

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2017–18) BILL 2017**

*Third Reading*

Resumed from 10 October.

**MR S.J. PRICE (Forrestfield)** [12.57 pm]: I rise to contribute to the third reading debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2017–18) Bill 2017. This budget is the McGowan government delivering on our election commitments and putting a plan in place to address the challenges that we were left by the previous Liberal–National government.

Before I get into that, I want to mention that today is International Day of the Girl. It has a couple of different names, including the International Day of the Girl Child, the International Day of the Girl and the Day of the Girl. There are 1.1 billion girls in the world and nearly 600 million of them are aged between 10 and 19 years. I am very fortunate to have four of them in my family so the issue is extremely close to my heart. We need to ensure that we address the challenges that women face when they get into the workforce and that young girls face while growing up to give them the ability to essentially aim for the stars and believe that they might be able to get there and reach them. It was really pleasing to see reference in the budget under division 14, “Communities”, to some of the barriers that women face when they enter the workforce in all sorts of positions. Essentially, there are issues associated with gender equality and pay equity within the whole of Australia but especially within Western Australia where there is a significant difference. It certainly needs to be addressed. I will briefly quote from the budget. It states —

The barriers to women’s full participation in the workforce continue to be reflected in low levels of representation in senior leadership positions, board membership and science, technology, engineering and maths ... occupations. The gender pay gap in Western Australia is larger than the national average, and women are achieving lower levels of economic independence at retirement. A range of collaborative, cross-agency initiatives are promoted and supported that address these issues.

It is pleasing that the McGowan government is undertaking initiatives to help address these challenges. We are leading the way within this house as well. It is disappointing to see the low representation of women on the other side, when the National Party has a higher representation of women in this house than the Liberal Party. That is something we all need to address. The Labor Party has some very strong policies in place under our affirmative action rules to ensure that it heads towards 50 per cent representation of women. If that is the way it needs to be achieved, we need to make sure that we do that and hopefully at the next election, there will be a lot more women around this chamber.

Staying with the community section of the budget, I have previously mentioned the need for financial counselling services in my electorate, and the previous government initially removing the funding, and then reinstating some of it to the local community organisations providing that service. Once again, the budget makes an allocation for that. It is good to see the government continuing to fund financial counselling in my electorate and across the community. It is also pleasing to see money allocated in the budget to deal with domestic violence. I want to refer in particular to the funding allocation for respectful relationship programs in schools. To deal with domestic violence in our society, we need generational change, and we need to start by teaching young children about respectful relationships. This is a positive step forward. It would be great to see an increase in funding for those sorts of activities, as well as for the implementation of additional programs.

The budget also contributes a significant amount to education in Western Australia. It is pleasing to see that the McGowan government has committed enough funding to ensure that new schools can be built in areas that need them, and to improve the services and facilities in the schools that we have. Importantly, the government has also committed to providing 300 additional education assistants in schools. The member for Bateman spoke quite extensively about this yesterday; he considered it a complete waste. In 2015, the Liberal Party essentially cut 465 education assistants from Western Australian public schools. At that time, the government said it had removed only 350 positions, but it ended up removing 465 education assistants from schools. That was essentially to save money in the budget, and came on top of \$200 million worth of other cuts to schools. The approach of the previous government was very disappointing, so it is great to see that the McGowan government has committed to ensuring that we put those education assistants back into the schools. It is extremely important in areas such as the electorate of Forrestfield, because education is the key to socioeconomic mobility. Getting a good start in life and having a good quality education opens up a lot of future opportunities.

As a result of the announcement by the McGowan government of the additional education assistants, five primary schools in my electorate will receive additional education assistants. East Kenwick Primary School will receive an 1.6 additional full-time equivalents; Forrestfield Primary School will receive 0.8 additional FTEs; Woodlupine Primary School will get 0.9 additional FTEs; and Dawson Park Primary School and High Wycombe Primary School will each get 1.2 additional FTEs. These schools need the assistants because of the challenges that

come with being in a low socioeconomic area. Kids who are coming to school face a variety of challenges outside school. School is a safe place for them. They come there for breakfast and lunch, but they also come just to be kids. For some kids, being at school is their only time of normality. When they get back home there are so many different things going on in some of their houses that it is difficult to comprehend for people who do not come from such backgrounds or have not been exposed to them. That is extremely important to my electorate, and I am very thankful and glad about the McGowan government committing the money to it.

