



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Legislative Council

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THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 1.00 pm, read prayers and acknowledged country.

LIVE SHEEP EXPORT

Petition

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [1.02 pm]: I have an e-petition that reads as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

With respect to the proposed Federal Government ban on export of live sheep, we note: That significant damage has already been done to international sheep markets and the industry in general by the proposed ban; The need to keep ships coming and sheep moving through the ports, preserving the markets and allowing destocking of drought plagued farms so as to prevent the need for mass culls; The saleyard price has already suffered due to the proposed ban; and The widespread and established concern for the wellbeing and mental health of those families involved in the farming sector. We request that the Legislative Council urge the Cook government to take decisive action and seek an immediate reversal of the Federal government's proposed ban on live export of sheep and seek to urgently re-establish those markets which have been lost

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition bears 90 signatures.

[See paper 3006.]

ELECTORAL ACT 1907

Petition

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [1.03 pm]: I have an e-petition that reads as follows —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

Seek the Legislative Council's support in urging the Government to amend the Electoral Act 1907 (WA) to enable persons to vote in Western Australian State Elections once they attain the age of 16 years, noting people from this age or younger pay tax and their contribution to the Electoral Funding of political parties (via the tax system) is unwarranted in circumstances where they do not presently even get to participate in our democracy (vote).

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition bears 15 signatures.

[See paper 3007.]

CORONAVIRUS — RESPONSE REVIEW

Petition

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [1.04 pm]: I present an e-petition containing 971 signatures couched in the following terms —

To the President and Members of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Western Australia in Parliament assembled. We the undersigned ...

Request that the Legislative Council establish an inquiry to: 1) Acknowledge the unintended adverse consequences some State Government Covid policies had on some individual Western Australians; and 2) Recognise the need for a review of state based Covid19 response inquiry (into the actions by the State Government) to complement the recently announced and very welcome Commonwealth Government Covid19 response inquiry which explicitly excludes the actions by State Governments in its terms of reference; and 3) Call for a genuine and transparent review of all unilateral State Government Covid policies such as vaccine mandates, border closures, travel restrictions and lockdowns, to ensure an 'even better' response to the next pandemic.

And your petitioners as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[See paper 3008.]

PAPER TABLED

A paper was tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

CITY OF BUNBURY BUSH FIRE BRIGADE LOCAL LAW 2023 — DISALLOWANCE*Notice of Motion*

Notice of motion given by **Hon Lorna Harper**.

BIOLOGICAL SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY*Notice of Motion*

Hon Ben Dawkins gave notice that at the next sitting of the house he would move —

That the Legislative Council agrees —

- (a) that a person's biological sex is a fact;
- (b) that it is not scientifically possible to change a person's biological sex from one sex to the other sex at a cellular level; and
- (c) that in some settings, biological sex is more important than gender identity.

PLAN FOR OUR PARKS PROGRAM*Motion*

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [1.08 pm]: I move —

That this house commends the Cook government for the implementation of its Plan for Our Parks program, which is the largest expansion of the conservation estate in the state's history.

This is a great opportunity to talk about a great initiative from our government. Many members are probably already aware of our Plan for Our Parks. We developed this initiative in 2019, seeking to create five million hectares of new conservation reserves by the end of this year. This has been done on a historic scale and will result in a 20 per cent increase to our parks and reserves, which will greatly protect our most valuable natural assets. We are very lucky here in Western Australia; we have such a large state and so much diversity. To be able to have so much more added to our conservation estate to protect some of the diverse biodiversity we have across the state is really great and very important.

The other reason this initiative is really great is that we are entering a new era when it comes to working with our traditional owner groups in both land and sea management. We have had new agreements with over 20 traditional owner groups across the state, which provide Aboriginal people with great opportunities for jobs, training and career development in all areas of land and sea country management. It is estimated that we will have up to 280 full-time jobs across the state with the investment in the Plan for Our Parks program, and we will build new relationships with our traditional owners. The Plan for Our Parks program provides a great opportunity to work towards closing the gap. I refer to the implementation of our Aboriginal empowerment strategy—Western Australia 2021–2029. It really illustrates our commitment to making agreements with Aboriginal communities.

