just go to the property next door and save that property instead.

I have arguably done a bit of a segue around emergency services issues. I applaud the minister for introducing this bill. I hope that it goes a long way towards addressing the behaviour of some people in the community. Drunkenness is no excuse; we need to be respectful of police officers and their animals. If people are not, they could find themselves in a bit of strife. I applaud the minister and I thank the police officers who put themselves on the line every day. I know that people in my electorate appreciate the service of the police in Mundijong and Armadale. I commend this bill to the house.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie) [3.30 pm]: I rise to speak on the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023. I note that this bill makes good on a commitment that we made to the Western Australian Police Union, which specifically asked in its 2017 pre-election submission that there be harsher penalties for people who commit offences against or are cruel or hurtful to animals that are working with the police. Of course, that is horses and dogs from the equine and canine units in our Western Australia Police Force. It shows how much our police officers respect and enjoy working with those animals, and how deeply hurt and upset they are when they realise that there are some members of the public—members of the criminal fraternity—who are inclined to violence in general, but are particularly inclined to commit acts of violence against animals such as horses and dogs.

I note that since January 2015, there have been 32 recorded assault incidents involving law enforcement animals. It is quite appalling to note that there are members of our community who do not respect animals and not only are prepared to behave in an unlawful way, which is appalling enough, but also want to pursue their actions and behaviour while hurting animals. I have heard of all sorts of appalling ways in which that is done. There are reports of some people who attend public gatherings with pockets full of ball bearings to drop on the ground, so that the horses are upset as they put their hoofs on the ball bearings and find their footing disturbed. All sorts of terrible things have happened to animals providing a valuable service to us and helping our WA Police Force to maintain law and order.

I know that the vast majority of the Western Australian community is as appalled as I am by such acts of criminality and cruelty. It always leaves us wondering: What is in the minds of people who commit criminal acts and cruel behaviour? What is the underlying psychology and pathology of these people? I think it is often the case that there is psychologically something seriously amiss with these people. The likelihood of a person being the perpetrator of such dreadful things as family and domestic violence or abuse of young people is much stronger in someone who is also prepared to be cruel to animals in any way. I think we need to look at not only the offence that these offenders commit against an animal, but also the likelihood of them perpetrating offences against other human beings, as well. A body of academic research on this shows that there are connections. We can use that to see that these acts of cruelty are, in fact, a red flag that should go up. It shows that we need to respond to and perhaps keep a better eye on these sorts of offenders, knowing that they could be more likely to commit other types of offences against children or the elderly or all sorts of other abuse of humans.

When the police equine unit has been in my electorate of Thornlie, I think it has always gone extremely well. The community's general response is one of great respect. Already, the public has a tremendous respect for the police.

When people see our law enforcers out and about, they feel reassured. They know that the government is aware of perhaps a particular pattern of behaviour—a sequence of events such as misbehaviour around a shopping centre, for example—and that police presence reassures people enormously.

A couple of years ago, at about this time of year in the lead-up to Christmas, there were a few events at the Centro Maddington shopping centre. Members of the public were beginning to get quite anxious about things. The police equine unit came along and immediately had a calming influence on the community. People were greatly reassured. The horses were outside the shopping centre and in the car park; they were not able to go into the shopping centre, but just their visibility and the fact that they were there had a very beneficial impact on the overall situation. I think it almost diffused the tension as well. I have not been able to observe it firsthand very often, but I imagine it is the case that when police are on their horses in Northbridge, there is not only respect, but also something that gives people a bit of a reality check about a situation. There is diffusion of any tension that might be in the air. When people see police officers calmly moving through a crowd on their horses with their calm, dignified manner, it reassures everyone.

This is a great example of that bond that exists between humans and all the other animal species. So often, that bond has been used in a beneficial arrangement between humans and working animals. It is interesting to think about that particularly strong relationship throughout history. I know that in Western Australia, there is a strong relationship between humans and sheepdogs. Our farming community's reliance on kelpies and border collies for rounding up sheep is incredible to witness. There are alternative means of managing a sheep flock, but it would be a much harder task if farmers did not have the capacity to use well-trained sheepdogs. Recently, there was a very popular program on the ABC about a litter of kelpies and their placement with different owners who had different training methods. They were under the watchful eye of experts; nevertheless, there was a fair degree of variation between the dogs and their particular abilities, and, of course, the ability of the new owners to train those dogs and bring them along.

Working with animals always requires great skill, particularly when training animals. Coming back to the issue of law enforcement animals, that training is incredibly intense. It is about not only getting the horse or dog used to doing a particular task, but also acclimatising them to the amount of noise, the sometimes raucous behaviour and, indeed, sometimes the unpleasant prodding, pushing and cajoling that might go on. I note that the member for Darling Range spoke very well on the various forms of abuse encountered by animals—horses and dogs especially—in the police service.

In passing, I want to acknowledge an often overlooked working animal—that is, the carrier pigeon. I do not know that carrier pigeons are used so much these days, but in World War II, which is not that long ago, it was essential for aircrew in the Beaufort bomber squadrons to have a carrier pigeon on board. If the aircraft was downed, they would release the pigeon. The rescue people needed to know the rough timing of the downing of the aircraft and how long it took for the pigeon to get back to its home, and they would then have a rough idea of where the aircraft was downed. Indeed, there are cases in which pigeons received the animal equivalent of a Victoria Cross—the Dickin Medal. I heard one story on the BBC of a carrier pigeon called Winkie, whose aircrew were saved from a very cold and horrible death in the North Sea. Through this triangulation method, rescuers were able to locate where the bomber was, so the aircrew spent only a short while in the water and did not drown or die of hypothermia.

Animals are incredibly gifted in so many ways. We have heard about the use of animals in modern times as an assistant to people who suffer from post-traumatic stress-related symptoms. They are very valuable today. Our own Water Corporation relies on an English springer spaniel—it might have a couple now—to detect leaks, which is very important. Those dogs have incredible noses. Of course, our quarantine service relies on dogs for drug detection and quarantine. If the beagle sits next to someone at the airport when they are waiting for their bags to come off the carousel, they know they might have some questions to answer! They might have forgotten about some apples in their suitcase or something like that. That would be pretty bad form, but that can happen and they will be in trouble. Other animals also provide incredibly valuable services to humans but are sometimes forgotten about. Pigs are brilliant at sniffing out truffles, although I believe that our truffle industry in Western Australia relies more on labradors. It is another example of the breadth of skills that animals have. When it comes to law enforcement, they are particularly special animals. The police canine unit has the capacity to track down offenders or assist in finding lost or missing people. A person with a form of dementia might be lost in a bushland area. If a good scent dog is out working and looking for them, that will reduce the time taken to find that lost person.

When I was at the Perth Royal Show this year, I was struck by the range of skills of dogs in the different categories. Although toy dogs might perhaps be more companion animals, terriers have historically been valuable in sniffing out and freeing us of vermin, by getting rats and things like that. Then there are the gun dogs with their amazing noses. As I mentioned, Kep helps the Water Corporation to find leaks. The ability of gun dogs to scent where a bird might be is used less in hunting in modern times, as the need for gun dogs is far less frequent. The hound group includes sight hounds. It also includes greyhounds, whose running ability is exploited through greyhound racing. The scent hounds include bloodhounds and beagles, which, as I mentioned, can be used to help detect someone who might be lost in a bushland area. Then there are the working dogs. I touched on the importance of sheepdogs to our sheep flock and the management of sheep on our farms.

I am heartened that we will ensure that much tougher penalties will apply to those who commit offences against animals in the police service. I recognise that such offences have, to date, gone by with very weak sentences; charges have been brought but there has not been much of a penalty. That is what we are amending with this legislation. I think the penalties that offenders will incur will be proportionate to community outrage for offences like this. This is welcome legislation. I know that members of the Western Australian Police Union will be heartened that their request that the government provide this sort of legislation will be fulfilled. It just shows that being a member of a union—in this case, the WA Police Union—can bring about change. As a professional in a particular area, a union member can see where problems are in the system and use a collective voice to have that failing identified and brought to the attention of government, and for the government to act and solve the problem, especially when it is a Labor government like the Cook Labor government. I am very proud to be part of a government that is solving this problem by making sure that our police equine and canine units are looked after properly. Those animals give us great service. The least we can do for them is to ensure that people face significant penalties should they be found to have abused those animals in any way.

I will conclude my remarks by commending this bill to the house.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [3.47 pm]: I rise this afternoon to congratulate the Minister for Police for bringing this small but important piece of legislation to the house. It is the last possible moment of the year, but let us hope we get the Criminal Investigation Amendment (Protection of Law Enforcement Animals) Bill 2023 through. I also recognise the members of the WA Police Union with whom I met in 2016 or 2017 to discuss the care of police horses and police dogs and their concerns around not just the enforcement of prosecutions for those who injure these animals, but also the capacity to bring any real action against criminals who abuse them. I thank the minister for this mighty step forward. I am sure the police union will be incredibly happy.

The minister might be able to address this question later if he has time. When these dogs and horses are retired, they are not generally expected to live for very long, particularly the dogs. I think they retire around the age of seven, after quite a few years of service. As members can imagine, when they retire, they often have quite a few vet expenses attached to them. When the dogs are retired, it is often a member of the service who takes them on because they love them and work with them. Often, they take them into their own homes. These dogs are highly trained, so they need to be very carefully placed with experts in dog management. There is a very expensive set of bills that goes with caring for these dogs. It would be really good to know whether any work has been done to make sure that enough funding is provided to see these dogs through for the rest of their lives—if you like, a retirement fund. I think that is only justified. These are serving police animals, or police officers, if you like, and they deserve every respect. The horses are a little bit different. They will quite often live until they are quite old and are often not retired until they are 12 or 13 and they would go only to equine-specialist homes, I would hope. It might be more difficult to fund their retirement, but it certainly should be considered in the future.

I am really glad that the Minister for Community Services; Child Protection is in the room, as is the Minister for Police. During the beginning of the 16 Days in WA family and domestic violence campaign, I had a conversation with a very senior police officer from the FDV squad. I asked in the course of our conversation whether the officers who are dealing with family and domestic violence were trained or whether the system trains them to look across offences when they go into a house and there is a suspicion of violence against children or women. What places were the police trained to look at for other offences so that they were aware of the person they were dealing with? I said to this officer, “So, you would be looking at offences under the Animal Welfare Act, would you?” There was a bit of silence and they went, “Oh, well, not necessarily.” I guess my question is: do we really want somebody who has been convicted of cruelty, torture and abuse of a pet looking after our children? We really need to make sure that when police are going into domestic violence situations or are assessing domestic violence situations, they are also looking at crimes that have been committed under the Animal Welfare Act, which, of course, are not necessarily prosecuted by police; they go through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development or the RSPCA. It is a vital part of it. It was part of the working with children checks. I hope it is still there. Certainly, it is a critical part of it.

This Cook Labor government funded the Pets in Crisis program, which has been restored again with further funding. That program specifically looks at taking on the animals of the survivors of domestic violence as they are trying to get their lives back together in order to help them first escape the situation and get themselves out of danger and then move into a safe situation. Often they cannot take the family pet with them. Pets in Crisis through the RSPCA WA looks at fostering pets and companion animals until the family is in a safe place and can take those animals back. This is a really, really positive program and should be continued. I would love to see more funding going into that program. Generally speaking, that is called the cruelty connection. I think the link to the abuse of animals, as the most vulnerable in the household second to children, I guess—children and animals—is globally recognised through all the evidence that has been gathered in the last 30 years that I am aware of. The cruelty connection is very well proven. The link between people who are cruel to children and people who are cruel to animals in the home is very clear. Also, children who witness cruelty to and abuse of animals and a lack of compassion for animals are likely to grow up into adults who have little compassion and are more likely to be aggressive and take that aggression out on powerless people in their families and homes, like animals or children.

I could say a lot about that, but I have only a limited time, so I want to get on to the bill that we are discussing that the minister has put on the table. This bill is extremely important to protect our police dogs and police horses. I note that it references the Animal Welfare Act 2002 at many places. I just want to bring the house's attention to the fact that we have an amendment bill being drafted for the Animal Welfare Act. It is being drafted based on the results of Linda Black's review of animal welfare laws, which is a fairly substantial document. Had I four hours, I would bore this house with the detail of the review of the Animal Welfare Act 2002. The Labor government has responded to that review and it has pretty much accepted all the recommendations of that review. Some of the things that are referred to in the bill we are currently debating that I thought might be worth mentioning are things like infringement notices. The animal welfare review panel recommended that any necessary steps be taken to enable infringement notices issued by inspectors to be enforced by the Fines Enforcement Registry. I believe that my government has already started taking steps to do that. These infringement notices are essential in making sure that complaints of animal abuse are acted on quickly. It is not always the police who are involved in this, as I said before. The general inspectors under the act are from the RSPCA and DPIRD, as well as police.

On the inquiry into having sufficient resources to enforce, the panel recommends prioritising and strengthening the training and professional development of everyone who enforces the Animal Welfare Act. I got feedback that some of our police graduates were a bit quizzical about why they should be asking questions about animal abuse or animal cruelty when they were interviewing victims of domestic violence. I find that disturbing, quite frankly. The links that I have referred to should be absolutely obvious. I would encourage police to make sure that the training of new officers very clearly points out why we would look at infringements that have been made under the Animal Welfare Act in relation to the abuse of and cruelty to children and domestic violence victims. The panel also recommends that when an individual or a corporation is convicted of an indictable offence under the Animal Welfare Act, a permanent prohibition order be made, unless the accused can demonstrate exceptional reasons why an order should not be made. At the moment, it is very hard to make a permanent prohibition order. We have had instances of people who have abused animals by not feeding them, starving them, beating them, breaking their backs, dragging them behind cars, skinning them alive, slitting their throats and a whole range of things in their back yards being banned from having an animal for a short space of time, but a year or two later they are allowed to have animals again. That is simply not in keeping with community standards in a modern Animal Welfare Act. I look forward to seeing improvements in that space as soon as possible.