Also in the budget, the McGowan government has committed additional funding to improve the science experience in schools. It has allocated \$12 million to convert existing classrooms to science laboratories across 200 primary schools, in addition to \$5 million in grants of \$25 000 each for schools to equip those labs. That is an incredible commitment, and once again it is putting its money where its mouth is. We went to the election saying that science, technology, engineering and mathematics—STEM—was a key platform of our education policy, and to ensure that the money was in the budget to offer schools the ability to apply for these grants—which is currently going on at the moment—is a great outcome. I know that just about every single school in my electorate has put in for a grant, and I will be lobbying very hard for them to achieve successful outcomes. On top of that, we also committed \$2 million for the integration of coding into teaching, which is an important skill for the future. It is incredible to see the number of primary schools now embracing robotics and teaching coding to their children. It is certainly something that was not thought of when I was going to primary school, and it will be interesting to see the benefits it will have for these children's future employment opportunities.

Moving on from education, one of the other significant policies we took to the election, and which is funded in the budget, is the local jobs policy. As we look through the budget at the different projects to which we have committed money, we see a significant amount of expenditure on local infrastructure projects. Money is also allocated for the establishment of the industry participation advisory service. That will be part of future legislation that will come into this house. Once again, it is the government leading by example. We put a process in place under which there is a requirement that anyone who wants a government service has to maximise the opportunity and the benefit for local employees, suppliers and service providers. That is a very positive step for all Western Australians. The advantage of the government doing it first is the same as that for the paid domestic violence leave provision. Once the government brings it in and makes it part of a policy that is accepted within government departments, then the private sector will take up those things as well, like we saw with Rio Tinto picking up on the domestic violence leave policy, and then implementing its own employment policy, and that is fabulous. However, the real benefit is that, under the policy that we went to the election with, the significant amount of money the government spends on its services—we spend billions of dollars every year running schools, hospitals and public transport systems, and delivering services right across the state—is then injected back into local opportunities, and that creates a lot of employment possibility within local areas. Once again, that is the McGowan government putting its money where its mouth is—going to the election, saying what it is going to do, and then getting in here and delivering on that. Once again, it is a credit to the Treasurer and all the ministers to be able to achieve that.

Even more locally, a significant amount of money has been committed within the eastern suburbs. More than \$600 million has been allocated for eastern suburbs road improvements, and 3 600 jobs will be created as a result of that. This includes such projects as the extension of the Thornlie to Cockburn part of Metronet, not to mention some of the other infrastructure spend that we have been able to include in the budget. In particular, around the Forrestfield electorate, money has been committed in the budget to put in grade separation at the intersection of Kalamunda Road and Roe Highway, and to deal with the long-running issue of the intersection of Hale Road and Woolworths Drive. We have committed to a number of other programs right across Western Australia. That is without even getting into the biggest project going on in the state at the moment, and in my electorate—the Forrestfield–Airport Link. This project commenced under the former government. It will be a generation-changing project for people who live in the north-eastern part of the Perth metropolitan area. It provides a rare and unique opportunity to plan and build a new subdivision within an established part of the state. We need to do that in the right way by embracing the Smart Cities approach and ensuring that we provide opportunities for the jobs of the future, for education and training, and for both high density and low-density living located close to public transport. It is an exciting opportunity. We need to ensure that the Forrestfield rail terminus is a destination for people to live and work and not just jump on the train to get to the city. The Forrestfield train line will run smack bang through the electorates of the members for Maylands and Belmont. I look forward to ensuring that we maximise the opportunity for all our constituents who live in the north-eastern electorates of the metropolitan region to benefit from this significant project.

I thank members for the opportunity to speak on this bill and I commend the bill to the house.

**MR V.A. CATANIA (North West Central)** [1.10 pm]: Mr Acting Speaker —

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** It is nice to have you here!

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 11 October 2017]

p4524b-4532a

Mr Stephen Price; Mr Vincent Catania; Acting Speaker; Mr David Michael; Dr Tony Buti; Mr Ben Wyatt