The program also provides a really great opportunity for further development of nature-based and cultural tourism. Everyone knows marine and national parks, and they are really a brand that drives tourism. Last year, over 24.6 million people visited our national parks. That was an increase of over nine per cent from the year before. That shows people are really valuing getting out and being in our natural environment. I think COVID was one of the things that helped people to wander out yonder and see how great and diverse our state is and how many opportunities there are to get out and enjoy the outdoors, whether it is through hiking or other things like that.

Another important thing is the opportunity for people to experience Aboriginal culture and heritage, and Aboriginal cultural tours. We want to realise our goal of being the premiere destination for Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences. We have *Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan 2021–2025*. I also want to commend the work of the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council for Aboriginal tourism and promoting Aboriginal tourism around the state. My good friend Robyne Reynolds represents the goldfields–Esperance area on WAITOC. It does some fantastic work to promote Aboriginal cultural tourism and help Aboriginal groups develop tourism opportunities.

I am pleased that we are already up to 50 per cent of our target of five million hectares, which is really great. Since 2019, 2.5 million hectares have been protected under this program. The first park was Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park in 2019. That was coupled with \$10 million to tourism management and infrastructure. The government has made strong commitments towards helping stimulate tourism through helping in the development of tourism products as well as park infrastructure.

A lot of members would have heard about our Aboriginal ranger program. It is a really important program. I want to commend the government for the program, which has operated since 2017, which is when we came to government.

The government has invested \$103 million into the Aboriginal ranger program. Earlier this week, \$13 million was awarded in round 7 of the program, funding 21 on-country programs around the state, which is really fantastic. I want to give a shout-out to one of the groups that has received some funding, the Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation, which is chaired by Robbie Miniter. I commend it for the work that it is doing down there. It was successful in the grant program. South Coast Natural Resource Management, which is based in Albany, was also successful and works in the great southern. I wanted to give it a shout-out because it has done a lot of work with the Aboriginal corporations in helping them build capacity. It has worked with Gnowangerup and nearby Tambellup and helped them build capacity with a lot of their new ranger projects, mainly seed collection projects. Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation and Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation are two Aboriginal corporations that have also been funded through this program. It is really great to see the progress that has happened through the development of their ranger programs since 2017 and the collaboration with farming groups, local government and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

We all remember when Minister Whitby took on his role as Minister for Environment. One of the first national parks under this Plan for Our Parks program that he opened was Dryandra Woodland National Park. I was very lucky to go there with him when he announced that park. The state forest has now been transitioned to a new national park under the Plan for Our Parks program. It is the first national park to be developed in the wheatbelt region. If members have a chance to go there, they should because it is less than two hours from Perth and it is fantastic. When people go for walks there, they can see numbats, woylies, brushtail possums and malleefowl. It is a great place for some of our most vulnerable wildlife. I think I have spoken before about the predator-proof enclosure there called Barna Mia, where people can go on some night walks and see a lot of the animals that are being protected in the enclosure. I think there is a really fantastic opportunity for us to have some Aboriginal rangers working in the park in the future. The initiative is supported by the Shires of Narrogin and Cuballing. I look forward to what we can do in this area in the future with the new park. I also want to talk about the commitment that went into building the predator-proof enclosure at Barna Mia, which has a 14.7-kilometre fence that is 1.8 metres high and provides a great area for protection of species that cannot survive out in the wild due to predators.

I will briefly comment on the Western Shield project, which has been going for over 25 years. It is one of our largest native-species conservation programs. It looks at feral foxes and cats. We all know how many native animals feral cats kill each year. They kill more than 1.5 billion native animals in Australia each year, which is a huge amount. A lot of our native species have benefited from the Western Shield project, so I wanted to commend the government on running that program. I also commend all the community groups that go out on annual fox shoots, working to target some of our foxes, cats and rabbits. For example, down in Ongerup and Gnowangerup, they recently had a fox hunt. I think they had 165 foxes, five cats and 311 rabbits in one night. I give a shout-out to all those people, mainly from farming communities, who get out and collaborate to help protect our native animals against predators.