In the final moments, I draw the attention of the house to the comments that were made by the Minister for Agriculture and Food in the upper house concerning breaches of the Animal Welfare Act. I will paraphrase the minister in the other house, Minister Jarvis. I will select some pieces from her speech. She said that many people would remember with disgust the footage of dying and distressed sheep suffering heat stress aboard the *Awassi Express* in 2017. They would have seen a lot of that footage aired over the last couple of weeks as we dropped the case against Emanuel Exports. This was shocking, to say the least—absolutely horrifying. The thought that anyone in the farming industry or representing farmers would say that dropping of animal cruelty charges was welcome is not just naive, but also severely out of step with the human condition of this century and with what the community expects. Quite frankly, it is shocking that that would be said. The Western Australian public has a right to expect that all animals receive appropriate standards of care. Duty of care is one of the issues addressed in the amendment bill to the Animal Welfare Act. It is vital that we have duty of care in place for the sake of the livestock that are part of our food chain at the moment, and for the sake of their futures as much as anything else. The minister concluded in her speech —

Emanuel Exports and its directors should be left in no doubt that the unspeakable cruelty that those animals endured was largely responsible for the federal government's decision to end the live sheep trade.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

SCHOOLS — STAFF — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Motion

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I certainly relish the opportunity today to move the motion on the notice paper. I move —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its failure to alleviate teacher shortages and provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

Over the last few years, we have seen an increased prevalence in this area. It is a really important element when we look at a number of examples that I will be laying out today. The basis for some of my examples will be taken from the State School Teachers' Union of WA's report *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia*.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I point out that although the Minister for Education purports that I do not like unions, what I do not like is some of the legislation that the minister has brought in over time, such as making special arrangements for unions in certain places. What I do not like are the special arrangements for union meetings and special

arrangements for unions in the electoral reform process and the like. Minister, I actually felt very comfortable at the release of the State School Teachers' Union report the other week. The president of the teachers' union, Matt Jarman, was there. I certainly have a lot of respect for him, and he is a very good teacher and principal in his own right. I was also surrounded by many union members from within this chamber. I felt very comfortable. Even the member for Bassendean came over and said hello to me on the day, so I want to put the record straight for the minister.

Dr A.D. Buti interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: The Minister for Education is a very capable minister who will be able to say all of this in response rather than by interjection. I would like to hear what the member for Roe has to say.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday): Thank you, member for Cottesloe.

Debate Resumed

Dr A.D. Buti: Okay, let's leave it. I will not refer to our usual —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: We will let it go, minister, but I will be referring to some of the points that were brought up in the report and by former Labor Premier Hon Dr Carmen Lawrence, who was the chair of the panel. In this environment, I look forward to laying out some of the issues in the education system and finding out what the minister's long-term strategies and views are to alleviate the teacher shortage, which is a reality and needs to be dealt with by this government that has a \$6 billion surplus, or \$17 billion over the last three years. This is the minister's chance to lay down the groundwork to alleviate these teacher shortages. I am certainly looking forward to the minister's response outlining what he sees happening in the long-term future. I recall the minister saying in question time I think a couple of weeks ago, "Watch this space." I look forward to watching this space and seeing what he fills it with.

The *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report pointed out the disappointment that the teachers' union had to come up with a full review of the teaching profession in WA, in some respects allowing the Department of Education to sit back and wait for the results, knowing exactly what the report would say and provide it with another 12 months to put out fires within the education system.

I will lay out some issues pointed out by the State School Teachers' Union report. The report states that schools are starved of real-term funding, and that Western Australian schools require funding of up to 100 per cent of the schooling resource standard. It states that significant and growing pressure has meant teachers have reached breaking point, and that there are chronic and growing teacher shortages and an increased volume and complexity in the teaching tasks. It outlines the challenge of educating many more disadvantaged students and students with increasingly complex needs. The minister has spoken about that before. The report refers to the frequent policy changes and states that the independent public school initiative needs to be looked at, and that teachers have low morale and increased burnout and feel undervalued and disrespected. Class sizes need to be smaller and access is required to quality resources and professional support. Time for duties other than teaching and rural appointments also needs to change. That is from just the executive summary. The minister can see from that list that there is a real concern about many of those elements.

I will start with the alarming statistics on violence in Western Australian public schools. An article in *WAtoday* by Holly Thompson and Rebecca Peppiatt headed "'They are not safe places': Perth's most violent schools revealed" states —

... Freedom of Information ... show there were 114 instances where students took prohibited weapons to schools in 2022 ...

The article goes on to state that according to the report of the State School Teachers' Union —

... school based violent events in WA were occurring once every 45 minutes, or 11 times per day.

Jarman said members were increasingly worried about their safety at work, and the union received hundreds of calls per month asking for help.

... 800 calls a month (from members) ... in the categories of violence. That number is growing ...

...

The union's report also revealed 86 per cent of teachers had considered leaving the profession in the past four years, up from 80 per cent two years ago.

That is a real concern to me and, I am sure, the minister. As the minister knows, 25 per cent of graduates are also looking at leaving the profession within five years. The article continues —

... 31 per cent of teachers surveyed said they had been the victim of physical violence at least once this school year, while 55 per cent said they had experienced verbal violence.

The article quotes Mr Jarman —

“The number of staff who are leaving and attributing their departure to violence and physical safety has been increasing for the last three or four years.”

Almost half of all teachers surveyed said the violence had not come from students, but from their parents.

The minister has spoken about his concerns with parents and, quite frankly, I agree with him that quite a few of these issues are attributed to parents. The other issue is that teachers are confronted as they go about their shopping, they are being attacked in online forums and their leaders are having to deal with aggressive parents, all of which contributes to a dangerous workplace. I think that is a pretty good summary of some of the violent incidents.

The number of workers compensation claims within the Department of Education reinforces the dire situation that schools are facing. In the last financial year, there were 459 claims of assault by a person or persons, with a liability of \$9.5 million. This figure is up by 25 per cent from the 2022 number, when 384 claims were made at a cost of \$7.6 million. I will continue with the workers compensation figures. The breakdown is very interesting. There were 156 claims in 2023 for being accidentally hit by a person, with a payout of nearly \$3 million. The number of incidents involving exposure to a traumatic event is up from the previous year, which had 19 claims at a cost of \$1.4 million, with 44 claims at a cost of nearly \$3 million this year. The number of claims for exposure to workplace occupational violence is up from seven cases last year to 21 this year, with a cost of \$1.14 million. There are a variety of other claims. I think that gives an overlay of what we are facing out there in the world—violence and aggressiveness from both students and teachers. It is a concern. I know that the minister and previous minister outlined their strategies, if you like, to deal with violence. However, I think it is actually increasing. I am curious to know whether the minister has any other plans to deal with these issues. Of course, it flows on to our younger teachers as well. They are very worried about the workplace and how it is going to pan out. That is just a summary of that department.

If I can, I just want to move on to limited registration teachers. An answer given to a question on notice on 17 October stated that we have 380 limited registration teachers in the metropolitan area and 197—nearly 200—in regional areas. We have 577 out there. I guess they are needed in the current environment to backfill positions. That is just a reality. I was recently given more information about some of the regional incentives, some of which will potentially be paid. I know there is a category for graduate students, who are hopefully now being sent out to the bush. That is important and I support it. To be honest, when teachers get sent out to the bush, they sometimes actually enjoy themselves. They might end up finding a partner, maybe getting married and spending the rest of their life there with their family and so forth. We have seen many examples of that over the years. From my perspective, I support anything that will take our younger good-quality teachers out into the regions.

I have a couple of examples of incentives from other states. The Victorian government has announced payments of up to \$420 a day for student teachers who complete school placements in regional, remote and specialist government schools. It will provide \$140 a day in urban centres and metro specialist schools and \$420 a day in outer, regional and remote schools. It is called the pre-service teacher placement grants program. The Victorian government will put \$32.2 million into the program, funding up to 11 000 placements over the next two years. Other announcements from the Victorian government to support the teaching workforce include \$93.2 million for scholarships to make studying a secondary teaching degree completely free for around 4 000 teachers each year, \$95.7 million to support more graduate teachers in government schools, and \$27 million to provide \$50 000 to assist teachers from Victoria, interstate and overseas to relocate to hard-to-staff positions in government schools.

There is some serious expenditure by the Victorian government compared with the Western Australia government, which has allocated \$15.49 million to assist with the recruitment and retention of staff in regional and remote areas in 2024. That \$15 million will continue the funding of the regional attraction and retention incentive in 2024. As the minister knows, that is for 66 regional and remote schools, up from 48 last year. I welcome the addition of those other schools into that category. I used to say, and still maintain, that Daniel Andrews was the worst Premier that Australia has ever seen, but it seems like Victoria’s Minister for Education or the new government—now with a new Premier—is injecting some serious amounts of money into the attraction and retention of young staff. I think that is important to note. We can look at the financial position of the state of Western Australia compared with Victoria. Victoria appears to be in substantial strife, but it has still prioritised the attraction and retention of staff over and above the scenario that we are seeing here.

I will quickly refer to some other articles that refer to teachers departing or resigning. An article by Caitlyn Rintoul entitled “Exhausted, burnt out and overworked” states —

WA teachers are picking up gardening and cleaning shifts in a desperate attempt to keep their schools open as the union warns the education system is stretched so badly the situation has now become “untenable”.

That is one article. There is another about the scenario with the curriculum, which I will probably get to a little bit further down the track. We have a real concern. I am curious about the minister’s response to this article in *The Australian* entitled “Woke unis failing new teachers”. I found this article very interesting when it came out.

It states —

The Institute of Public Affairs has analysed 3713 teaching subjects in education degrees offered by 37 Australian universities. One-third of all subjects relate to what the IPA describes as “woke” theories of identity politics, decolonisation and social justice.

Just one in 10 subjects relate to teaching children how to read, write and learn mathematics.

That is the reality that has been identified. I think it is important. The basics are English, mathematics and the like. I am curious about whether the minister will address this scenario with our woke universities or some of the woke courses that are being dished up. They need to go back to the basics. As the minister knows, classroom management has to be the highest priority subject to be taught to our young teachers. That has to be the first priority, along with those basics subjects so that they can pass on that information.

My time is limited today. We had a briefing last week on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is prevalent, especially in some of our more remote schools. I certainly hope that our education department will make sure that our teachers are FASD-informed, because it obviously restricts learning capacity and can create speech and language disorders, communication challenges, sensory processing difficulties, issues with attention and focus, and many other issues. It is very important for the education department to take that on board also.

In respect of regional support, the minister knows that we like to talk about the regions. I have called on the minister to support regional leaders and teachers. I have also spoken to the director general on occasion about the need to bring back the regional centres that provided mentoring and support to our regional teachers and young regional principals who have just started out. They need that close-at-hand support, not people sitting in Royal Street. They actually need mentoring, the like of which we used to have at the Narrogin district office. We had that support, including Aboriginal support officers; lead psychologists; curriculum support staff; participation coordinators; road safety drug education regional coordinators; home school moderators; student health and wellbeing support staff; and positive behaviour support coordinators. These are all very important configurations that district offices can provide. They could provide them to support our regional schools and principals.

I do not know whether, amongst the \$5 billion or \$6 billion surpluses that seem to be rolling through, the issue of Government Regional Officers’ Housing is being addressed. I know the minister who sits in front of the Minister for Education talks about the variety of housing projects, but I do not hear too much about GROH housing, so I look forward to any response on that. I know there are potential schemes for helping subsidise the rent of these new, younger teachers who are going out. Unfortunately, there are no GROH houses in a lot of those communities.

It has been revealed that in the five-year period from 2019 to 2023, there has been a significant increase in home education enrolments; obviously, COVID was a large part of that. Over that time, the ratio of students to home education moderators—who are tasked with legislative compliance requirements—has increased from one moderator to 167 students in 2019; the number of students had increased by 20 in 2023. We have a challenge. A lot more parents obviously took on home schooling due to COVID and continued on with it. We need those moderators in place to make sure they are doing the job well.

The School of Isolated and Distance Education is now basically the biggest school in the state. It provides a good service, but I worry that it now seems to be the fallback position for some of our district high schools and senior high schools that might have only a couple of students doing ATAR. I do not see it as a long-term solution for an ATAR student to be sitting in front of a screen in the library all week long. That is something I think the education system, over time, needs to have a bit of a look at. I know that it is a solution of sorts and it provides some sort of answer for students who are staying in their particular location. As I have said, we have seen SIDE grow into the largest school in the state in the number of enrolments. That is not the preferred option. Obviously, distances and so on are a challenge, but from my perspective we need to think about alternatives. When we get down to three or four students in year 10 at a district high school, we cannot just keep saying, “Oh, let’s just put them in the library and put them on SIDE”, and that is it, with no option for a teacher in front of them at the coalface.

I will quickly refer to the federal government report by Professor Mark Scott, *Strong beginnings: Report of the teacher education expert panel*. It states —

Nationwide, teachers testify that at its best, teaching is a job that delivers rich, intrinsic rewards, but teachers are operating in an environment that is more difficult than at any other time.

...

The challenges for teachers can be immense.

As we know, the pandemic caused serious challenges; however, initial teacher education is a focus of the Scott report. The recommendations were heavily weighted towards support for students and teachers during practical experiences; mentor teachers, as I spoke about; and mid-career pathway programs. Bevan Ripp, president of the Principals’ Federation of Western Australia, is very experienced and has put out a media release on the report titled *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia*. He said that alleviating the issues faced by public school teachers must not remove school leaders’ autonomy.

Regarding the centralised model, he said —

“By removing school leaders’ limited autonomy, existing problems will be worsened. We need our teachers and school leaders to be able to plan and apply strategies according to the needs of each setting.

...

“Re-introducing a centralised staffing model once again will not help in a teacher shortage where there are not enough bodies to go around. The focus needs to be on attraction, and then retention.”

He said that what is needed is for —

... current and future governments to direct funding to make salaries competitive and resourcing equitable; to raise the status of the profession in the eyes of community; —

That includes various other things, including reform around teacher training programs and the development of policy and promotion to encourage more robust sharing of the responsibility to address societal and community issues. That certainly is a good summary.

I spoke about some of my concerns about the curriculum, but I want to go back to the report commissioned by the State School Teachers’ Union of WA, *Facing the facts*. There needs to be an immediate and substantial injection of funding. The State School Teachers’ Union has provided the Minister for Education with a free blueprint for a comprehensive strategy that would alleviate some of the pressure points in the public education system. That the union had to fund this review in the first place is beyond me. It came as a response to the changes that have occurred since 2010 and the effects they have had on our teachers’ professional standing, workloads, roles and responsibilities. Returning to the regional support model would provide a significant improvement to the roles that regional leaders and teachers perform.