---

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** It is nice to be here. It is a pity that some of the way in which the Chair operates from time to time is questionable, and I think we saw that performance yesterday.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr R.S. Love):** I beg your pardon! Member, you will withdraw that.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I withdraw that. Sorry. I apologise. Perhaps other people can apologise as well.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I also want to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2017–18) Bill 2017 and highlight a number of issues. The Premier said in this house that the Treasurer has handed down the best budget ever. This budget is anything but the greatest budget ever for my electorate of North West Central. It is a budget that is hurting our seniors in particular in the provision of aged-care facilities in Carnarvon. I want to put this in *Hansard* so that members will understand. Three years ago, \$16.6 million was allocated out of royalties for regions to provide a high-end aged-care facility based at Carnarvon Hospital. The history of this project is that in 2007, the Howard federal government changed the formula for aged care. At that time, the Carnarvon aged-care facility was located just out of town at Olive Laird Memorial Hostel and accommodated up to 11 seniors. Unfortunately, the change to the funding requirements meant that Churches of Christ, which managed that facility, was no longer able to operate that facility because it could not make a profit. A campaign was orchestrated by the community to ensure that we could continue to provide aged-care facilities in Carnarvon. Unfortunately, that was not successful and the 11 people at that facility were moved to Northampton and Geraldton, but mainly to Perth, because it is very difficult to get aged care in regional Western Australia. It was very upsetting for those seniors and also for their families to see their loved ones moved from the area in which they had wanted to spend their last days.

After the change of government in this state to a Liberal–National government, and with the benefit of royalties for regions, we commissioned a report into the best way to provide aged care in Carnarvon for the Gascoyne. The report was pretty thick. It covered all the bases ranging from low care to high care. The aged-care facility in Carnarvon currently comprises independent living units and a senior citizens' hall, with scope for expansion because the facility backs onto Brockman Park. The community of Carnarvon would like all the aged-care services to be located in the same facility, because that makes sense. Unfortunately, because we need to rely on federal funds to provide aged care, the financial modelling does not allow for high-end aged care to be located with low to medium care. We therefore decided when we were in government to talk to the Western Australian Country Health Service to see whether it could cater for high-end aged care at the Carnarvon Hospital site. This would reduce the operating cost because the health system could take up some of the cost of providing meals, washing and cleaning. At that time, the operating cost was about \$150 000. We were told that we would need \$250 000 on top of that to make it profitable for a private provider to provide high-end aged care at the Carnarvon Hospital site. At that time, the capital cost was \$16.6 million. Originally, that was for 24 beds, which was an increase on the 19 beds that are currently available at Poinciana Lodge, which provides high-end aged care. We were able to get that up to 28 beds. We finally reached agreement with the Department of Health and the federal government and were able to get that up to 38 beds. All the studies that have been done over the last 10 years indicate that 38 beds will cater for the current demand, and the site allows for future growth to 60 beds, which is what the demand will be in future years.

The site was cleared last year and plans were drawn up for a facility that would cater for people with dementia, people who are bedridden, and all the other ailments that people face when they get older. It would enable aged care to be provided in a brand new, modern, state-of-the-art facility so that our seniors would not need to leave Carnarvon and the Gascoyne and go to Perth to see out their final days. The project was ready to go out to tender in June this year. However, in this budget, the funding for this facility has been cut from \$16.6 million to \$10.4 million, and the number of beds has been cut from 38 to 24 beds. Poinciana Lodge is very dilapidated, because we obviously need to watch what we spend on that facility now that we are building a new facility. I have been approached by people who are very upset because they know that their parents will never get to move into that new facility. The project has also been delayed or deferred for a year, so we will not see any funding until 2018–19.

Added to this is the problem that the local government, the Shire of Carnarvon—not the whole council, but two of the shire councillors; one being the shire president—has been negotiating with the Labor state government to try to relocate these funds. I will not even say high-end aged care; they are trying to relocate these funds to the independent living units. They believe that there is no need for high-end aged care because low to medium-end aged care needs to be looked at first. That is the problem. I say that these two people who claim to represent Carnarvon do not represent it. In estimates a few weeks ago the health minister made the claim that he was in discussions with the Shire of Carnarvon to work out a way to deliver this \$10.4 million and look at another site.

I want to say something for the record. I am not getting all worked up because I am always scared of the Chair and what he may do to me, but we have a friendly Chair in here at the moment!

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr R.S. Love):** Member, I have warned you before about making imputations about the Chair. I call you to order for the second time and I ask that you withdraw that remark.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** There we go; we never have friends in this place, but anyway. All I can say is —

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member, withdraw the remark you made about the Chair.