One of the things that Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson did in her role as Minister for Environment, before she moved on, was to release a 10-year plan for the wheatbelt region. As I said, Dryandra Woodland National Park was the first national park under the Plan for Our Parks project, but she released a 10-year management plan. There are a lot of parks and reserves across the wheatbelt region and a lot of diversity; it is an important habitat for our rare and native species.

I want to move on now to a really important project we are doing along the south coast as part of the Plan for Our Parks, and that is the proposed south coast marine park. It is supported by a lot of members of our community. This park will take in more than 1 000 kilometres of coastline and cover about 1.3 million hectares. It will be the first oceanic marine park on the south coast. The government's vision is to create a world-class marine park that rivals Ningaloo and the Great Barrier Reef. I am really pleased that the Cook government is getting on and delivering that park because it has been talked about for decades and, finally, we are the government that is getting down and doing it.

We can go back to 1994 when the Department of Conservation and Land Management came out with its first report on a representative marine reserve system for Western Australia. Then in 2010, *Oceans of opportunity* was another report that proposed a strategic framework for marine waters off our south coast. It is really great that we are finally getting down and doing this. I recall that shortly after I moved to Esperance over 20 years ago, the University of Western Australia had funding to do a really big project to characterise the fish habitats of the Recherche Archipelago. It did a huge amount of research work by vessel and created a couple of really great books that showcase the great, diverse marine environment across our south coast. Once established, the park will make a significant contribution to the comprehensiveness, adequacy and representativeness of our network of marine parks. As I said, we do not have a marine park on the south coast, so this will be really great.

Since coming to government in 2021, we have been conducting a lot of community consultation. We have overhauled the community consultation program that was underway. It has been restarted in a new way with community reference groups and sector advisory groups to really consult with the community and get their feedback on the development of the park. The draft management plan for the south coast marine park is now out for public comment, and I encourage everyone to comment on it. We extended the usual three-month public comment period to four months.

If people can give constructive criticism and tell us what they like as well as what they do not like, that will help us to work out what we have got right and what is really important to people. We are proposing to have about 25 per cent as sanctuary area. People will still be able to drive on, fish from and bring their dogs to the beaches, which is a really great balance. As a government, when people say that we are doing too much or not enough, we know that we have the balance right, and I think we have done a pretty good job with this. There are some amazing places out there to go to. I love to go to Woody Island, as does a lot of the community, as well as diving and snorkelling off Esperance. As I said, the park will run for 1 000 kilometres along the south coast from Bremer Bay to the border. It is a huge area.

One of the things I am really pleased about is that the park involves four traditional owner groups. When the draft management plans came out, we had four separate draft management plans, one for each of the traditional owner groups, which is really good. First of all, it makes it simpler for the public who do not have to look at a plan that covers a huge amount of coastline. It also gives the traditional owner groups their own little management plan that they can work on with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Holistically, the park will be managed as one park, but it is great to see the initiative have four separate management plans covering the Mamang Maambakooort, the Wudjari, the Western Bight marine park—the traditional owners are the Ngadju—and the Mirning. I encourage everyone to have their say about the proposed marine park. It is, again, a fantastic initiative from the government, and it is really exciting to have a park on the south coast.

I am married to a fisherman, and when I met my husband on a random beach outside Esperance, he had a motorbike and dive hookah, and I did not really know what he was doing. He was diving for abalone, and I did not even know what an abalone was back then. I have been lucky enough to spend time with someone who has a boat and has spent thousands and thousands of hours swimming underwater around all the islands across the archipelago. It has been a great opportunity to see the value of what we have got out there. There is so much out there to explore and see; it is a really spectacular part of our state. If people have not been there, I encourage them to go.