I guess my real question to the minister is: what is the long-term strategy for attracting and retaining teachers? With a \$5 billion-plus surplus, education is the one thing this government could target to ensure the future of the state. I have tried to lay out the groundwork and point out my concerns and the concerns of the State School Teachers’ Union and Hon Carmen Lawrence in commissioning that report, and some of the issues they see ahead. However, unlike Victoria, this state has the resources and the minister has an opportunity to put his blueprint on what he sees as a long-term strategy for attraction and retention. I know there are challenges and that COVID has created a challenge, but we are hopefully out of that scenario now. I think a lot of points were identified in the review.

I certainly look forward to the response of the minister. Unfortunately, he will not be here tomorrow morning to listen to my grievance about Esperance Senior High School, which he knows is one of the main infrastructure projects in my electorate that I think would aid that part of the world. Anyway, I look forward to the parliamentary secretary responding to that grievance. That is a separate issue from the attraction and retention of teachers, which is an important issue that this state will face over forthcoming years. I look forward to hearing the minister’s response to that.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [4.30 pm]: The member for Roe has brought an incredibly important issue to Parliament that I want to tackle in a serious manner, but I have to say that the member’s contribution was everywhere. The motion states —

That this house condemns the WA Labor government for its failure to alleviate teacher shortages and provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

The member for Roe went on to talk about the Institute of Public Affairs and wokeism. What did that have to do with the motion in front of us? He talked about peripheral issues. Before I get on and respond in detail, I will briefly refer to the *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report. I welcome the report and am giving it serious consideration. We already have some of its recommendations in place. However, I am confused. The member for Roe said that that report provides a blueprint. He then read out Bevan Ripp’s view that we must retain the independent public school system. *Facing the facts* states that we have to get rid of IPS. Where does the member stand? Does he support the report or Bevan Ripp on IPS? He said that *Facing the facts* provides a blueprint going forward. A considerable part of that report talks about removing IPS, an initiative of the previous conservative government. Where does the member for Roe stand? I am confused. He said that the report is a blueprint but then said that Bevan Ripp is right, so where does he stand?

Mr P.J. Rundle: The report says that there are some issues with IPS that are worth looking at.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It says more than that. The member for Roe referred to the executive summary. Did he actually read the report or just the executive summary?

Ms L. Mettam: He read the report.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I am asking the member, not the Leader of the Liberal Party.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I read the report, I can assure you, minister.

Dr A.D. BUTI: If the member for Roe read the report, he would know that it does not talk about tweaking IPS. Let us be honest: it does not do that, does it?

Mr P.J. Rundle: No; absolutely.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member for Roe would therefore not agree with that part of the report. It does not necessarily provide a blueprint, does it?

Mr P.J. Rundle: Issues were brought up in the report. It is not question time.

Dr A.D. BUTI: The member needs to be careful. He said that the report is a blueprint for going forward, but a considerable part of the report criticises IPS and basically recommends its abolition. That is what it does. The member for Roe needs to be careful with what he wishes for or what he says.

The member for Roe referred to Victoria. I want to talk about WA, but he referred to Victoria. Does the member know the current debt of Victoria? It is about \$100 billion and is projected to be \$171 billion in 2026. We are a prudent government with good financial management. That is why we were able to respond in a way that resulted in us being able to keep our schools open during the COVID pandemic. As the member knows, being a great football supporter, when Gillon McLachlan was here for the AFL grand final in 2021, he stated that his kids had missed seven out of eight terms of school. Did any of our students do that? I think there was a one or two-week lockdown.

Mr P.J. Rundle: What I am talking about is their investment, given their debt.

Dr A.D. BUTI: I would not use Victoria or any other jurisdiction as an example.

The member for Roe also referred to the Professor Mark Scott report on teaching. As the member very well knows, that report talks about national issues. Teacher shortages is a national and international issue. This is a very serious issue and I will address what we are trying to do. The member for Roe stood up and reeled off a whole list of things without any linkage, logic or connection between them, and he did not link them to the motion that he brought to the house. What he did not say was what can be done. I could invest millions and millions of dollars in this issue tomorrow but that would not increase the number of teachers tomorrow. As a principal said to me in front of other principals, if the teachers are not there, they are not there. We cannot just change things, but we are addressing the issues. I will go through that. I might also say that a school community is made up not just of teachers; it is also made up of principals, who have a very important part to play, and education assistants, but we know what the previous government thought about education assistants—it wiped them away. A school community also includes front office staff, cleaners, gardeners, P&C members and board volunteers; they are all part of a school community. The motion is particularly about teachers, and they are a very important part. As the Minister for Education in the Cook Labor government, I will not listen to a conservative politician cry and lecture me on public education. I will not tolerate that. We are the champions of public education; we have been and always will be. We are doing many things to address the challenges that we face, and particularly the teacher shortage issue.

The member mentioned the Scott report, which considered the teacher shortage issue. One of the main reasons that we have a shortage of teachers is that there are not enough graduates. But people are not going to be attracted to teaching when people like the member for Roe talk about violence in schools and say that schools are a terrible place to work. I have a very good working relationship with Matt Jarman, but he is not helping the situation when he paints a picture of schools being a place of violence and not being safe. That is not true. Schools are one of the safest places to work because of the great work that teachers and principals are doing. How are we going to attract people to teaching when the member for Roe stands up and reels off issues about workers compensation and says that schools are such violent places? He knows that they are not. He knows that most teachers have a good, rewarding experience and that schools are safe. Yes, there are issues. That is why my predecessor, Hon Sue Ellery, and I have tackled the issue of violence. As the member knows, I enhanced the anti-violence package earlier this year. I have not had one principal come up to me and say that what I did was wrong. They come up and thank me, because they know that the government and I support them against abuse, and particularly parental abuse. I have told them that if they need to use a prohibition order, they should go and use it. They have thanked me for that. However, it will not help the situation when people like the member for Roe paint our schools as bleak, unattractive and unsafe places. What will happen is that fewer people will go into teaching. The shadow Minister for Education should show some responsibility and tell me how we can improve things, rather than expressing his bleak, alarmist attitude to public education in Western Australia. I can tell members that that is not the case. It would be better if people like Matt Jarman also did not paint that picture. Yes, there are issues, and we have been seeking to address them. More things need to be done. One of the major challenges is parental abuse, whether it is online or physical. That is totally unacceptable. As the member knows, I have instigated measures to ensure that principals know that we have their back when it comes to violence.

Yes, it is hard to staff schools, particularly in some of the regions. That is why we have the regional attraction and retention incentive, and that is why we have increased it. On 20 September this year, we announced more than \$15 million in funding to continue that incentive to 2024. That builds on the \$12.4 million provided in 2023. That incentive scheme now covers 66 schools, up from 48. Teachers can receive between \$5 000 and \$17 000 for going to hard-to-staff remote public schools. That is a major measure and I think the opposition is supportive of that. That

is one of the things that we have done to try to attract people into the regions. The opposition talks about being the champion of the regions, but between 2013 and 2015, under the previous Liberal–National government, there were three Nationals cabinet members—they were basically part-time because they walked out when they did not agree with something. I have to tell the member for Vasse that some of her former Liberal colleagues were seething because they were not cabinet ministers and Nationals WA ministers were allowed to be cabinet ministers. They could decide to walk out if something was a little bit too hard or they did not agree with it. If someone is going to be a cabinet minister, they need to take the responsibility, both good and bad. They cannot take only what is beneficial to them and walk away when things are difficult.

Anyway, with regard to public education, between 2013 and 2015 the previous Liberal–National government cut over \$200 million from school budgets—over \$200 million. A further \$45 million was cut from secondary school budgets in 2015. Over 800 teaching positions were cut in 2014–15. More than a thousand education assistant positions were cut in 2014–15. More than a thousand education assistant positions were cut in one year! The opposition talks about regional offices, but what did it do? It cut 150 central and regional office positions. There were 200 redundancies across the sector in 2015 alone. There were 110 Aboriginal and Islander education officer positions cut in 2014 and an average reduction in spending per student of \$714 a year. Can the opposition stand up with a straight face and say what we should be doing with public education when it has that record? Surely the member for Roe cannot do that. He cannot be serious about standing up and referring to a union report, a central plank of which is the independent public school system that his government introduced, and then refer to someone who supports IPS, and say, “Provide the blueprint”, and proceed to tell us what we are doing wrong, when I have reeled out what the opposition did when it was in government.

The last state budget had a “six” in front of “billion dollars” for public education for the first time—\$6.4 billion. Is the opposition saying we are not spending on education? I cannot understand the logic behind that. We recently introduced further funding for 51 district high schools. That is a \$5 million funding boost, per annum, for 51 district high schools. I announced that in September. That builds on the \$9.3 million funding for regional schools in 2022–23. That is incredibly important for district high schools because it allows for improved curriculum delivery and expanding access to specialist student support services and helps schools to provide the best education for students in the regions. I am passionate about students in the regions receiving a high-quality education, but it is a challenge because we have such vast geographical distances. It is difficult, but we are putting spending programs and policy decisions in place that will assist with that.

Yes, the staffing issue is a problem, but we are not alone. It is a worldwide problem, apart from probably Ireland and Finland. In terms of English-speaking countries, there is probably no other jurisdiction beside Ireland that does not have a teacher shortage. What are we doing? We are employing teachers for Teach for Australia. We are utilising pre-service teachers. We are engaging in an international recruitment program in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, Canada and South Africa, and we have been very successful in attracting over 75 teachers from overseas to go to schools in our regions. We provide a stipend to encourage pre-service teachers to do their practicums in regions and in learning areas of high demand such as STEM. We are doing the things that the opposition says we should be doing. The Leap program pre-qualifies teachers into learning areas of high demand. The Aboriginal employee professional learning program is a pathway for Aboriginal staff to become teachers. There are teacher career pathway opportunities for senior teachers and level 3 classroom teachers, recognising exemplary practice in classrooms. Those are some of the measures we have taken and are taking to try to improve the quality and supply of teachers in Western Australia. We engage in the Teach in WA program, the remote teaching service induction program and the remote connection program. They are the things that we are doing. I do not think the member for Roe should refer only to one report, which he says is a blueprint but he disagreed with half of it. He should do his research and look at what the government has done. We have done a lot and we have to do a lot more because we are facing a demanding challenge, which was recognised by the Scott report that the member referred to.

The member’s reference to the Institute of Public Affairs was out of left field. I fail to understand how wokeism in the curriculum has anything to do with the motion. The member talked about universities. One of the problems—some people will not agree with me—is that when we moved from the one-year diploma of education to the two-year master’s degree, it created a disincentive for some people to do teaching. It is a particular disincentive for people to make a mid-career change from one profession to another. They may be able to cope with one year out of the labour market, but two years becomes more difficult. Not everyone will agree with that. There were good reasons for going to two years. People thought it would improve the quality and status of teaching, but I do not think it has. I have not seen empirical evidence that that is the case. There may be evidence, but I do not think there is. I have told the deans of our education schools in our universities that I want a rethink of that. They came back and told me that they cannot fit all of the content in. I said their focus should be on what is needed for teaching. Students could do their Dip. Ed., and if they have an academic bent, like the member for Cottesloe or my good self, they might want to do a master’s. They could do that part time for the second year or do a thesis.

I think we need to rethink that issue. There is opposition in the tertiary —

Mr P.J. Rundle: Are you making any progress with that?

Dr A.D. BUTI: I cannot do everything at once! If the member knows how universities work, he will understand that there is a process of engaging in dialogue and then we will see how we go. It will be difficult.

Let me talk about red tape. I have stated a number of times that once I became minister, I instigated a review of red tape. I think the member may have mentioned that teachers and principals should be doing what they should be doing, which is teaching and leading schools. We should be reducing red tape when we can. I am determined that we will do that. All I can say to the member is, “Stay tuned. Watch this space.” I think, even the member—who likes to paint a negative picture of anything we do—is going to be hard-pressed to paint a negative picture when I announce some changes. Watch this space. The thing about this side of Parliament is that we are passionate about public education. We have numerous people here who have experience as teachers. Even if they have not had experience as teachers, they are still passionate about education. There are a number of people who want to make a contribution. I would love to go on for an hour, but I will not.

We need to be careful about the “violence stuff” because that is important. If we are going to paint schools as a cesspit of violence, nobody is going to teach. The member has a responsibility as a member of Parliament to not paint that picture. At the last census, we had 322 294 students across 830 public schools in WA. The Department of Education is the largest public sector employer in the state with over 43 000 full-time equivalent staff with around 96 per cent of those in schools. If we take that into consideration, some of the figures that the member read out may be diminished in significance. Maybe it is not as bad as the picture the member is trying to paint. But we need to continue to ensure that our staff can go to work every day, because one thing about the Labor movement is we believe in a safe workplace. We know the other side of politics likes to cut corners when it comes to workplace safety and has not always been a great champion of occupational health and safety legislation. Members opposite talk about schools being such violent and unsafe places, but do they know the industry that has the most workplace deaths? They do know.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I do.

Dr A.D. BUTI: It is agriculture. I do not go out and say that farms are terrible, violent, unsafe places, because they are not, but that is where most of the workplace deaths are. Members opposite should be a bit more responsible in what they say. It is totally unacceptable for any teacher, principal or student to be subjected to violence in a school situation. That is why, on 17 July this year, I announced an update to our anti-violence package, *Standing together against violence*. I ask the member for Roe to stand with me and this government in our battle and our efforts against violence, rather than coming into this house and painting a picture of alarm, because that is not going to help anyone. We have the connect and respect initiative, and I am really determined that we will keep on with that and do what is necessary to ensure that we have a safe environment in which everyone can come to work and return home safe, and students can learn in an environment in which they can achieve their best outcomes.

As I said, there are many more things I would love to talk about, such as the alternative learning centres that we have and the increase in money we have provided for students with special needs. One thing we will not do is cut hundreds and hundreds of education assistants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers. That is one thing we will not do.

Ms S.F. McGurk: One of the best recruiters we’ve had in that area, don’t worry.