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** I withdraw whatever I said, Chair.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr V.A. CATANIA:** The problem is that the local government is talking to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Regional Development about utilising that \$10.4 million at another location. Over the last 10 years with the development commission we have gone through why the centre cannot go to that location. One reason is the synergies in it being located at the hospital—that is, to be able to utilise its services. A second reason is to be close to nurses and a third reason is to be close to doctors. That would enable nurses and doctors to go through the wards of the hospital and the high-end aged care. Nurses and doctors would be able to visit all the time. The problem with the site on which these two councillors wish to see independent living units or medium-end aged care is that there is already demand for up to 24 beds for high-end aged care in Carnarvon. There are problems with the ground at the site they would like to reallocate this money to. It is old mangrove ground that requires a huge amount of remedial work to be suitable for anything to be built on it. There is a problem with the site. There is a problem with going towards medium-end care when there is already a waiting list of up to 24 people who want to go into a high-end aged-care facility. I know the Minister for Health will read this *Hansard* transcript and so I say to him that there should be no more delays in the high-end aged care needed for Carnarvon; he has to make sure that it stays in the current location. The previous government has already cleared the use of the hospital site for high-end aged care, as I said, to be close to nurses and doctors and to ensure that the ongoing costs are minimised by sharing some of the synergies that the hospital already has to offer. It is crucial that the plans embarked on by the previous government are continued by this Labor government. That is without even asking why the government would cut a \$16.6 million high-end aged-care facility with 36 beds to a \$10.4 million facility with 24 beds. I just do not understand. Why would the government defer it for a year? I just do not understand. The demand is there and money has been put in place, but the government is taking it away from people in the later years of their lives. There is demand from the people of the Gascoyne to have a facility. It would have been completed within a year or two from June this year. Why has it been deferred? Why is the government listening to these two local government councillors when the issue has never been discussed in the council? It is not part of any report. The site that they are looking at has been put by the wayside because it does not meet the requirements of high-end aged care. It costs too much. My fear is that this high-end aged-care facility will never be delivered because this government is listening to a couple of people who perhaps have vested interests in relocating or deferring this money, moving the facility to another site and putting the money to another use.

I urge the government and the health minister to read this speech in *Hansard* and understand that the community has already gone through the process of deciding on the best site for a high-end aged care facility, which is desperately needed in Carnarvon for the Gascoyne so that our seniors can live out their last days in the place they were born or grew up in. It is absolutely critical. Please, Minister for Health, do not listen to two councillors at the Shire of Carnarvon, because they do not represent what the community wants—that is, 38 high-end aged care beds at the current hospital site. That is what was committed to and promised. I want this Labor government to put back the money, put back the beds and keep the current high-end aged-care facility site at the hospital in Carnarvon.

**MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta)** [1.26 pm]: I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on the third reading of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2017–18) Bill 2017 today. Before I go into some of the things that impact the seat of Balcatta, I just want to paint a picture. Obviously, I live in the electorate of Balcatta; I have lived in Balcatta for my whole life. One of the reasons I ran for Parliament was that I wanted to see a change of direction in the state government and being a member of the Labor Party, I wanted to see some of those Labor ideas of fairness and equity brought back into the system. I grew up in an area where single blocks were being bulldozed for one or two-unit apartments, but not too much. There were a lot of clubs and multicultural clubs in the area. They were all opened by people like Jann McFarlane and Ron Edwards, who were two good federal members for Stirling, as well as former great members for Balcatta like Nick Catania, John Kobelke and other members who looked after the seat, including my old boss Bob Kucera. A lot of those facilities were built 20 or 30 years ago. I looked at some of the local parks and state government assets and infrastructure and thought that the area had been neglected. That is not so much a comment on the last eight years, although it could be; it probably happened over a couple of decades. Some of those inner-city areas have been slightly forgotten about, not through any malice but because

the pressure points have always been the outer suburbs of Perth. People were moving out to the outer suburbs and needed schools and facilities. Existing facilities in the inner suburbs were starting to stretch and continue to stretch under the burden of infill. Some decisions of the previous government allowed for infill in areas like Balcatta, Joondanna and Tuart Hill, where, as I said before, houses were being knocked down and two or three units were being built. For the last four or five years at least, under state planning changes, sometimes eight, 10 or 12 apartments have been built on an old lot. That has increased traffic and parking issues and demand for local schools and hospitals. With more people living on the outskirts of Perth, more of our roads in the inner suburbs are being used by people to come into the city. There is also an effect on public transport. In the 1960s, Tuart Hill, where I live, was an outer suburb of Perth. I think after Tuart Hill Primary School, the next primary school was Wanneroo Primary School and there was bush all the way through. The world has changed. I think some of those areas in the inner suburbs were forgotten about. Although it is a criticism of the former government, it is probably something that has gone on for longer over successive governments, including governments of the Labor persuasion, which is why I ran for office. As a local councillor, I saw that some issues needed to be looked after with plans for future development and upgrades to some of these facilities.