I would like to acknowledge Recfishwest and all the work it has done to encourage people to get involved in the consultation and say what this park means to them. Recfishwest does some great work. Over summer, it ran fishing competitions along our south coast. It held 10 fishing clinics that were completely booked out. Over 350 kids took part in those clinics, with a record attendance for the tour. It shows that people are getting out to the regions and that they have an interest in fishing. One of the reasons for creating the south coast plan is to protect those things for our children and our grandchildren so they can continue to fish and experience things like the great big blue gropers. I look forward to seeing the blue gropers grow larger in some of those areas and our kids being able to swim with and see those amazing creatures again, because right now they are pretty rare and few and far between.

The south coast is also important to Esperance because of a couple of big fishing competitions that we hold. Each year in September, there is the Esperance Land Based Fishing Club competition, which last year saw 130 fishers participate. The Esperance Deep Sea Angling Club also runs the Esperance Archipelago Offshore Fishing Classic every year. It is a huge event with a lot of people coming from the goldfields. Last year, more than 275 anglers competed on 83 boats. It was great to see 83 boats going out of Esperance. It is a pretty fantastic day and a great thing that the angling club is doing. I want to commend the recreational fishing groups in Esperance for the work they have done in bringing people together. It is also good for one's mental health to get out and fish, so I commend the groups for their engagement in this whole process, especially the volunteers who have given their time. It is really important that I take the time to thank them as well.

In the short time I have left, I want to mention the link between the proposed south coast marine park and the land. We have so many fabulous parks that link in with this new south coast marine park and plenty of opportunities for people to visit. East of Esperance, we have Cape Arid National Park and Cape Le Grand National Park. A person can see the whales from the beach in Cape Arid. They can walk up on the rocks and look down on the whales. It is fantastic. Cape Le Grand has some fantastic beaches as well. Lucky Bay has just been voted the best beach in the world. There are fantastic opportunities there. Over summer, one can see just how popular it is with all the parking lots overflowing. With climate change happening, in summer it is great for people to come down to the south coast where it is cooler, and they can still hike and do a lot of outdoor things that cannot be done in a lot of other areas of our state because it is too hot.

The Fitzgerald River National Park lies between Hopetoun and Bremer Bay. That is a fantastic park as well. It is an amazing natural environment with so much natural diversity and so many unique species. People can also see the whales from places like Point Ann, which can be accessed from Bremer Bay.

I do not have much time left but I want to commend the team at DBCA. The new director general, Stuart Smith, has come over from Fisheries and is fantastic. I think he has really helped to bring the south coast marine park together. I also commend Luke Bentley, manager, Aboriginal engagement, planning and lands. I thank them both for all the work that the DBCA does behind the scenes on collaboration in trying to get this park right—well done for that. They have also put together a heap of information—fact sheets and newsletters—over the last couple of years. I encourage anyone who wants to, to have a look online because there is a lot of information about the park.

I am sure other members will talk about the rest of our huge state. I have provided some information just on the south coast and the wheatbelt area in the southern half of the state, but we have a huge state and we are doing a lot of great work with traditional owner groups and on protecting our natural environment. I am really proud of our government's commitment to our natural environment.

HON ROSIE SAHANNA (Mining and Pastoral) [1.28 pm]: I would like to speak in support of the motion moved by Hon Shelley Payne on the Cook government's Plan for Our Parks program. I thank the honourable member for discussing this program today.

The Plan for Our Parks program has so many benefits, including protecting our state's natural environment, implementing its conservation strategies and creating more nature-based tourism opportunities, but as an Aboriginal person, one of the benefits closest to my heart is the opportunity the program offers traditional owners to jointly manage country. I am sure people have been caring for country for thousands of years. They have a special connection with their land. The Plan for Our Parks program is administered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, which has a long history of partnership with traditional owners throughout WA and working together with Aboriginal people to manage, access and care for country.

One of the best things about the Plan for Our Parks program for me, from a Kimberley point of view, is that it has really enhanced cultural tourism in our state, mostly in the Kimberley, where I live. There are tourists there just about 12 months of the year. The parks are one of the main attractions. In 2022, three new marine parks in the Kimberley were announced. The Bardi Jawi Gaarra, Mayala and Maiyalam Marine Parks cover more than 600 000 hectares of the Buccaneer Archipelago and are now jointly managed by the Bardi Jawi, Mayala and Dambeemangarddee traditional owners.