Dr A.D. BUTI: Yes. We will not do that. I recognise the *Facing the facts: A review of public education in Western Australia* report. We have already instigated some of those recommendations, and I will make other comments on that in due course. But in regard to red tape, watch this space very soon.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [4.51 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to this debate. For those playing along at home, I will be opposing the motion. I would like to address the second component of the motion. I will talk about some of my experience as a father, a teacher and a local member of Parliament. I think it is disappointing for the shadow education minister to put up a motion that we have failed to provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff.

At the outset, I say thank you to all the teachers, education assistants, student services and admin staff, students, parents, families, principals and leadership of all our schools. If someone is having trouble sleeping tonight and is listening to the debate of this at home, please do not take what the opposition says about schools in Western Australia as fact. Take it with a grain of salt.

I have 16 schools within my electorate. One of them is the school I taught at most recently. I count about 30 to 35 schools as being within my electorate, because a lot of my families go to Perth Modern School, Rossmoyne Senior High School and private schools around Perth. My families attend a number of primary and high schools and I want to thank each and every one of them. I cannot talk about a motion like this without acknowledging the role that each of those school leaders, staff members and families played during the COVID period, as well. The minister alluded to it. The eastern states and the rest of the world missed entire chunks of curriculum. We will see the positive ripple effects of having had people in a learning environment at school for a generation to come. The TAFE and training sector was able to continue. The students I used to teach actually got to complete their certificate in hospitality courses while still at school. Most hotels, worksites and other places continued; building industries continued. The

shadow Minister for Education spoke about the School of Isolated and Distance Education having too much screen time. That was the experience for a lot of the world. Because of the hard work of our teachers, staff and families, that was not the experience of Western Australian families.

I have to tell members that I was a teacher at what would be called a hard-to-staff school in my electorate. It is deemed to be a rougher school than others. I do not think there are any rough schools; there are no bad or good schools. Sorry, I should say there are no bad schools; they are all good schools. But it was tough teaching at a school under the Liberal–National government. I will talk about some of the things that were done that we are still addressing now.

My experience is that I was an English and careers teacher in Gosnells. I was a year coordinator and I had experience in student services. That means that I dealt with a lot of what I would call the darkness and the diversity that families bring in and have to deal with, and young people do not have a choice in the cards that they are dealt. I was a workplace learning coordinator. I was also the teachers' union representative, so I was a member of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, for those in the opposition who are worried about union influence. I was a very proud member of the teachers' union. We had assaults. There were times when young people made poor decisions and there were times when parents and families made poor decisions, and staff were hurt as a consequence of that. That was never okay, but one thing I commend Ministers Ellery and Buti for is actually rocking up to that debate and saying that violence is not acceptable. That did not happen under the previous government. When we had Liz Constable as the education minister, and Peter Collier, as a former teacher himself, as the education minister —

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: Point of order.

Mr D.A.E. Scaife: Oh, no, you didn't use "the honourable"!

Mr T.J. HEALY: Hon Peter Collier.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Carry on, member.

Debate Resumed

Mr T.J. HEALY: When Hon Peter Collier was the honourable education minister, he did not take a stand, like the current government has. I refer to the *Let's take a stand together* document. I come from a family of teachers, and a number of my friends and colleagues are still in the teaching profession. I think I have forgotten some of the tough periods as a teacher; I think I have glorified some of it now. I have forgotten that at this time in the term, teachers are absolutely waiting for the end of term. I acknowledge that; I am not saying it was incredibly easy. But a number of teachers appreciated that the education minister and the director general said: "You have rights. Violence is not okay." Again, I commend the former Minister for Education's *Let's take a stand together* report and the next generation, Minister Buti, and the *Standing together against violence* statement, which actually states what is and is not okay.

In the schools that I taught at under the previous government, it was never a clear line when someone, be it a young person or a parent, crossed the line. This makes it clear—I am not sure whether we can call it a codification—and that is important, because there were many times when I was told about a young person who might need to get suspended or not suspended, or we were doing different arrangements. It is important for a line to be drawn so that when there is assault or violence, whether it is verbal or physical, a school, teacher, staff member or principal knows what to do. There is a great package of options. It is never a great option to have to explore exclusion and some of those more extreme options, but it is also important to say to a young person and their family that these are the consequences.

I am going to talk about consequences. The shadow Minister for Education, Peter Rundle, spoke of the challenges that now exist in schools. There absolutely are challenges, but I tell members that we are dealing with the ripple effects of what the previous government did. I say this because the shadow minister is seeking within a matter of months to form government and become the actual Minister for Education, and I fear—I think the majority of our communities fear—a return to that. It almost seems like a bit of a cliché now. The former government literally cut millions of dollars from schools. When governments cut actual dollars that schools could otherwise allocate in their one-line budget for excursions, relief teachers and all the different aspects, it has an effect on the culture of the school. I will use the example of my school. Annually, \$500 000 was cut from our budget at Southern River College. I can tell members that we were not drinking la-di-da coffee and walking on carpets of gold; that money went to core services. When the previous Liberal–National government cut education assistants from all our classrooms, including mine, it had an effect. That government made a promise at the 2013 election, which it won—that my school and a number of other pre-1980 schools would be rebuilt. Esperance, which I heard the member for Roe talk about before, was in that little cohort. That was part of the promise that the former government broke, by the way. My community voted for the Liberal government in 2013 and after the election you said—not you personally—all Liberal members of the then Liberal government said, "We broke that. We shouldn't have made that promise." Older schools needed that. They relied on that, but it was cut. Again, there were teacher cuts. We spoke about the

loss of AIOs and education assistants. The former government raised TAFE fees by over 500 per cent. In my role in the careers workspace, I dealt with students transitioning into their careers. My young people could not afford to go to TAFE. My young people who wanted to do a bricklaying course or a hospitality course or a nursing degree or any of those things could not do it. Looking at what I used to call year 13, those students would have to sit on the couch in year 13—those who wanted to explore leaving school early to go into a form of apprenticeship or other things. We are still dealing with those consequences today in terms of our workforce development. If the former government had actually provided the funding to that generation who really missed out that the Labor government of today provides now, we would have a different skill set for young people now. The independent public school rollout was damaging. My school was one of the last to move into the independent public school system and have the ability to pick more of its staff. If Hon Nick Goiran, honourable Voldemort, gets back in, this will come back.

Withdrawal of Remark

Dr D.J. HONEY: I ask that the member withdraw that statement. It was an offensive slur against a member of the other place.

Mr T.J. HEALY: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Mr T.J. HEALY: It was federal governments too. Interestingly enough, we had a school tour when Chris Pyne was federal Liberal education minister. He actually came to Southern River College. That was a time when we were talking about Gonski. Labor governments were talking about Gonski funding—actual equitable funding. I may or may not have the part of the union. I think Matt Jarman and a number of senior State School Teachers' Union of WA people were there having a little protest outside the school and Chris Pyne actually came over. I was quite impressed. Ken Wyatt was there as the federal Liberal member having a school visit. I remember Chris Pyne saying blatantly to all of us, "No, don't worry. We'll fund Gonski exactly the same as Labor will. You can trust us." We know that did not take place. We know that at the federal and state levels, Liberal governments failed us. On our end, I will say that we built new primary schools in my community. We froze TAFE fees. The minister spoke about the wonderful builds for STEM labs at district high schools. The support for regional schools and teachers and recruitment is commendable.

Members, I just want to say again how much I look forward to a strong debate in the community about whether it really believes that a Liberal government, which could easily form in a couple of months—a Liberal–National alliance or coalition or whatever they call it—would cut school funding. Who knows? I might be teaching again in 18 months! A Liberal government would raise TAFE fees. It would disadvantage our young people. My community needs to have a think about that because it is very, very clear that Labor governments fund and support teachers and schools and their families. Again, I commend Minister Buti, Minister Ellery, director general Lisa Rodgers and all the schools in my community and across Western Australia and their teachers and their staff and families. Thank you very much.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [5.04 pm]: I rise today as a passionate advocate for our public education system. Members will know, if they have heard me say it before, that I am a proud graduate of Australind Senior High School. I did all my schooling there. I do not have quite the background of some of the members to follow, but the member for Collie–Preston has just pointed out that the catchment area for Australind Senior High School is shared by her and the member for Murray–Wellington. I know there has been \$15 million worth of builds completed under their watch at Australind Senior High School. Thank you for doing that for my ex-school, member for Collie–Preston, member for Murray–Wellington and the minister. It is a great investment. I am a proud graduate of the public school system. I served on the board of Australind Senior High School when it became an independent public school. After I graduated, I acted for the State School Teachers' Union of WA and its members when I was an industrial relations lawyer. I would say that my number one priority since being elected as a member, as the minister knows, has been advocating for public schools, some of which are significantly disadvantaged in my electorate.

I really want to say that when the member for Roe gets up on these issues, when he goes down to meetings of the State School Teachers' Union, when he goes to the launch of the *Facing the facts* report, they know that he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. They know that. They know that he is not genuine. They know that he does not have the runs on the board and that he is not credible when it comes to his commitment to teachers and the union movement. They know. They see through it. They see through the act. They see that he has just hitched his bandwagon to what he sees is an issue that he can attack the government on, but he does not have the track record of working with teachers, school leaders and the union movement to make the investments that are needed.

Mr P.J. Rundle: I have known Matt Jarman for a good 25 or 30 years.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: That is like saying, "My friend is", or, "I know someone." That seems to be his defence: I know someone who is a teacher or a unionist and therefore I must be a supporter. That is exactly the kind of flimsiness that I am talking about, member for Roe. His evidence that he supports teachers and unions is that he knows a teacher. I am pretty sure that if that were the test —

Mr P.J. Rundle: I am married to one.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I know that the member is married to one. I was waiting for him to get that one out. That has to be his best one yet. His defence for how much of a supporter of the education system he is is that he knows a teacher and is married to a teacher. If that is the test, literally everybody in Western Australia knows a teacher. That would mean that everybody in Western Australia is on the side of the public education system like the member for Roe.

I will digress for a minute. I think the member for Roe should be a little offended because the member for Southern River did not use the member's proper title before. He referred to the member for Roe by his name and the member for Cottesloe did not jump up and take objection to that.

Dr D.J. Honey: If I wasn't writing, I would have.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: That is not true, member for Cottesloe, because the member was writing when he raised a point of order about Hon Nick Goiran, but he did not back the member for Roe. Maybe the member for Cottesloe sees through the member for Roe's act as well.

I want to make this point, which the minister and I have made before, which shows the member's lack of genuineness when it comes to supporting the teachers' union. I refer to the ridiculous contribution he made when we were debating the independent monitor to be appointed to Crown Perth. In that contribution—I have *Hansard* here—the member was referring to his concerns about the qualifications of the person who would be appointed as the independent monitor. The member said —

What concerns me is whether that person has any links to government or unions, and what their history is, or the like.

Just to make sure that it was not a slip of the tongue, the member repeated himself and said —

It will have to be someone of the highest integrity, with no background union affiliation.

The member very clearly put on the record that he considers that if someone has a union affiliation, they cannot be a person of the highest integrity. I will tell you what: Dr Carmen Lawrence has some union affiliation, member for Roe.

Mr D.J. Kelly: So do I.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I heard some rumours that the member for Bassendean has some links to the union movement. In fact, I have heard some rumours that many members in the Labor Party have links to the Labor movement. Go figure. I really want to make the point that the member for Roe cannot stand in this place and rely on the *Facing the facts* report when he has run down people with a union background. He has said that they cannot be people of the highest integrity, and, like I said, the member for Roe repeated it.

I want to back in a point that the minister made. I will not claim to have read the whole report, but I was flicking through it and found a section on independent public schools. It will be interesting to know whether the member for Roe wants to endorse the whole of the *Facing the facts* report, because the really telling part about independent public schools in the report says —

In the event, there were substantial cuts (\$250–300 million) to the public education budget in 2013–14 following the introduction of IPS, resulting in significant job losses in the WA Department of Education's head office and in regional offices, as well as reductions in the number of education assistants and family liaison personnel across the state.

That is the legacy of the former Liberal–National government that is exposed in the *Facing the facts* report. If the member for Roe wants to get up and quote from that report, he should also get up and own up to the fact that the political party that he belongs to was part of a coalition that is savaged in this report for its \$250 million to \$300 million cuts to public education. Members of the Liberal Party and Nationals WA will say and do whatever it takes to get elected, and we are going to see that more and more over the next 16 months—an opposition that is desperate to win back at the next election the furniture that it lost and is desperate to hoodwink the people of Western Australia again and get back into government. Opposition members will make a series of false promises about things like public education, when their record shows that they do not care for public education and they do not care for teachers in our public education system and all they are prepared to do is treat them as a ticket to a job in Dumas House.

MR H.T. JONES (Darling Range) [5.12 pm]: It is a pleasure to follow the member for Cockburn. I must admit that I was a bit disappointed when he jumped me, because he is a hard act to follow.

Mr P.J. Rundle: As long as you're not going to attack me like the member for Cockburn.

Mr H.T. JONES: I am inspired to attack the member for Roe now!

The other day, I was reading *The Guardian* online, which is the best publication in Australia for news, and the teacher shortage popped up as a story. I thought, "Oh no, the Libs have planted another story", but no, it was about New South Wales. I looked into it and I found, as the minister mentioned, that there are shortages everywhere. I googled it today and found that there is a worldwide teacher shortage. Does anyone want to have a guess at how

many teachers we need to educate every child in the world? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimates that we are short 44 million teachers to educate every child in the world. It is good news, though, because the figure is lower than it was a little while ago, when it was 69 million. Southern Asia has increased its teacher cohort. It is now only 7.8 million teachers short. The teacher shortage is everywhere around the globe. It is a competitive industry. The global reasons that people mention for the shortage is that teachers deal with high stress levels and have low salaries in some parts of the world. The director general of UNESCO said that we must better value, better train and better support teachers.

The lemon suckers opposite, as the member for Mandurah refers to them, try to undermine every institution they talk about in this place. I was struck when the member for Roe mentioned the \$5 billion surplus. It is never mentioned in terms of great economic management. There is always something to spend. He mentioned that the one thing that the WA government could do is spend more on teachers, but he forgets about the other areas he undermines all the time. I used to be in the Navy and I compare my life with being on a ship—that is how long I was in the Navy for. Morale is a powerful tool on a ship and in life. Since I have been in this place, I have been a bit disillusioned. Perhaps I was naive, but opposition members spend all their time undermining every occupation they can think of to score the political points that the member for Cockburn mentioned, in a desperate attempt to regain their seats and possibly government. I do not do that.