The first issue I want to talk about is Balcatta Senior High School. I went to Servite College in Tuart Hill. The school that I was meant to go to was Tuart Hill Senior High School, but it was closed in the 1980s. I ended up going to Servite College and I had to learn how to be a Catholic pretty quickly.

**Mr D.J. Kelly:** How did you go?

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** Not too well. At the time, the facilities at Servite College were pretty old as well. In more recent years, I have enjoyed going back to Servite College for its award ceremonies because I remember the “Servites Unite” anthem, and I sing it with gusto because it was drilled into us.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** How does it go?

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** “Servites unite, go side by side”; that is enough singing for *Hansard* today.

In the last decade or so, Servite College has had a lot of money spent on it and it has new facilities. A lot of the old buildings were knocked down and it is a really good school now with really good facilities. When I went to Balcatta Senior High School for the first time, I could not believe the age of the buildings and the state of its facilities. The school has some excellent students, some really great staff members and a great school community. The school was heritage listed in about 2014. I think they were probably worried that it was going to be shutdown so they had it heritage listed to make sure that that could not happen. I think the last major building works happened there in the early 1990s. The school is celebrating its fiftieth year this year, and most of the buildings date from that time or the two or three years after that. The buildings are very old. During our election campaign, the week before we announced that we were going to make an election commitment of \$50 million to rebuild that school, I remember doorknocking a house around the corner but just behind West Balcatta Primary School, which is diagonally across the road from the high school. I knocked on the door and said to the woman who answered, “My name is David Michael. I am running for the seat of Balcatta. What are your issues?” When I saw a young child running in the background I was prompted to say, “I presume education is going to be an issue of importance to you.” She said that of course it was, and I said, “Well, you have a great primary school—West Balcatta Primary School—on your doorstep and you have a great high school as well in future years.” She said that they were not even on the short list. I can understand parents choosing between a public high school and an independent or Catholic high school, like mine did, but I thought it was disgraceful that that local public high school was not even on the short list. A week later I was proud to stand with the Minister for Education, now the Premier, on the street verge in the rain outside Balcatta Senior High School, with the state’s media in attendance, and announce that we were going to fix the school. I could then write to that mum and tell her that at least she would have a choice of going to the school around the corner.

During the last few years, with this pressure on the City of Stirling, I got to know a little bit about the Stirling city centre. Those members who are a little older than me would remember when the site used to be called the Hertha Road tip, which was located next to the City of Stirling council buildings and extended into the electorate of Scarborough to Scarborough Beach Road. Main Roads Western Australia owns lots of land there for a six-lane highway, which will never be built. The City of Stirling first worked with the last Labor state government under Hon Alannah MacTiernan, the then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, now the Minister for Agriculture and Food, and then, after 2008, the coalition government and the Stirling City Centre Alliance on planning for that road and the development to go either side of it. Ikea and the Osborne Park industrial area is currently located there on those massive blocks of land, which were an old tip site, five or six kilometres out from the Perth city centre, waiting for something to happen with this road development. The project has dragged along and there was never any money for it on state budgets other than planning money. It appeared in the former government’s budgets as future works under the Department of Planning, but then at some stage it disappeared from the budget; there was

no mention of it anymore. I think the City of Stirling was even told off at one stage for going to Canberra to seek money for the project.

**Mr D.C. Nalder:** I assume that you are referring to me there.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** No. I am just saying that I think it was told off at some stage for trying to seek money for the project.

**Mr D.C. Nalder:** We were spending the council's money to lobby Canberra when the decision was going to be made by the state.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** I am pleased to say that for the first time, the state government has put \$60 million towards the project. This project will open up that area. I know that when the member for Scarborough was first elected, she was very supportive of this project, and I am pretty sure she still is. When this road is built, it will reduce vehicles at the freeway interchange at Cedric Street by 42 per cent. During morning peak time, it will reduce travel time on Cedric Street from Karrinyup Road and the freeway by 22 per cent. At the moment, these roads are clogged up. If anyone has tried to do the Ikea run to see what the traffic is like even on a Saturday morning, they will see that the whole area goes into gridlock. This road will fix a lot of that and it will allow people to live, work and recreate above the Stirling train station.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** Will the member take an interjection? How much will it cost to actually build that road?

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** The conservative estimate is about \$120 million, and we hope that our federal member Michael Keenan or the federal government will pitch in for the second half.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** Does that include an interchange with the freeway?