Last year, the Bunuba National Park was created in the Fitzroy Valley, extending the Danggu Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River to Dimond Gorge. The new park covers more than 220 000 hectares and is larger than London. The creation of the Bunuba National Park was not only the fulfilment of an election commitment but also a historical cultural milestone for the Bunuba people and their knowledge that the Martuwarra Fitzroy River is a living ancestral being. The new Warlibirri National Park was also formed in the Kimberley in 2022, spanning 16 000 hectares along the Margaret River east of Fitzroy Crossing. Margaret River is home to important areas for the Gooniyandi language group and is also considered a living ancestral being by Gooniyandi people. Although it is not a newly formed park, it is worth mentioning that, in 2020, the Labor government renamed the King Leopold Ranges in the Kimberley the Wunaamin Miliwundi Ranges to honour its Aboriginal heritage. The new name incorporates the Ngarinyin, which is my people, and Bunuba traditional names for the ranges. There have been other examples of national parks in the region being either renamed or adjusted to incorporate their traditional names. It is so refreshing, as an Aboriginal person, to see names for national parks and cultural areas being recognised in the Kimberley.

I guess most members sitting here in this chamber have been to the Kimberley at one time or another. If not, members are missing out, because the Kimberley region is regarded as one of the last remaining true wilderness areas on the planet, and it is home to some of the most extraordinary natural attractions, including me! It is commendable that the Cook government understands the profound importance of preserving areas such as the Kimberley so they can continue to be visited and enjoyed by generations to come. It is also commendable that the Cook government recognises the most beneficial way to preserve these areas of natural beauty and intense culture is to work alongside Aboriginal people in the management and conservation of these beautiful, magnificent sites.

Working collaboratively with the Plan for Our Parks program is the Cook government's Aboriginal ranger program, which is also very close to me. It has created more than 800 employment opportunities since its inception. The initiative combines thousands of years of traditional knowledge with modern technologies and strategies to preserve the environment, cultural values and the traditional owner's connection with land, sea, community and identity. Caring for country has benefits for the cultural, economic and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

The Cook government's ongoing investment into the Plan for Our Parks program will continue to empower Aboriginal people to have a say in how their country is cared for as well as providing the necessary environmental and economic protections.

I am proud to be an Aboriginal person in this government, and I am proud to be part of a government that fully recognises the benefits of both the Aboriginal ranger and the Plan for Our Parks programs.

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.34 pm]: Thank you, President, for the opportunity to say a few words to support this magnificent motion moved by Hon Shelley Payne. It is a fantastic motion to outline the Labor party's credentials on environment protection and also conservation. The Labor Party has a deep and proud history of protecting the environment because it knows it is an important aspect of our human life. It is important for the wellbeing of all Australians.

I must make the observation that the entire National-Liberal alliance is capably represented in this chamber by Hon Colin de Grussa, and all the other honourable colleagues of the member are on urgent parliamentary business. Perhaps if they could make themselves available, they could learn a few things from the Labor Party and the

Cook Labor government because the Labor party has a strong and proud history in supporting and protecting our environment. We know that it is not only important for the wellbeing of all Australians, but also good for the economy of our state.

Back in 2016, the Labor Party put out the *WA Labor plan for jobs*. I have mentioned this document a number of times. I took it upon myself to translate this document into Mandarin Chinese, and this translation was published in 2016 by the Leader of the Opposition's office with the support of Hon Mark McGowan, as the Leader of the Opposition. In the document, there are a number of initiatives on supporting regional jobs and jobs for our First Nations peoples living in Western Australia. The Labor party knows that that is linked to the wellbeing of our economy. Let us not forget—I think it is important that we remind ourselves in this place and in our community that we were in domestic recession in 2016. In Western Australia, 80 000 Western Australians were out of a job. You can imagine the difficulties those families faced. That was all to the discredit of the former Liberal–National government.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas has talked a number of times about fiscal management and accused us of having good luck as a government. It is conveniently left out that the Liberal–National government also had a mining boom. What did it do with its money? It blew it. It let public sector debt run through the roof. It was a total disaster. They bought plastic cows and singing toilets using royalties for regions funds. When Labor came to power, it changed that. It put mechanisms in place so that the money in this state can be spent in the best interests of the people of Western Australia. I recall that during the eight and a half years of the Barnett government, Hon Donna Faragher for a time was not the minister because of family duties. I hasten to add I sometimes wondered had she stayed on as a minister in the Barnett government during the entire time perhaps, she could have used her —