The member for Cockburn undermined one of my arguments. I am married to a teacher, but I was also taught by teachers. As a good local member, I get to every school in the electorate, and even those outside the electorate, as often as I can. It may seem a little woke to the member for Roe, but disability education is a focus of mine. As such, I am on the board of Kenwick School, which is miles away from my area. I was asked to be a board member of the school. My son went to that school, so I am passionate about the services it provides to children with disabilities. I went to the graduation recently and there were teachers and education assistants who do an immense job sometimes under trying circumstances, because some of the disabilities are quite profound. Sorry, Deputy Speaker, Kenwick School is obviously in your electorate, but I was glad to represent you at the graduation. Education assistants are vital. As the minister said, the opposition, not wanting to be woke, cut 1 000 education assistants in 2014. Of course, cutting education assistants puts more pressure on teachers, because education assistants perform roles in the classroom. They manage behaviour and prepare lesson equipment. They are in classrooms, making life easier for teachers. If the member wants to talk about supporting teachers, he should not cut education assistants.

Another school that I am a board member of is the Armadale Education Support Centre, which, again, is outside my area in the member for Armadale's seat. I correct that; I have been invited to be a board member of the Armadale Education Support Centre. I went to the graduation last week and it was probably the best graduation I have ever been to. It was very uplifting. The year 12 teacher, Jordan Walker, gave a fantastic graduation speech. It was really uplifting for the students and everyone in the audience. The education assistants at that institution do an immense job in performing their roles to make life much better and to take the workload off teachers in the woke area of social justice and providing education to people with disabilities.

As a local member, I talk my electorate up and I talk people up. Members should not talk people down because then morale suffers and people start to think that they are in an occupation that is undervalued. Teachers are in a noble profession. It has a high workload and high pressure, but there is great satisfaction when the kids graduate at the end of their schooling. I must admit that I was jealous of my wife, who is a teacher, because everyone came up to talk to her at the Kelmscott Agricultural Show. All these kids who had been her pupils and had graduated were saying, "Oh Mrs Tran, Mrs Tran", not knowing who I was. I will have to work more on my projection in the electorate. These are young people who may not use Facebook. That sort of thing is very gratifying. The member for Fremantle talked about doing some bricklaying. Seeing houses built gives a sense of satisfaction, and I think that seeing young people built is also a great source of satisfaction for teachers.

In the electorate, there is a network of principals at the state schools within Serpentine Jarrahdale. If we look at the different schools in the area, we see that some are very small and some are large. Jarrahdale Primary School has 64 students and six teaching staff. The biggest primary school in the area, West Byford Primary School, has 794 students and 46 staff, while Byford Secondary College has 1 416 students and 86 staff. Within the network, they support each other. We cannot expect Jarrahdale Primary School to have expertise in all the areas that the other schools have. The principals meet every month. They share ideas and resources and lend resources to each other. Teachers go between schools. The IT specialists sort out IT problems for people. The schools lend their venues to the other schools—they collaborate. A couple of weeks ago, the Minister for Education visited the network. Network members were able to have a great and frank conversation with the minister and highlight the issues that they are dealing with. The education of kids with disabilities was up there on their list. There is no denying that being a teacher is a difficult role and it takes a lot of resources. They expressed their ideas. It was not all about, "Give me more resources." It was about training the trainer. There is a lighthouse project at some of the schools in Geraldton and, within that, they teach teachers how to manage children with special needs and to share resources. That is the sort of thing that the wonderful principals in my electorate do, and I am sure principals all over the state do a similar thing. They are experienced and professional and they use the resources they have to get the best possible result. I will not talk them down. They are a wonderful cohort and they should be talked up.

All this negativity and white anting will not achieve anything. As the minister said, instead of pointing out things for video clips or to feed to journalists as news, what the minister wants from the opposition is some ideas: “How about you try this? This is something that I’ve read about and it’s a good idea”. Opposition members have to think about the impact that their words have on teachers. Teaching is a noble profession. Teachers should be applauded. Education assistants are just as important as teachers. Everyone involved in the education system should be built up and supported. I did not want to continue to use the word “supported”; I should have gone to school for a bit longer! I like to talk up my electorate, the teaching profession, police and nurses. That is the way to improve things.

MS K.E. GIDDENS (Bateman) [5.22 pm]: I am also pleased to make a short contribution to this motion and build on the positivity in the contribution of the member for Darling Range. I will not speak about the first part of the motion; I am confused as to why it has been structured in the way it has. Clearly, there is no evidence that the Western Australian government has failed in the context of what we have already talked about—namely, a national and international shortage. I will leave that and focus on the second part of this motion, which refers to the failure of the state government to provide a safe and supportive workplace for school staff, which, of course, is a motion that I fully disagree with. When I read this motion, my first reaction was a cynical eye roll: “Here we go, yet again. Our school staff, communities, students, parents and families are being used to score poorly conceived political points in this chamber.” The role of the opposition is really important. The opposition absolutely has a role to play in raising issues with the government and to ask it questions and hold it to account, but this is not the motion to do that.

After I got past my cynicism, I had the realisation that, in fact, only one person in the entire Liberal–National opposition has teaching experience. Giving members opposite the benefit of doubt, I will assume that perhaps this motion comes from a misunderstanding of the challenges and experiences of schools. I put on record that we on this side of the chamber have a proud record of supporting schools and teachers in public education in particular and that we have the experience of no fewer than 10 members of this government who are former teachers and principals. In fact, two former educators sit in cabinet, the very highest level of decision-making in the Cook government.

All teaching and non-teaching staff deserve a safe workplace—that goes without saying. Schools are unlike many work environments. As well as having the obligation to keep school staff, visitors and students safe, they have obligations under anti-discrimination legislation to provide an education to all young people. There is complexity in this job—disability, trauma, medical conditions, poverty, family violence, housing instability and neurodiversity, to name just a few. I would like to give some examples of what my teaching experience was like for the benefit of members of the opposition, although I note that only two opposition members are in the chamber. I doubt that their interest in this area is genuine. I hope my experience can inform the two members of the opposition who are in the chamber about what schools are like and the experience of educators, students and communities. What I am about to provide are the stories of real students in real schools, but I will obviously use false names to protect their identities.

Johnno, who was a student at a regional school at which I was doing a prac, was given a ride home by his teacher. That is the kind of thing that teachers in regional areas do that teachers in the metro environment may not do. When the teacher arrived outside Johnno’s house, Johnno became so scared that he was non-verbal. It was clear that Johnno had experienced severe family and domestic violence in the home and was scared to get out of the car.

Felicity started self-harming in year 3. She was concerned about her weight and image. She was active on social media and had a history of being bullied by her peers and sharing inappropriate images on Facebook and other social media networks. Sarah, who was a primary school student, smeared her own fecal matter on the toilet walls. Likewise, she was a victim–survivor of severe child abuse and family violence and she presented at school with very significant and complex behaviours. Peter was a student with ADHD who went on medication. He was an active and engaged student, but often his medication was stolen and sold by his big brother, and it was clear when Peter was off his medication. Max was a year 7 student who came to me and the school I was working at at the time. His trauma background was so severe that he was in the care of community services. He could not be fostered in a home and he could not live in a group home. He was looked after by 24/7, round-the-clock, paid carers in a house that was provided by the government. He was at school for three hours a day, if we could get him there. We worked with him on a one-on-two basis, with me as the teacher and an education assistant. We worked with him to provide him the opportunity of reintegration into a classroom learning environment. Samuel had an alcoholic father. He would be awake all night, often on his PlayStation or other devices, listening for the sounds of his father. When a student accidentally bumped into him in the canteen line, he would act aggressively. He was hypervigilant to risk. Jane had no nutritional food in her house and when she missed breakfast club because the car would not start, she could not concentrate and became disruptive in class.

I do not share these examples to demonstrate that schools are unsafe. I share these examples to demonstrate the incredible role of our schools and teachers in providing for the complexity and diversity of students from our community. They do that in a safe environment. It is an incredible achievement. The work they do is absolutely vital in our community and they are the unsung heroes. It is deeply rewarding work. We have heard that it is undervalued work. Motions like this do nothing to raise the value of our teachers, schools and educators.

As the member for Bateman, I now support our schools in a different context. I work with some incredible educators and schools that achieve great things, largely in an environment in which students are very well resourced and have great support from families and their community. I would like to share some of the amazing work that schools in Bateman are doing, such as Applecross Senior High School, which is a finalist in the 2023 WA Education Awards for excellence in teaching and learning. This nomination is extremely well deserved. I believe that the awards will be announced next Monday. The school's Facebook page boasts a vast array of activities, opportunities and achievements for its students. Currently, the tennis team is in Brisbane competing in the national high school championships. We can see on that page examples of visual and creative art and drama; musicals; fundraising to give back to other communities in need; vocational education and training programs and courses; and a range of pathways to meet the needs of all the students in that community.

Last week, I visited the school to see the result of Labor's 2021 election commitment of \$1.5 million for a new science classroom. It was great. The kids were in the classroom, racing cars that they had designed from scratch and made using a laser cutter. They were doing a whole bunch of maths and STEM around that activity. I have to say that the member for Roe's call to bring back the basics is such a simplified call that absolutely does not reflect the work that happens in our schools. I guarantee that those things are not simple, and they should not be. Our kids are engaged with a range of tools across curriculum areas that are complex, exciting and engaging. As part of the \$1.5 million election commitment that was delivered, kids are using laser-cutter machines and 3D printers. I do not want our schools to go back to basics. That does not represent the workplace and the skills we need for the future, or the opportunities and skills that our kids need.

At Applecross Senior High School, I met Avery and Milla, two year 9 students who were selected for next year's Premier's Anzac student tour. The competition is for year 9 to 12 students, and two students from Applecross Senior High School were selected.

Also last Friday, the same day—a busy day—the year 7 transition students from across Bateman were at Applecross Senior High School, including my own son. I know with absolute confidence that those students who will be going into Applecross Senior High School will have the very best quality education with the very best teachers and support staff.

I will make one more very brief important comment. When we talk about failure, there is an obvious claim that things have not been done that should have been done. I put on the record that Minister Buti has been to my electorate and met with not only Applecross Senior High School but also all my primary schools so that the principals and key staff of those schools could have a direct conversation with the Minister for Education in this state. That was not just it. I have had feedback from a number of schools that the issues they raised at that meeting had been addressed by the minister—that the department had been in contact with them and the issues had been actioned. There is no failure by this minister or members on this side to support schools, and particularly public education.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [5.34 pm]: My son has completed his formative schooling years and my daughter will soon complete year 10, both at local public high schools. They first went to Palmyra Primary School and then went on to Melville Senior High School. I quite literally have skin in the game on the matter before us today.

I am fiercely proud and protective of my kids and of our public education system here in Western Australia. I speak with firsthand knowledge when I say how grateful I am for the comprehensive whole-of-child approach to education that my children and their peers receive in their public schools. I join the minister in calling out the hypocrisy of a conservative member of this place lecturing us on investment in public education. I remember the cruel cuts of the Barnett Liberal–National government in 2013 and 2014. I remember working with my fellow parents and citizens presidents from across the southern suburbs to join together to form a group called Save Our Schools. We joined unions and the wider community to campaign to put our kids first. I remember marching up the Terrace with my daughter and many other families on that occasion. I remember when the education assistants left our classrooms because of those cuts. It was a major reason and, quite frankly, the catalyst for me being here today. We know that things like workload, administrative burden and the challenges that come with supporting complex learning and mental health can make this workplace difficult for our teachers.

While I have a moment, I congratulate the Minister for Education for his leadership and extraordinary commitment to supporting our teachers and support staff in an increasingly challenging environment.

DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands) [5.36 pm]: I thank my colleague the member for Bicton for allowing me the space to rise to oppose this motion and instead give an example of how the Cook Labor government has invested in our public schools to create spaces for students and teachers alike that are safe, inclusive and engaged in best practice, not only creating safe and supportive workplaces but also delivering amazing student outcomes. Like the minister, I start by acknowledging the best practice teaching work that we see every single day in our public schools. I see that as not only a local member, but also a parent and a proud product myself of WA's education system.

I chose to live in Nedlands so that my children could go to Shenton College, an award-winning school with award-winning teachers and leaders. Decades earlier, my parents moved to Nedlands so we could go to

Hollywood Senior High School. The tradition of great public schooling in my community continues. I will use one example from one school in my electorate. In fact, I have had to limit my highlights reel about this school to the last few months, as its great student outcomes are so abundant. Earlier this term, I had the honour of attending the opening of the second stage of Bob Hawke College, a state-of-the-art inner-metropolitan school that is beautifully integrated into its local environment and surrounds. It is the first high-density secondary college in WA, and that is only where the innovation at this school begins.

The minister and Premier were at the opening to see not just the physical spectacle of the school, but also the vibrant culture that has been created and the student-led practices so highly valued by the school. Some of the \$53.9 million investment in the second stage includes new state-of-the-art facilities to provide a hub for student talent and creativity, including a performing arts centre; a theatre with capacity for 350 people; dance and visual arts studios; music rooms; general classrooms; student service facilities; and multidisciplinary playing courts. There are also low-sensory classrooms for neurodivergent students.

In a very “woke” move led by students and their social justice club, the board, P&C and school leadership created safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQIA+ students. This is the kind of woke, safe and inclusive space that will mean better student engagement, retention and behaviour. Of course, buildings and facilities are only part of the story. I will tell members about some of the teachers and leaders at Bob Hawke College. Today, it advertised the Bob Hawke Aboriginal teacher scholarships, named, of course, in honour of Bob Hawke’s lifelong commitment to and support of Indigenous rights, and his vision of a fair and inclusive Australia. This scholarship will contribute to creating culturally responsible environments that build on the strength of the many Aboriginal students who attend Bob Hawke College, by engaging them in learning and enabling them to thrive academically, socially and culturally. These scholarships will provide for Aboriginal postgraduate and undergraduate students to complete secondary teaching qualifications, building fantastic workforce capacity in the short term and cultural capacity in the longer term.

Four days ago, it held the 2023 retreat for its 40 new staff and 300 new students, learning together about the vision, culture and practice of the college. The college is a finalist in the excellence in disability and inclusion category of the WA Education Awards for 2023. This award acknowledges schools that demonstrate excellence in meeting the diverse needs of students, parents, families and communities. It recognises schools that provide engaging and inclusive learning programs and environments for students with a disability or an imputed disability.