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** Yes, it replaces the current interchange.

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** Is it going to cost \$120 million, not \$300 million?

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** That was a very early estimate that included a lot of other work. We are looking forward to hopefully some contribution from the federal government on this because it will open up that area to become a second CBD for Perth. It will create jobs and hopefully people will not have to use their cars, because the current train station sits in the middle of nothing around the old Hertha Road tip area. A Westfield development will go in there, and at some stage Ikea will go and hopefully be replaced by a high-scale development. I am really looking forward to that and I am glad that there is finally some money in the budget for this project.

I will move on to Osborne Park Hospital. This is another area that people have continually raised with me as a concern. The hospital is well loved and many people from the area were born in Osborne Park Hospital. However, Osborne Park Hospital is 50 years old and does not look like it has had anything done to it for the last 50 years except work on the car park and improvements in some of the theatres. I am proud that the minister, as part of the sustainable health review, will look at the future of the hospital. The hospital needs a master plan so that when money goes towards its redevelopment it is not done in a piecemeal approach. When I was a councillor, I know that a former Minister for Health, Jim McGinty, had a master plan ready to go with a heap of money in the 2007 budget's forward estimates for the stage 1 upgrade to Osborne Park Hospital. That was taken out pretty much straightaway and whittled down until it went completely. In last year's state budget, there was money for Osborne Park Hospital but it was removed in the *Government Mid-year Financial Projections Statement*; it did not even last six months.

I am pleased to see that some smaller issues are referred to in the budget. One is a terrible intersection at Boya Way–Erindale Road that is very close to the freeway interchange. This intersection is of great concern to the local area and I am pleased to say that we will allow the City of Stirling to access \$750 000 to improve road safety at that location. On a similar vein, the intersection between Scarborough Beach Road, Main Street, Brady Street and Green Street, which is on the border of the City of Vincent and the seat of Perth, is used by buses going from Edith Cowan University in Mt Lawley to Glendalough station, and many local residents to get to the freeway. It is a double intersection with all those streets coming into one and it has been a mess for a long time, especially with the amount of traffic that goes through there now to the point that a bus has to cut through Joondanna to get to the train station. It does not do a pickup at Joondanna; it goes through side streets just to avoid that intersection. I am glad to say that we have put \$3 million towards fixing that, and both councils are working on a plan that they can take to Main Roads to help do that.

This budget delivers for my community. It balances the need for the government to do the right thing and fund its commitments with budget repair. I know that some of the state's budget problems are not the fault of the former government. There are externalities that it could not have helped but there are other things that it could have done. I will not go into them because over the last few months the Treasurer has gone through them at length during debates in private members' business and in matters of public interest. However, I will say this: I recently held some seniors forums and went back out doorknocking, although I have since stopped doorknocking because of the local government elections just to make sure that no-one is confused about what I am running for!

**Mr P.A. Katsambanis:** You don't want to get confused with them.

**Mr D.R. MICHAEL:** I will stay away from that one at the moment.

People told me that they understand the situation that the state is in and I think they understand the situation that the economy is in. Hopefully, things will turn around. My plea to those opposite is to jump on board—as a Fremantle Dockers member, I used to have a bumper sticker on the back of my car that read “Join us”—and join us to try to fix the budget. Once we have started to fix the budget, we can have a fight about budget measures and revenue and expenditure measures. In the meantime, please join us in trying to fix this so we can get the state's finances back on track.

**DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale)** [1.41 pm]: I would like to contribute to the third reading of the Appropriation (Capital 2017–18) Bill 2017 and the Appropriation (Recurrent 2017–18) Bill 2017. My friend the member for Balcatta just ended his eloquent speech about the budget and budget repair. Let us go back a little bit.

Under the regime of the previous Liberal–National government, we had the greatest mining boom in the history of Western Australia. Let us not forget that—the greatest mining boom in the history of Western Australia. I think the former Liberal–National government thought that the boom would never end, because it did not have a plan—there was no plan B. Obviously, it was going to come to an end, but the former government did not have a plan and, as a result, the incoming Labor McGowan government has been saddled with budget deficit and massive state debt. This government is facing budget deficit even though the state has just experienced its greatest ever mining boom. The member for Balcatta is correct—the state's financial situation is not completely the result of the former government's mismanagement of the finances and its failure to have a plan. A considerable part of it is due to the fact that there was no plan B. This government now has to deal with budget deficit and massive state debt. Led by the Treasurer, Premier and cabinet, the government outlined in the budget its plan to deal with the state's financial situation—that is, the budget deficit and state debt. That plan was outlined by the Treasurer—who has just walked into the chamber—in his budget statement and in the budget papers. We went through the estimates process; indeed, the Treasurer has been prosecuting the government's case for the last month. Members on the other side may not agree with the measures—that is okay, because, of course, it is a battle of ideas—but because the financial situation in which we find ourselves is largely due to the previous Liberal–National government's financial mismanagement, they have a responsibility to allow this government to attempt to repair the state finances in the way that it sees fit. Members opposite can oppose our measures in debate and say that they do not believe that this is the way the government should go, but they should not block our budget measures.