Hon Donna Faragher: I do not know where this is leading.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I am trying to find the best words to describe that situation. It would be great if we had Hon Donna Faragher beyond 2025. Unfortunately, I think we will be missing you, and you will be dearly missed.

Hon Dan Caddy: She will be missing us!

Hon PIERRE YANG: Most of us, perhaps!

Hon Donna Faragher: I will tell you on May 21 next year.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I have your number, so I will probably give you a call on the 22 May.

President, I would like to come back to the motion.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you, honourable member. You are very welcome to do that any time!

Hon Donna Faragher interjected.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I will come back to that in a bit. We will see how we go over the next 40 minutes, honourable member.

It is important to know that the geographic area of Western Australia is one-third of the entire nation of Australia, and we have many wonderful old-growth forests in the south west. As an Army reservist serving in the ADF for 10 years, not every month but perhaps every second month, I would go out into the Bindoon military training area with my mates to train. The Australian Army can also claim credit for the management of its grounds. It is very important that we maintain what we have in this state. We do not go and chop things down. We protect the environment. We take the rubbish out after a military exercise so we do not leave litter in the military training area. The Army can be very proud of its management of the entire military training ground in the bush and at different training areas in Australia, such as Puckapunyal, Singleton in New South Wales and Townsville in Queensland, and I give the Army a shout-out. Good on it for doing what it is doing.

Western Australia covers one-third of the geographic area of Australia. We have many pristine areas in the state, and the Labor Party, and Labor governments whenever we are in power, has demonstrated deep-rooted support for the environment. Who could forget the protection for the Ningaloo Reef during the Gallop government years or the ban on logging old-growth forests? Of course, I will also go back to the 1980s when Bob Hawke was the Prime Minister. The former leader of the Greens, Mr Bob Brown—is he a doctor?

Hon Donna Faragher: Yes.

Hon Darren West: Yes. Member, Dr Bob Brown pronounced Jimi Hendrix dead. Fun fact!

The PRESIDENT: Order! If you do intend to interject, please make it relevant.

Hon PIERRE YANG: In an article dated 17 May 2019, after the passing of Hon Bob Hawke, Dr Bob Brown claimed that Mr Hawke was our environmental Prime Minister. I wish to draw attention to the fact that Hon Dr Brad Pettitt, a member of the Green Party in this Parliament, is away on urgent parliamentary business. I had hoped that he could be here, but he is on urgent parliamentary business.

During the 1980s, the Hawke government protected 60 000 hectares of wilderness in Tasmania. That was a very important achievement because in the lead-up to the late 1980s, the awareness of the importance of protecting our

environment was gradually dawning on us. We want to protect the environment or we will leave this place for our children and grandchildren worse off than we found it. The Labor government in Canberra took the lead and protected our environment. That was the first and most critical moment in our nation so that we could start the process of protecting our environment. Of course, when it comes to the state government, as I mentioned, the Gallop government protected our environment and the Carpenter government continued it. The McGowan government also had a very proud history of environment protection, which is continued by the current Cook government.

If I may, it is important to note that to date a total of 2.5 million hectares of new conservation reserves, which is 50 per cent of the target, have been created under the Plan for Our Parks initiative. The initiative provides the basis for a new era in working with traditional owners, with reserves created that are intended to be jointly vested or jointly managed with traditional owners.