Under the leadership of principal John Burke, the school leadership structure includes, of course, a board and a parents and citizens association, but it also includes a student board, giving students a say in the decisions impacting them.

Let us see where these kinds of teacher-engagement and capacity-building strategies land the students. Recently, Bob Hawke College students were the first-place winners of the Minister’s Innovation Challenge 2023. They were up against 30 other schools from WA, and they looked at solutions to ease traffic congestion at Matthews Netball Centre in Wembley. Any netball parent knows that this is something of a wicked problem on a Saturday morning. They developed an app prototype that uses AI to predict car park availability and provides a carpooling option for its consumers. As part of the process, students engaged in a partnership with the Town of Cambridge and are now continuing that collaboration to develop the app further.

This month, a team of five Bob Hawke College students won the Planning Institute of Australia’s award that recognises outstanding planning work by secondary students in WA. Their nomination addressed social planning, environmental planning, transport planning, urban design and economic development planning in a project of designing a sustainable suburb.

Bob Hawke College student Lachlan Wheals has been selected to be on White Ribbon Australia’s youth advisory group, a national group of 12 young adults aged 13 to 17. Lachlan is one of three students from WA. The group will meet quarterly to discuss and shape key messages and actions to prevent violence against women and children. He will participate in the annual national meeting as well. It is a really important role to acknowledge during the 16 Days in WA of activism against violence against women and girls. He is a young man whom perhaps some other community leaders could learn from as tonight we face the closure of the Safe Night Space for Women in the City of Perth. People can use their position, leadership and passion to make a difference to the lives of others.

In another arena, Bob Hawke College won the School Sport Western Australia interschool gold carnival last month. Finally, team Bob Hawke College won the mock trial competition. Their team Legally Brunette won the 2023 Law Society of Western Australia mock trial competition. The competition began earlier this year with 116 teams but came down to two—Bob Hawke College and Rossmoyne Senior High School—at a trial in the old Supreme Court adjudicated by the Chief Justice of WA. The victory is even more impressive for Bob Hawke College because its year 10 students were competing against year 11 and year 12 students throughout the yearlong competition.

This is just a number of examples from one school that this Cook Labor government built, created and invested in. It has invested in teachers and in building their capacity to lead amazing student outcomes.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman**.

COMMUNITY SAFETY — FRONTLINE WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS*Motion*

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [5.43 pm]: I move —

That this house applauds our frontline workers and volunteers who work hard to keep Western Australians safe and notes that the Western Australian Labor government is failing in its promise to do so, instead continuing to disregard the concerns of frontline personnel.

Nothing illustrates the respect that Western Australians have for our volunteers, especially, and for our frontline paid personnel who battled the fires on the weekend and still battle to keep them under control. Despite the best efforts that they were able to muster, homes were unfortunately lost. Fortunately, no lives were lost, and we should be very grateful for that, considering the ferocity of the fires. It is a testament to the work of the paid and volunteer frontline personnel and to the work of the people who looked after pets and people when they were evacuated to make sure that they were safe. That was a great testament to the frontline personnel in our state, and it speaks well to this motion, which seeks to acknowledge the efforts of such people. This is not just about that incident. Right across our state, whenever there is an emergency, a fire, a flood, a cyclone, a traffic accident or a lost person, a volunteer or paid frontline worker is there to pick up the slack and make sure that people are safe or as safe as possible. I reiterate that nothing I talk about here takes away from the efforts of those frontline workers and the regard in which they should be held. We are talking about a very special group of tens of thousands of people across the state who work so hard to keep Western Australians safe in emergencies and in our health system. The member for Vasse will talk about some of the frontline workers in the health system as we go through the discussion.

Seven years into this Labor government, we see that the critical frontline workers who are doing such heavy lifting are often not well supported by the government. For instance, the preparedness of some aspects of our bush firefighting capacity is not necessarily as it should be, and that is the government's responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the volunteers or the workers in that sector.

I point to work that the shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Hon Martin Aldridge, has been doing in this regard. He has made it clear in some of his statements, in the numbers of questions that he has asked and in the numbers of inquiries he has made that there are chronic problems with staffing shortages and the age of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services operational fleet. From the work he has done, his view is that at the beginning of the bushfire season—we recently saw the dangers of that—DFES remains crippled because of staff shortages in crucial roles, such as technicians and auto-electricians. At the time of his very recent inquiries, a month or two ago in September at the beginning of spring, those levels were down to about 50 per cent of operational capacity. That means that the fleet is at risk of not being as prepared as it should be. I am not saying that they are not making the effort. This is about the resources that the organisation is putting towards the situation. Vacancies exist in the organisation. When he made those inquiries, 50 positions had been vacant for over a year. Critical roles had not been filled for over a year. Some of the staff roles include a breathing apparatus technician, which was vacant for more than 600 days; a mechanical technician role, which was vacant for more than 770 days; and an auto-electrician role, which was vacant for over 380 days. We see chronic staff shortages in key areas of frontline operational matters.

Nearly 200 trucks have exceeded their recommended service life, and dozens of them are over 20 years old. Although the Minister for Emergency Services might not think that is much of a problem, it certainly is if personnel are being sent out in vehicles that are not up to date. I am not making allegations of any sort because of the staff shortages, but when resources are not available, mistakes can be made. I point that out because that is the area for which the government is responsible. As has been famously said, the government minister does not hold the hose —

Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Ms L. METTAM: Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is obviously not inviting interjections, and I cannot properly hear his contribution.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Liberal Party. There is no point of order. Carry on, Leader of the Opposition.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: I thank you for your protection, Deputy Speaker.

There is a very famous comment—it became unfortunate—that the minister and Prime Minister do not hold the hose, but they supply the hose. They supply the money for the hose. They supply the support to make sure that the hose will have water coming out of it when it is plugged into a hydrant. If we do not get all those things right, it does not matter who is on the ground, they will not be able to contest the fire. Hon Martin Aldridge highlighted the failure of the minister to ensure that the proper resources were available so that the frontline people who are out there risking their lives for the community were well supported. That is critically important, and the government needs to take heed of this because we know that the fire season in this year could well be very severe indeed.

Another matter that Hon Martin Aldridge has raised on behalf of emergency services personnel is the presumption regarding post-traumatic stress disorder. Ambulance paramedics were granted extended protection for PTSD from February 2022 and career firefighters from May 2023, but volunteers who are on the front line beside those career firefighters do not have the same presumption. After denying this for the Western Australia Police Force, earlier this week the Premier did a backflip and said that he will allow police officers that presumption. It is a welcome thing. I am glad that that has happened. It should have happened earlier. The point is that Hon Martin Aldridge has on occasions been raising this issue and, in fact, sought to make amendments to the Workers Compensation and Injury Management Bill, which would have increased protections for those volunteers who were diagnosed with PTSD. That would have brought all the emergency services into line with one another. The presumption of PTSD protection will alleviate some of the burden of proof regarding a person's condition when they are seeking some sort of compensation or treatment. Without that presumption, they will have delays and costs, and they may not be able to receive the support that they are asking for.

Last month, an open letter signed by various organisations, which together represented 26 000 volunteers, called for this matter to be dealt with. I have a copy of the State Emergency Service Volunteers Association of WA newsletter and it is signed by bushfire volunteers, SES volunteers and a whole range of other volunteer fire and rescue services people. Reading from that, Volunteer Marine Rescue Western Australia was also involved and the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services Association of WA. They said —

We express our profound disappointment and concern over the recent decision made by the Labor government, in collaboration with the Greens, to vote ... against the amendment proposed by the Opposition to extend presumptive PTSD protection to our dedicated emergency service volunteers. The same volunteers who tirelessly serve our communities day in and day out and save the state more than 2 billion dollars per year.

Mr M.J. Folkard: I don't recall seeing this letter!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach.

Mr M.J. Folkard: What a load of nonsense.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member!

Mr R.S. LOVE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

These combined organisations represent 26 000 people.

Mr M.J. Folkard: No! Pretends to represent. It pretends!

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Burns Beach!

Mr R.S. LOVE: These are the people who put their time aside and take risks to ensure that their communities are safe. Often, they may well be the only people who, for a considerable length of time, can respond to a situation because, as we know, some areas are more isolated from help than others.

I will move to the issue of the shortage of ambulance volunteers in our state. In many country areas—I had some information here, but it does not really matter—over the half a dozen years or so the volunteer ambulance services in electorates such as mine have been extremely stressed. We have seen a dramatic fall in the number of available volunteers, which puts pressure back on the volunteers who remain. This puts the community at greater risk because there could well be a considerable length of time between a call-out and an ambulance arriving. Recently, one of the longest-serving doctors in my electorate of Moora wrote to me, with great concern, about how much risk was being placed on the community because of the shortage of ambulance volunteers. In North Midlands, between Moora and Geraldton, a number of smaller communities, such as Perenjori, Morawa, Three Springs, Mingenew et cetera, have very real pressures on their ambulance services.

In March 2019, the WA Country Health Service did a review, which was endorsed, on having a sustainable ambulance service in country areas. I think the government, through WACHS, needs to continually revisit that idea to ensure that the country areas have a sustainable ambulance service because in some of the areas that I represent, the ambulance providers and volunteers themselves are coming to me saying that they do not believe they can guarantee their communities will be safe under these current arrangements. This is not me saying this; this is the doctors and ambos themselves telling me that they do not have a view that their communities are being kept safe at the moment. The government will say that that is just the word of volunteer organisations, but the government, through WACHS, is the one who is ultimately responsible to ensure that the health system works in those regional areas.

One of the concerns is that many, many volunteer hours are chewed up in patient transfers between hospitals in those smaller centres and smaller nursing posts, or from smaller hospitals to a major hospital in Geraldton, Perth or even Northam. Although some of the ambulance services are happy for that to happen, because they get paid to do that, and it helps pay for their ambulance et cetera, it eventually chews up the volunteers' energy, so those volunteers are becoming much more stressed and there are fewer on the ground. Something has to happen. In some of those towns there is no operational ambulance because there is simply no-one to run it. WACHS will have to look into this issue to ensure that, going forward, we are confident that our communities are safe.

Another matter of grave concern to my communities at the moment is the changeover in the provision of services in a number of nursing posts and smaller medical centres with Silver Chain withdrawing from providing that service. There are 11 centres across Western Australia. Most of them are in the wheatbelt or in the midwest; four are in the electorate of Moore, another four are in the Central Wheatbelt and the rest are spread across the state with one in Roe, one in Kalgoorlie and one in North West Central. This is an issue of concern for those communities. I have been contacted by people who are very concerned about whether there will be a continuation of the service that they have had from Silver Chain in those communities. Some of them are not that small and not that remote. I will list the towns: Shark Bay, Leeman, Eneabba, Mingenew, Lancelin, Bencubbin, Beacon, Brookton, Hyden, Walpole and Eucla. There will be an impact pretty much from the furthest west to the furthest east of the state and pretty well the entirety of the south west land division.

Today the member for Central Wheatbelt asked the minister a question in this place: would the minister guarantee that the service level would be maintained in those centres? Disappointingly, we did not get that guarantee. We did not even get a guarantee from the minister to say she would look closely at it to ensure that what could be done, would be done. Instead, we were left with a very airy statement about stress in the health system and difficulty in staffing across the state, which left me with no confidence whatsoever that we will see a system where those Silver Chain centres will be staffed in the way they have been before.

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We understand that Silver Chain is pulling out, minister. I am not denying that, but someone has to step in —

Mr P. Papalia interjected.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: I have a point of order. The member is not accepting interjections and the minister will be responding in short order.

The SPEAKER: Minister, you will have the opportunity to respond, I hope. Leader of the Opposition.

Debate Resumed

Mr R.S. LOVE: Those communities are looking at a changeover that is happening around March. They have great uncertainty whether they will be receiving services after that simple request for the minister to guarantee that services will continue. In the main, these are WA Country Health Service facilities. The situation at Lancelin has been a bit of an oddball one for years in my view. Within the Shire of Gingin, a shire of around 6 000 people, there is no public health facility that is run by WACHS to my knowledge. It has a nursing post in Lancelin but it has been run under a contract with Silver Chain. The miserable nature of that contract over the years I think has led to the situation that Silver Chain consider it is no longer viable to continue. I have raised that with numerous ministers over the years and, unfortunately, we have not seen much of a result.

We know our health system and our frontline services that keep us safe have been under a lot of stress. Through COVID, the nurses and police kept Western Australia strong. They kept order in the state and had to undertake new roles that they had not done before. Their roles changed and the way they went about their business to deal with the need to wear more protective clothing, to lockdown areas of the state, to keep tabs on where people were and to run a new system of identification of citizens, following them wherever they went into shops through the apps that people were required to use. It was unprecedented and it put a lot of stress on those personnel. As we know, as we come out of that situation, there has been general acceptance that there has been a rise in mental health issues. That has led to a lack of respectful behaviour towards police and nurses in hospital systems. Those two groups especially have been voicing concerns to the government about the support they are getting, their working conditions and their remuneration. There is also a feeling of lack of respect as much as anything else from this government. It does not seem to want to listen to the point that I understand the nurses at least are looking at running candidates for Parliament at the 2025 election because they obviously feel that is the only way they are going to be heard. They are looking at the government at the moment and saying “These people are not listening. Here’s an opportunity with the change this government put in place with a lower quota to get a seat in the upper house.” That had been the case before. Nurses are thinking that perhaps the best way forward for them is to be directly represented in Parliament. People in the police force are also talking about that. I do not know whether that eventuated but it was certainly a topic of discussion for the police. They were to discuss a motion at their recent conference. I have not seen an announcement about the result of that, but I dare say we will know in the fullness of time, or the minister may be able to enlighten us where that went. The point is that the police who put that motion forward did not feel supported. They did not feel they had a government that had their backs and they felt they had to directly address issues in the Parliament of Western Australia. That is very disappointing for them to feel undervalued and they felt they had to take that path forward.