**Ms S.E. Winton:** Wreckers!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Whatever word members want to use, the fact is that if the Liberal Party in the upper house does not pass our budget measures, the financial situation of this state will become worse. Opposition members do not have to agree with the government's budget measures, that is fine, but do not block them. We will rise and fall on our measures. Opposition members in the other place have acted in an obstructionist manner. Having read the newspapers, I know that some Liberal members in the other place hold the orthodox view that the budget measures of the government of the day should not be blocked. Given that ours was a historic victory, the most historic victory by the Labor Party in the history of Western Australia, one would think that the opposition would allow us to implement our budget measures. As I said, they do not have to agree with them, but simply allow us —

**Mr V.A. Catania:** From your point of view, what is the difference between the gold royalty increase that your government is proposing and what we proposed for mining royalties? What is the difference because both this year and last year? I have heard the same arguments for the two policies.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** As the member knows—the member for Dawesville keeps reminding me!—I am not in cabinet so the question is best asked of the Treasurer. There is a difference in magnitude. The National Party was seeking to tear up state agreements.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** No.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It was. There was no way that the National Party could have implemented its policy without a variation in state agreements. As the member would realise—I know he is an avid reader—an opinion piece that I wrote on this issue was published in *The West Australian* before the last election.

**Mr S.A. Millman:** It would be unconstitutional as well.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** Arguably, it could have been unconstitutional.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** The magnitude of the gold royalty that this government is seeking to implement pales into insignificance when compared with what the National Party was seeking to do and the way it was seeking to do it. Our

budget measure will not tear up state agreements. The member for North West Central may argue that there should be variations in state agreements, but we will leave that for another time because I have only a short period of time.

I plead with the opposition to argue its case—the member for Kalgoorlie has been arguing strongly in Kalgoorlie—but allow the measures that the Treasurer has sought to implement through his budget, which he has been very frank about and for which he has given reasons, to pass and we will be judged on those measures. The opposition is not allowing us to attempt to reduce the financial strains that the state finds itself in due to the economic mismanagement of the previous government. As I said, and as the member for Balcatta said, the state's financial situation is not completely due to the previous government's mismanagement, but a considerable part of it is.

The members for Forrestfield and Balcatta and other previous speakers talked about this government's decision to increase funding for education assistants, who serve a very important purpose in our education system. People do not really understand what education assistants do. Obviously, they assist in the education of students, which is why they are called education assistants. I will use a personal example. My daughter required an education assistant. The presence of an education assistant in the classroom allows children with special needs to engage in mainstream education. The education assistant does not necessarily stay with the child with special needs throughout the school day, but their presence allows the teacher to give special attention to the child with special needs while the education assistant helps out with the rest of the class. That does not always happen, obviously, because the teacher has to deal with the whole class, but without education assistants it reduces the choices that parents have about mainstreaming their child with special needs. Deciding whether to mainstream a child with special needs is a very difficult decision. There are pros and cons and it depends on the level of disability and so forth. If we remove education assistants or do not have enough of them, it substantially reduces the choices available to parents of children with special needs. If our daughter did not have an education assistant, she would not have been able to attend Armadale Primary School; not necessarily because of the educational part. Anyone who has been to Armadale Primary School will know that it is a beautiful school and has beautiful scenery. It is built into a hill.

**Mr B. Urban:** It is in Darling Range.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is actually in the electorate of Darling Range. The street is the border. A lot of students, obviously, live in my electorate but the actual building is in the member for Darling Range's electorate. When educational tours are held here, the local member is notified but I was never notified. However, because my kids went there I used to be able to find out. The good thing was that even though I used to go and meet them, Tony Simpson, the former member, used to pay for their muffins and orange juice. As long as the current member for Darling Range does the same thing, I will be very happy! The school was built into a hill so there are a lot of steep steps. Of course, if the students need assistance, they need an education assistant to help.