Hon Rosie Sahanna talked about the importance of having cultural tourism. That is one initiative that we had in our Plan for Jobs program back in 2016, which we took to the 2017 election. Hon Rosie Sahanna also talked about the First Nation people's care for our environment, and I wish to add that our First Nation people have cared for this land continuously over 60 000 years. There is a way for peaceful and harmonious coexistence and co-dependence between us and the environment. This does not mean that we go in and log and fish species to extinction; it means that we protect the environment when we need to protect it and extract resources when we can do so sustainably, but also leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

I wish to give a shout-out to the Labor government, and I want to give a shout-out to Hon Shelley Payne for this incredible motion. It is important that we talk about protecting our environment and we talk about our Plan for Our Parks initiative so that we can remind ourselves of the importance to continue this protection.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [1.48 pm]: I am very happy to rise today in support of the motion to recognise the great value of the Plan for Our Parks program and in support of my colleague and friend Hon Shelley Payne. This is a really important motion to make, notice and recognise in that it is no overstatement to suggest that having a Plan for Our Parks is, indeed, a visionary and an incredibly important legacy to leave for future generations. It is more than just environmental protection and preservation; it is legacy, it is community, it is connection, and it is recognising that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves and the impact that we have on our short time here on Earth.

Historically speaking, planning for parks has proved incredibly valuable. I might take us overseas for a quick trip to a place that I have always wanted to visit and never have and that is New York. If we think about the planning that took place and the visionary future-thinking needed to create what is now Central Park in New York, it has proved such a valuable and critical part of the infrastructure. It is the lungs of that city. It is a tourist hub. It is a recreational hub. It is a vital green space in what would otherwise be 100 per cent concrete jungle. Planning for parks matters.

Another example right back here on our shores—the fastest trip members will ever get to New York and back—is right here over the road from us, and that is Kings Park, a beautiful space that people planning and thinking ahead preserved for the future. They preserved a beautiful part of the environment and invested time and space into it. Any time we take a trip to Kings Park, we see people valuing and appreciating that beautiful space. The trees there never cease to take my breath away. It is really important to note that planning for parks matters, and that is why I say this is a visionary plan or series of plans by the Cook government, and I am really proud that this is something we have done.

Another fun fact I will tell members about Central Park in New York is that one of the winning designs for that park was by a farmer named Frederick Olmsted. I will take members back to that a little later. I thought that was a very interesting fact. It was not him alone, but I thought it was great to see that a farmer recognised the importance and value of preserving and making sure that there is green community space in which people can recreate and indulge in community and connection with each other, in a place where, increasingly, community and connection was starting to dissipate into small, isolated apartment buildings.

Kings Park is a wonderful park here in the city, but three parks in my region, Geraldton and the midwest, and even up into the Mining and Pastoral area that I mentioned, have been included in our Plan for Our Parks. We heard Hon Shelley Payne talk about value-adding and the preservation of species, and I will talk a bit about that as well, but we also heard Hon Shelley Payne talk about how that then enables things like the Aboriginal ranger program, and how we then build on reconnecting people back into country, providing them opportunities to plant roots back into the country that they may have become disconnected from for various reasons. It is not just country but also community. This will enable people to make a valuable and vital contribution to community and be a part of something bigger—our Plan for Our Parks. I want to mention firstly the Badimia conservation reserves, which are in the Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions. There are 114 000 hectares of reserves located in Badimia country, and they have significant Aboriginal, cultural and pastoral heritage values. Those reserves also protect around 563 flora and 162 fauna species. It is so incredibly important to preserve those species, and it is a great way to leave a legacy of protecting species that are unique to our country. I do not know whether anyone watched any of

the programs on the ABC over the weekend, but we continue to discover new species. We will not continue to discover these new species if we do not preserve and plan for our parks, as we have been doing. On that program at the weekend, the scientist—forgive me; I cannot remember his name—talked about having discovered a new ant species and said that Australia has the largest number of ant species in the world. Keeping and protecting open spaces allows us to protect and continue to discover these new species. The numbers and figures that I have provided do not necessarily stop there. The research and work that people can do in those parks is critical to not only maintaining and preserving our natural world for future generations, but also understanding the way they can contribute to ensure that plants continue to be propagated and other species continue to survive, because we all know that those things are interconnected.