I had talked about the situation with emergency services volunteers. I also want to point out very quickly something that has been raised in this place on a number of occasions. The government has gagged the volunteers who work under the Department of Fire and Emergency Services umbrella from talking to members of Parliament. For the life

of me, I have never been able to understand why the government felt that was appropriate. The code of conduct that all the volunteers in those organisations are forced to sign prohibits them from talking to members of Parliament. It seems odd to me. It often appears it applies only to members of Parliament who are not members of the Labor Party, because certainly during cyclone Seroja, I was refused access to community hubs and other government facilities that were providing services to my constituents, yet Labor MPs were being used as a conduit for information. People were told to send their concerns directly to a member of Parliament who was not the local member of Parliament but an upper house member of the Labor Party.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

Mr R.S. LOVE: That is a fact, minister.

We have consistently asked in this place over the last six years that the ban be reconsidered. I remember the former member for Warren–Blackwood, Hon Terry Redman, having a good old exchange in this place with the then Minister for Emergency Services, the former member for Cockburn. It has been going on ever since. Members on this side are denied access to facilities. They are not invited to go to facility openings et cetera but that is not the issue. The issue is that the people who are in those organisations need to be able to address their concerns to members of Parliament. If they do not feel safe in the organisation and they want to come to a member of Parliament and talk about that, they should be able to. If they do not feel that the conditions they are working in are appropriate, even as a volunteer, and they want to directly address that with their member of Parliament, they should be able to. To me that is one of the most telling indicators of a government that does not want to see accountability or an effective representation of issues that they find inconvenient. It does not like listening to members from this side bringing forward the issues of concern that exist in those organisations. The government has consistently sought to silence the voices of the 26 000 volunteers who are affected by those codes of conduct. Why on earth it is deemed to be appropriate for a volunteer to talk to a member who happens to be a member of a party that is in government, but not appropriate to talk to a member who is a member of the opposition is beyond me. I think it is abhorrent and I give the commitment that in any government I am a part of, I will not stand for that to be the case. Labor members on the other side would be able to speak to those volunteers, as they should.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [6.10 pm]: I rise to make a really short contribution to the motion. I acknowledge many of the challenges faced by the frontline people and services right across the state. In saying that, I also acknowledge the challenges that we have faced with in managing and providing for all those frontline people.

I first acknowledge the incredible work that our frontline workers undertake with incredible dedication and commitment, often going well above and beyond the call of duty. In regional areas, where I come from, and extremely remote areas, this is often with very limited resources and a diminishing number of volunteers. One of the towns in my electorate was down to two volunteer ambos. Both them were away so people hoped and prayed nothing would happen over that weekend. In the event that it did, it would be a very long wait for the Royal Flying Doctor Service or someone travelling long distances from another town. When we talk about getting assistance for frontline people, these frontline people are just as stressed when they cannot be there. The member for Moore touched on the issue of the diminishing numbers and it is absolutely a problem in these areas. The volunteers' mental health is affected by this as well.

Perth is a long way from the north. The further away we are, the less reliable services are, for obvious reasons, and it becomes more complex and less consistent. It impacts our retention on population across the regions, with people feeling that the services are not there to support their families if they are to move there. They also have problems with understanding how they will be taken care of if a specialist is a long way away. For example, a constituent has a child who needs attention urgently regularly; it is not a reason to move to a location if they cannot access the relevant doctors.

The member for Moore touched on this matter; I also find it amazing that as members of Parliament we are not allowed to enter a lot of the voluntary services. I get that regularly from groups, such as the State Emergency Service; they cannot understand why we cannot visit their premises and attend some of their functions. These rescue services are critical. The ambulance officers, the police and the firefighters are absolute heroes and they need support and to have someone to speak to. Sometimes they are in a bad place. They just need a conversation. That person needs to be there and be accessible. I understand exactly what the member for Moore was commenting on, because this happens regularly. In small communities, being a volunteer is stressful because often they know the person whom they are rescuing. Depending on what they are attending, it can be really, really life-changing for those people. Suicide and mental health is a major issue in the regions and something that all these frontline people have to grapple with. Having that support for them is crucial.

I am going to touch on the safe house that I spoke about in question time today. I have highlighted this issue in here for a long time and many people in the community have highlighted it as well. It is a crucial facility. Yes, there are services and facilities that everyone needs to work with, and I have admiration for all those services and programs that are in place. I thank the minister for having those in place, but this safe house is really something that will be life-changing for a lot of these children.

In the case of domestic violence, someone not being able to take their 12-year-old child to the refuge overnight is potentially resulting in people not leaving vulnerable situations. This safe house, hopefully, would cater for that cohort of children along with those ones who are on the streets at all hours of the night and need a safe space and somewhere to go. The street patrols do a fabulous job in the north and they keep the streets as safe as they can until 10 o'clock at night. After that time, they are looking for a safe space to take these children because they often cannot find somewhere to take them. It is crucial. I think that police are in the same situation. They can talk to the kids on the street. They will tell me that they speak to them, but they do not have anywhere to take them. I think if we are serious about keeping these kids safe, it needs to be prioritised. In all these towns there needs to be somewhere at that critical time—late into the night and in the early mornings—where they can go and we can protect them.

I refer to domestic violence and the refuge in Carnarvon. There needs to be a transitional house and the facilitators are looking at ways of creating one so that people do not have to go straight from the refuge back into the situation they came from. I refer to the drug and alcohol centre in the town. There is anecdotal information that drug use, particularly in Carnarvon, is increasing. I know it is across the towns, from what I am hearing. However, the drug and alcohol centre in the town of Carnarvon is open for only part of the week. That is a wraparound service that we need to make sure we ramp up to support these frontline people who are dealing with these issues. Again a lot of those are volunteers. They are picking these people up and it is really tricky for them if there is nowhere to take them to other than the hospital. That is a specific service that can be ramped up.

I refer to community safety. Right across our state, and in the north, it is often the volunteers who are dealing with some of these situations and are needing the assistance.

I refer to education in schools. I heard the previous private member's business motion that was spoken about. I think some members touched on bringing back the old ways of teaching. My understanding from where I live and I come from is that the cohorts of kids in classrooms are vastly different. Some kids have spent eight days in one year in a classroom. They are eight years old and they get returned to a grade 3 classroom when they have done only a month of schooling in their lifetime. It is creating issues. It is creating anger with those children who do not know how to react because they do not feel comfortable in that space. My take on that is we need to also investigate other ways for certain cohorts of these children in these areas which are of concern to find educational pathways. Some of the educators I have spoken to in my region at times feel like they are not getting the support levels that they need. They are feeling vulnerable at times.

As the member for Moore touched on, health is also an issue. We have the Meekatharra Hospital, Tom Price Hospital and Paraburdoo Hospital projects and a number of other projects. People are working in tired and old facilities, which is also putting stress on those frontline people. The nursing posts have been touched on, but for me, mental health and suicide really is something that we need to address, particularly in the regions. It is a massive issue. Those frontline people again need additional support in that area.

I would also like to make a last point. One of the observations that a lot of people make, and I have noticed, is that a large number of the regional managers have been centralised to locations a very long way from these towns, which is making them inaccessible. I think for the frontline people who work in those departments, without the senior regional managers in those towns it is really difficult to get guidance and direction in some really tricky situations. I encourage the government to consider returning some of the senior regional managers into some of those towns, which I think will give those people on the front line a lot more support and a direct line to report to. I will leave it there and pass on to my colleagues.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [6.19 pm]: At the outset, I wish to echo the comments made by the Leader of the Opposition that we have the highest regard for frontline workers in the state of Western Australia. In many ways, we critically depend on them for all the services they provide. It is interesting that the Labor Party portrays itself as a friend and the party that champions the workers. We hear a lot about that in opposition, but in government, it is anything but.

I will start by talking about a couple of issues that highlight the disregard that the Cook Labor government has for workers in Western Australia. I go back to the tragic and unfortunate death of Aishwarya Aswath in Perth Children's Hospital in April 2021. We on this side understand that children and people die in hospitals; that is an unfortunate fact of medical centres, in particular in relation to the illness suffered by that poor young child. What is the appropriate response to that as a government? The appropriate response is to carry out a detailed investigation, following which appropriate actions are taken. What happened under this Cook Labor government? We saw the young nurses and doctors get thrown under a bus, being referred to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency before the investigation in the hospital was even completed. I spoke with the medical staff, as did the Leader of the Liberal Party. They were utterly gutted and betrayed. They felt that they were being victimised and the government was making a scapegoat of them. The ministers in this place made the point that they did not make the referral but, boy, I think they came into this place with glee, talking about that referral and implying in some way that Aishwarya's death was caused by a failure of the staff. Subsequent investigations revealed that that was an absolute lie. There were system failures. Staff were massively overworked. The now Premier claimed in this place that there were appropriate staffing levels in that hospital. In fact, there were not appropriate staffing levels in that hospital.

Subsequently, a coronial inquiry was conducted, which made a number of findings. The Cook Labor government said that it would implement those findings. I stand to be corrected, but I think we are still waiting for some of those recommended changes to be implemented in the hospital system.

The government blamed the frontline workers. I hear the Minister for Health and others saying from time to time that they value the nurses. The minister tells us in this place how wonderful the nurses are but when it is convenient, ministers came into this place and blamed the workers. The doctors and nurses have not forgotten that at all. They know how they were treated. They know how they felt when they were thrown under the bus and when there were systemic failures, which were under the control of the government.

Let us look at where we are with nurses and the pay dispute that is still unresolved. Our nurses were the best paid in Australia in 2017. Now our nurses are the worst paid in Australia.

Mr W.J. Johnston: That's not true.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will respond to that interjection directly. The government plays this game, saying that that is not true, which the Minister for Energy said while sitting across the chamber. He should look at the detail. He is a detail minister. He should look at the relative comparison and the ratings that are used across Australia. If he looks at the substantial grouping of nurses and the substantial number of nurses in those groupings, he would see that our nurses are the worst paid in Australia. That is a simple fact.

Mr W.J. Johnston interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Energy, there should be time for you to contribute to the debate if you would like to. You have made your point in response to the member for Cottesloe repeatedly. I do not think it advances anything to continue to repeat it.

Dr D.J. HONEY: What was the response of this government about the workers? It threatened the nurses union with deregistration. It stopped the Your Voice in Health survey. It is now back. I want to talk about that a little. The government was so embarrassed by the results of that survey, which proved how those nurses were being mistreated, that it stopped the survey. Now it has brought it back. I will reflect on some of the outcomes now that it has been reinstated after a substantial hiatus and when the government simply did not hear from the nurses. I will provide some of the results from the latest Your Voice in Health survey. Only 47 per cent of nurses felt their employer cared about their health and wellbeing. Almost one in four believed their leaders were being honest in their communication with staff. Almost one in four believed that. Just over half said their employer inspires them to do their best job. Only 55 per cent felt decisions and behaviours of senior management were consistent with the organisation's values. The most terrifying result of that latest survey is that 55 per cent disagreed with the statement that it was safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done. That is more than half. Imagine that! More than half the nurses surveyed did not believe they could safely speak up. Imagine a clinical environment in which people speak up! That is absolutely pivotal to the best delivery of health services to people. Over 55 per cent of nurses felt that it was safe to speak up. No wonder the nurses are now forming their own political party. They feel so betrayed by this Labor government that they need their own voice to get their views heard. This Labor government has shown complete disrespect for those frontline health staff and our hospital workers.

I want to focus on doctors for a couple of minutes. It does not get much airing in this place but the way junior clinicians are treated in the hospital system by the Cook Labor government is an absolute disgrace. They are forced to work appalling hours and do appalling amounts of overtime. They are constantly on call. They cannot take breaks because there is a complete under-resourcing of doctors in hospitals. A large majority of young clinicians in our hospitals are constantly working on six-month or one-year contracts. I have spoken to clinicians in their seventh, eighth and later years in the hospital system who have never been on a contract for more than one year. I am sure that the Minister for Industrial Relations, wearing his industrial relations hat and his former union hat, would think that was appalling for any other worker. Those clinicians that we rely on in our hospital system are being abused in that way. They have no job certainty. They never know whether they will have a job because they are constantly on short contracts. Talk about treating those clinicians with disrespect. All other public servants got the \$3 000 bonus after the COVID pandemic and after pay rises were restricted. All other public servants got those pay rises. Do members know who did not get those pay rises? The young doctors and clinicians in our hospitals were denied the \$3 000 cash payment. They were absolutely denied it.

Mr W.J. Johnston: It's not true.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister can sit there and say that but it is absolutely the case. What an absolute disgrace by this Labor government. That is not how we treat workers with respect. There is no respect in the way that those young clinicians are treated by this government. They are among the lowest paid clinicians in Australia. For example, in Tasmania, the equivalent rates are about 20 per cent above the rates in Western Australia.

We have the issue with the police, which has already been covered in some part. We have a minister who likes to talk up law and order, yet the pay deal for the police has still not been resolved.

Mr W.J. Johnston: Yes, we have. The agreement's been registered. It was registered ages ago.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I stand to be corrected. I am happy to know that. It took an enormous period of time before —
Mr R.S. Love: They have voted to form their own political party.

Dr D.J. HONEY: I am about to come to that. An enormous period of time elapsed before that was the case. Again, the WA Police Union was so dismayed with its treatment by this Labor government that it is talking about forming its own political party. The government has come around. There has been a failure to keep our community safe, with record rates of serious crime. There is understaffing in our jails and enormous pressure on the frontline staff in our jails. We hear this story constantly; that is, the outstanding individuals who make up the staff in our jails, who work in the most enormously difficult circumstances, are under enormous pressure because they do not have adequate staffing. That sits at the feet of this Labor government. The reality is that under the Cook Labor government, Western Australians are less safe, and people are waiting longer than ever to be treated when they arrive at hospitals by ambulance and longer than ever to be treated for serious conditions.

The government says that it cares about frontline workers, but how did it treat St John Ambulance when it expressed concern about delays and ambulance ramping? The government launched an upper house inquiry to intimidate St John Ambulance. In July 2021, I believe, the government launched that inquiry into St John Ambulance to intimidate it because it did not like the fact that it was telling the truth about what is happening with ramping at hospitals. Those volunteers and permanent ambulance staff felt that they were being intimidated by this government. That is how this Labor government treats frontline workers. It does not treat frontline workers in this state with respect. The Labor Party does not live up to its promise to be the friend of workers. When the Labor Party is in government, it is quite the opposite.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [6.31 pm]: I rise to make a brief contribution to this debate in order to allow the minister to provide a response in the time remaining. I certainly back and commend the other members of the opposition for making such valuable contributions to this debate. As the Leader of the Opposition and other opposition members have stated, we are very supportive of the outstanding work that our frontline workers in this state undertake in a range of portfolios.