The member for Forrestfield talked about the need for education assistants to be available to children from difficult backgrounds who are not necessarily children with special needs in the traditional sense of the word. There are about eight or nine primary schools in my electorate and they vary. A number of my schools have incredible challenges. For instance, the Department of Education determines regular attendance at school as 90 per cent of the time. If a child attends school 90 per cent of the time, that is regular attendance. To me, that is too low because it allows students to be away for one day a fortnight. In a student's 10-year education career, if they were to be away for one day a fortnight, that is one year. One of my schools has a regular attendance rate of 57 per cent; that is, only 57 per cent of the students attend what is considered to be regularly, which is only 90 per cent of the time. Only 57 per cent of those students are attending school regularly. About a month and a half ago, one student in his third year of schooling celebrated his first five consecutive days at school. Granted, he is in grade 1 or 2 so there were years in kindy and preschool, where attendance often is not so great anyway. A year 6 student has a cousin in grade 2. That student is bribed by the school to go to her cousin's home every morning to wake up and dress her cousin and ensure that her cousin gets to school. She also ensures that her cousin has some breakfast, although most breakfasts are supplied at the school. The challenges of some of our schools are phenomenal and they require additional help. That is where education assistants become very important.

**Mr T.J. Healy:** The previous government cut the station officers too.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** That is right. As a former teacher, the member for Southern River knows that if students do not attend school, there is no hope. That is number one; we have to get students to attend school. If we reduce the school's ability to ensure that students are at school, half the battle is already lost. Just getting students to school is hard enough; it is a challenge. Once we get the students to school, we have to ensure that systems are established so that those students can be educated appropriately. As I mentioned previously, education assistants are also needed to assist other students so that they are not jeopardised by any special attention that is being given to children with challenges or special needs.

This government's approach to increasing the number of education assistants is incredibly appropriate and much needed. It is not needed in every school, but it is needed in many schools. I can assure members that it is needed in many of the schools in my electorate.

We need to be smart about our education system. Schools cannot be the answer for all the social problems faced by society and children but schools play an incredibly important part. At another of my schools, over the last 12 months there have been two suicides, not by students, but by adults who hanged themselves from a tree on the edge of the school oval. Students saw that as they came to school in the morning. The school has a school chaplain who, after discussing what a child saw after the second suicide, asked the child whether they wanted them to ring home so that their mum or dad could come and pick them up and take them home. Do members know what that student said? The student said, "No, the only safe place that I have is at school."

The challenges are enormous. Debating the issue of whether we should have education assistants is ridiculous. This government has increased funding for that but it is still nowhere near the amount that we need. We cannot do the things that we want to do unless we fix the state's finances. Whether it is \$100 million or \$400 million, member for Kalgoorlie, that is a substantial amount of money.

**MR B.S. WYATT (Victoria Park — Treasurer)** [1.56 pm] — in reply: I am disappointed that the member for Armadale was effectively sat down by the expiry of the clock. I think he was just about to make his key points.

I will make a couple of points. I thank members for their contributions to the third reading debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2017–18) Bill 2017. After question time, we will move on to the third reading of the Appropriation (Capital 2017–18) Bill 2017. I will not go through all the details of my budget in the next couple of minutes but, clearly, lots of those areas have been well ventilated and, no doubt, will continue to be well ventilated in question time and in the media.

One thing I want to say, and I think the member for Armadale was about to make this point, is that the concept that \$300 million, \$400 million or \$500 million is not a lot of money has crept into the dialogue both in this chamber and in some quarters of the community and that because it will not resolve the whole Liberal–National legacy of debt, we should not bother with these things. I have heard that from serious political players as well as from serious journalists and the media. The idea has been suggested that because we are not making an easy decision that generates billions of dollars, we should just throw our hands up in the air and not do anything at all. It is a slightly bizarre and somewhat frustrating narrative to sometimes hear in the political debate, which has been put to me to by people who should know better. I will, of course, push back on that. Ultimately, given where we are now, it is important that we find the savings and revenue measures that generate those amounts of money because they add up. Because we are operating at a deficit, every dollar that we can save or every dollar in extra revenue that we can raise is a dollar that I will not have to borrow. I would like to think that all people think that is an important thing but, clearly and unfortunately, that is not the case. Some people seem to think that the trajectory of borrowing is something that we should just continue. It is particularly disappointing.

In any event, I thank all members for their contributions. I look forward to their contributions on the capital appropriation bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.