A particular focus I have had as shadow Minister for Health has obviously been the health portfolio. As the member for Cottesloe has highlighted, the way this critical workforce has been treated under the Cook Labor government has been absolutely disgraceful. The Your Voice in Health survey highlighted that morale has been at an all-time low under this government, with just one-third of this critical health workforce feeling safe about speaking up, and many not feeling comfortable or supported in their workforce. Also, the nurse and health workforce at Perth Children's Hospital was, effectively, thrown under the bus in the wake of the tragedy surrounding Aishwarya Aswath before the conclusions of the investigation of that tragedy were made, with a coronial inquest highlighting significant systemic failings.

The SPEAKER: Attorney General, if you could keep your voice down or have your conversation elsewhere, please. Leader of the Liberal Party.

Ms L. METTAM: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We have a hospital system under extraordinary pressure as well, with a workforce working in conditions highlighting a lack of resourcing. Let us not forget that in 2017 our now Premier told Western Australians that the former government was failing in the health portfolio. I quote the Premier at that time. He said —

... record ambulance ramping, record waitlists and ... no plan for healthcare in WA ...

That is how he framed the so-called failings of the former government. The inconvenient truth for our now Premier is that in 2017 ambulances were ramped for around for 9 834 hours, and this year to date they were ramped for 47 190 hours. That represents a 380 per cent increase, highlighting a real failure of the government on health and supporting these health workers. That is certainly at the foot of this government. Also on this government's watch, the elective surgery waitlist has increased to 52 per cent higher than in 2017, with 30 000 people now waiting for surgery, or 10 000 more than when this government took over the health portfolio. That is just one area. As the member for Cottesloe has highlighted, under this government's watch we have a workforce that has gone from being the highest paid in the country to the lowest.

We have significant issues with safety at Perth Children's Hospital. I have touched on the tragedy of Aishwarya Aswath while she was waiting for assistance. As the member for Cottesloe has stated, there are still recommendations of the coronial and other reports to that matter that have not been addressed, with there yet to be a supernumerary resuscitation team put in place. That was a key recommendation. We heard of a 13-year-old girl allegedly being raped in a mental health ward. About two years after that alleged incident took place, the key recommendation about the safety of the environment is yet to be addressed. There were recent reports of a family with a 10-year-old boy who was turned away from hospital five times despite him attempting suicide several times and being a danger to his family. This is simply not good enough.

Of course, another frontline service is police, which I imagine the Minister for Police will highlight and focus on in his response. We have had a number of concerns about the lack of support for our police force. There has been

an exodus of police officers leaving the force, in fact, the largest number in the state's 189-year history. This police force is under extraordinary pressure. The number of officers who have resigned is about three times the average for a year. It is not good enough. Under Labor's watch we have seen extraordinary pressure. We could be doing so much better in law and order. There is no doubt that our frontline police officers feel let down when it comes to law and order. There has been a 45 per cent increase in domestic violence offences compared with 2017. We have seen the tragedy of 15 women who have died in domestic violence homicides since the beginning of this year. There has also been a 29 per cent increase in assaults and a 43 per cent increase in robberies, which are significant increases.

This week we welcomed the government's imminent introduction of GPS legislation for those who breach violence restraining orders. It is something the opposition has been calling for since the trial into this matter was completed in 2022, after beginning in 2020. There has been a great need for some urgency around that. I leave my comments there. I appreciate that the Minister for Police will now respond to the opposition's motion. We commend the outstanding efforts of our frontline officers, but we argue that they have been let down by the Cook Labor government.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [6.39 pm]: I appreciate the opportunity to address and correct this motion because although parts of it are quite clearly correct and reasonable and deserve to be lauded, I intend to amend the rest of it by removing some words.

Amendment to Motion

Mr P. PAPALIA: I move —

To delete all words after "safe".

The motion will then read —

That this house applauds our frontline workers and volunteers who work hard to keep Western Australians safe.

This amendment is an undeniable recognition of the extraordinary effort that continues to be contributed by our frontline workers right across the state in just about every sector in confronting any type of challenge, the likes of which we have seen in recent years. I want to address in particular the excellent work and service rendered to the state by the Western Australia Police Force as a matter of course and up-front, because obviously I have the police portfolio. Speaker, you obviously have an interest in this issue. I want to immediately correct the misleading of the house that occurred earlier when the Leader of the Opposition was on his feet. The Leader of the Opposition reflected on an announcement made by the Premier that amounted to a very significant commitment made almost immediately after it was requested by the WA Police Union. I attended the morning session of the eighty-seventh police union conference. The president of the police union, Paul Gale, got to his feet, and in the course of his speech, he made a request of the government. It was the first time I had heard about it. To my knowledge, the issue had not been in the public domain prior to that time. I meet with Paul regularly in my office. We have regular meetings, during which he raises matters with me. I do not recall him having said to me that he would appreciate it if the government would consider a presumption of PTSD in the same fashion that had been afforded to professional firefighters and ambulance paramedics.

The first thing to note is that the recognition of presumption was not in any way considered or delivered during the eight and a half years of the former Liberal–National government.

Mr W.J. Johnston: They didn't even get compensation.

Mr P. PAPALIA: No compensation for the police—we know that—but they did not do that for firefighters and paramedics despite having gone through the 2008–2012 boom, during which time the National Party was given all manner of funding to waste on extraordinary projects such as singing toilets and the planting of petunias down the streets of some regional towns. It would have been far better if the National Party had been focused on things like housing for children who live on the streets of Carnarvon, which is what we are hearing about now. Perhaps it would have been better if they had considered things like alcohol restrictions in towns riven by the damages caused by the harmful use of alcohol. Perhaps if it had considered those things, we might not have heard members of the Liberal Party or the Nationals WA—I am not sure which one it was—complaining about the situation now confronted by some towns. That aside, what I want to place absolutely on the record is that the former Liberal–National government had eight and a half years to consider things of this nature, but it did nothing. It was the Cook government that recognised the presumption of PTSD for professional firefighters and paramedics. Just this week at the morning session of the police union conference, the president raised a request that the government consider it. The Premier attended the police union conference in the afternoon, and, in front of the delegates, the board and the president, Paul Gale, he committed to the presumption of PTSD for police officers.

As the Minister for Energy indicated, that comes on top of and in the wake of the first government in history to not reject a request for police compensation. We remember that long ago, the repeated response of the Barnett government, the Liberals and Nationals, to the police union request for compensation was that police officers would necessarily have to relinquish their entitlements if they were to be given some form of compensation. That

did not happen until WA Labor came to office. Prior to WA Labor coming to office, the Speaker, then the shadow Minister for Police, took Medically Retired WA Police Officers Association representatives to the state Labor Party conference. In front of a mass of workers, none of whom were affiliated with the police union, they put their case and requested recognition and compensation. The WA Labor state conference passed a unanimous motion supporting the plea from the medically retired police association.

When we came to office, the now Speaker took up that case and addressed the challenge of how police officers had been so terribly treated in the past when they were medically retired by being given a section 8. They were dealt with under a section 8, which is essentially the part of the act that is used to sack officers who have broken the law or behaved inappropriately. They were treated in exactly the same fashion. The now Speaker addressed that issue, and it was the McGowan government that fixed that issue. It introduced a scheme to recognise many of the police officers who, in the past, had been medically retired and had received no compensation. This redress scheme was again delivered by the now Speaker and the McGowan government.

More recently, we finally fixed the appalling situation that had existed since Federation and absolutely went through the entire tenure of the Barnett government. During the former Liberal–National government’s eight and half years, ministers responded to requests from the police union and injured police officers by saying that it was impossible to afford a compensation scheme without them having to relinquish their additional entitlements to health care. We fixed that.

Premier Cook attended the police union’s annual conference and, having heard only in the morning that there was a request to consider the presumption of PTSD, he gave a commitment that afternoon. It was stated erroneously and misleadingly earlier in the debate that Premier Cook had backflipped in some way. The fact is that the Liberal and National Parties have never delivered on the wellbeing of police officers in Western Australia. WA Labor has done that and it will continue to do that. This is an important thing to note. I was not really listening to every part of the contributions by the Leader of the Liberal Party and the member for Cottesloe, but I do recall hearing the word “police” thrown around amongst other words. I think that there was some suggestion, particularly from the member for Cottesloe, that there was a need to care more for police officers. I absolutely agree. We should always be doing more, but I can report to the house, and I was happy to report to the WA Police Union’s eighty-seventh conference, that since the McGowan and Cook governments came to office, an extraordinary amount has been done, particularly under the leadership of police commissioners Dawson and Blanch. An extraordinary amount of work has been done to shift the culture of mental health injury, exposure to trauma and the consequences of it. It is not just about physical injury. A huge amount has been done to shift that culture in the Western Australia Police Force. Also, the services and supports afforded to our police have dramatically increased.

I can recall that when I was first elected in 2007, I was invited by the then police chaplain, Keith Carmody. The Speaker would know Keith; he is a bit of a legend. He was the only police chaplain the Western Australia Police Force had. That was only in 2007 that it had one chaplain. I can tell members that today it has six chaplains, including two women, and a 24/7 chaplaincy response to any traumatic event confronting a police officer anywhere in the state. Members can imagine that there are many of those events. We are talking about serious traffic crashes in which people are very frequently killed, maimed or left with serious injuries. There are firearms incidents. Sadly, there are many incidents of self-harm, suicide and the like. Often, incidents involve people of all ages, and police confront those situations without notice. It is a fact that they play a challenging and very confronting role.

We now have the capacity to respond immediately with a chaplain. This is not necessarily about religion. The chaplains are very much like what I was familiar with from the military chaplaincy. They deliver someone on the ground in the uniform. A couple of these guys are former police officers, but they are not all; it is not a universal experience. They are all mature, capable, trained and empathetic people whose immediate presence is calming. Since the 24/7 response has been rolled out, I have had feedback about just how effective it is. Their presence induces a degree of calm that was not there prior to their arrival and was never available in the past, unless the one chaplain—or whatever number of chaplains there were—happened to be around. Now, police know that there is a person who cares, is capable and is able to advise, support and guide them towards any further assistance they might require.

I can confirm this because I call every police officer who receives medical attention for an injury in the line of duty. I said this to the union the other day, too. I now know that by the time I call, the commissioner has personally spoken to the officer. Before he called, the district superintendent and very often some of the other officers in the chain of command have spoken to the officer. This is beyond confirmation of the care exhibited by the presence of a 24/7 police chaplain. In fairness, very often the union has also called. There is tangible evidence and confirmation that people care more for every officer who confronts an injury. I hear that every time I talk to officers in this situation; they recognise that something has changed dramatically. It was not that long ago that this did not happen. Not that long ago, people did not talk about exposure to trauma, the effect that might have on them at the time and the effect it might have on them in the future. That is shifting and changing dramatically, and it is a good thing.

We have more than doubled the number of uniformed officers in our health, welfare and safety division. We have more than doubled the number of psychologists and counsellors employed in-house. In addition, external authorised providers across the entire state are funded by Western Australia Police Force, and officers are able to refer

themselves without having to reveal to their command or their workplace the nature of their referral. That is something that was not there at anywhere near the scale it is now. Right across the state, that has dramatically shifted. We are talking about only five or six years, really.

Beyond that, there is one thing I am very proud of the Western Australia Police Force for having done in recent years. There was a program, which I think might have been initiated the last time we were in government, called the peer support program. Officers who volunteer are spread across workplaces across the entire state, in different districts, subdistricts and divisions. They are given three days of training to enhance their capacity, awareness and recognition of issues and to enable them to provide assistance and support to workplace colleagues who might have been exposed to trauma that may result in subsequent suffering. That program fell by the wayside for many years. I do not know when that happened, but I know that Commissioner Dawson reinvigorated support for it. I can tell members that we now have doubled the number of officers. I believe that about 200 officers across the state have had that training. They wear a badge so people know who they are in the workplace. It means that that intervention and support is provided, and the opportunity to seek assistance from a work colleague who is doing the same task but has had additional training to enable them to assist officers is afforded to them like never before. From my experience and in my view, this type of response to traumatic injury, trauma exposure or subsequent potential mental health injury is the single most effective response people can have. If people in the workplace are afforded extra capabilities through training and support and may be able to refer people to external authorities and supports, that is the best response. It is the response that people in the job on the front line—the people we are acknowledging and thanking—are most likely to choose and seek assistance from, rather than from some other professionals. Even though we have massively increased their opportunity to receive assistance from other professionals, it is probably more likely that they will seek assistance in a timely fashion from their work colleagues. That is a good thing.

I want to convey to the house and reassure them that things have dramatically changed. They are undeniably far better than they were under the last Liberal–National government. That does not mean that it has ended, that there is not a lot more to do, or that we should not get up every day and marshal ourselves to effect better change and look for better opportunities and more things we can do. That is undeniably the truth. We need to do that as well. We need to recognise that the Western Australia Police Force, particularly the command of the Western Australia Police Force, has done an extraordinary job in the last half a decade of transforming the response to officers exposed to trauma—in a good way. It is a good thing. There is always more to be done, and we will do more, but it should be recognised that we have come a long way in a relatively short period.

With respect to the other frontline services, we should be and are thankful. This government absolutely recognises the contribution made by our frontline services in recent years. As we confront another very potentially challenging fire season, all of our thoughts are with the people who are out there and will be out on the front line keeping all of us safe.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

MINISTERS OF THE CROWN — STAFF**940. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:**

I refer to previously tabled Ministerial Resourcing Reports, and in the absence of a Ministerial Resourcing Report for this Cook Government, I ask:

- (a) Please provide a list of a breakdown of all Ministerial Staff by:
 - (i) Ministerial Office;
 - (ii) Job Title / Position;
 - (iii) FTE measurement;
 - (iv) Salary Class / Level;
 - (v) If they have been provided a motor vehicle for work use:
 - (A) If yes to (vi), the type of motor vehicle;
 - (vi) If they have been provided a credit card for work use; and
 - (vii) If they have been provided a mobile phone for work use?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

- (a) A Ministerial Resourcing Report containing this information was tabled in both Houses on 7 November 2023.
-