There is also the Thundelarra Conservation Park in the Mining and Pastoral Region. That is in the south midwest region, also on Badimia country. This one is 100 000 hectares and spans a vast range of the midwest region. This park also supports some important ecological species, including flora and vegetation types, and also the malleefowl. These are really important species and are part of our cultural identity. If we do not plan for our parks in this way and create these spaces, create appreciation and respect and really truly value the species that are native to our country, we will lose that connection and part of our cultural identity. It is bigger than just preserving the park areas. It also creates opportunities for people to recreate, learn to tread softly on the Earth, and learn to really value and develop that sense of awe and wonder that we need to have for our Earth and country to really invest in caring about and protecting it. When we separate people from those things, we start to lose sight of the importance and value to human existence. That sounds a little bit over-the-top, but it is, in fact, quite true. Our country does more than just provide us something nice to look at; it also feeds us.

The last part I will mention that has been incorporated into the Plans for Our Parks is the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park. It is very close, just across the water from my home in Geraldton. I say “just across the water”; it is a bit of a trip by boat, or we can fly over there as well. The Abrolhos, as we know, is rich in history. It is not just a unique and special landscape providing opportunities for industry like crayfishing; it also provides part of the history and story of our nation. There is the Batavia shipwreck. So many stories exist there, and it always baffles me that we are not a mecca for European travellers, who love those historical stories. I think that the establishment of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park is the beginning of building that tourism mecca that is really focused on preserving natural environment to ensure that it is inclusive, and also build the tourism potential for the region that treads very softly and respectfully upon that environment.

I will share a really great story about some of the development on the Abrolhos Islands. Recently, in January of this year, there was a story about Chris Kerr, a local identity from Geraldton, which was filmed and shared in the media, if members would like to have a look. She got to experience the new disability-friendly infrastructure that has been established there in the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, so she could move about the island. Trust me—even when someone has shoes on it can be a bit treacherous. It is reef oriented and is not stable ground. Walkways have been established so that there is a full range of access, and other facilities have been established that enabled Chris Kerr to put on a mask and snorkel, go diving and experience the magical underwater world of the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park. It is a magnificent part of the world and probably one of the better kept secrets. Not many people head out there and really engage in that environment. If members get the opportunity to watch the video of Chris Kerr, a woman who is in a wheelchair, experiencing all that, please have a look. It is a fantastic story and really helps us to appreciate the value of ensuring that we provide equity of access for people to appreciate these national parks that we all quite frequently take for granted.

This is legacy building by the Cook government. I am incredibly proud to be a part of it, and I really thank Hon Shelley Payne for bringing this motion to everybody’s attention, because it a really worthy project to celebrate.

I think it is also really important to note that there is also a lot of hard work to strike a balance when we are developing the parks to make sure that the touch of human impact and footprint on those parks is managed, and that we are looking at impact and making sure that the species of flora and fauna in those environments that we are striving to protect and recognise, and maybe even identify as more research is undertaken, are protected and preserved for future generations. It is a really important inclusion in this Plan for Our Parks. I am really proud to say that is something that has been a focus of the Plan for Our Parks and part of the work of the Aboriginal ranger program, as well.

On the subject of the Abrolhos Islands, I would like to make a special note. As everyone knows, there is a crayfishing industry in Western Australia, and the Abrolhos Islands are a big part of that. A woman by the name of Pia Boschetti has grown up there. She runs Latitude Gallery in Geraldton. She has run a program out in the Abrolhos Islands called Flotsam and Jetsam for many years now. That is a really successful program. People go over, collect all the flotsam and jetsam—ropes, rubbish, driftwood and all the bits and pieces that might turn up on and around the islands—collate it, bring it back to the wharf in Geraldton, artists from across the region go and collect the bits and pieces, create artwork out of the flotsam and jetsam, then they have an exhibition and prizes are awarded. It is a fantastic event and a really great way to get people invested in caring about that environment and making use of waste that otherwise would probably end up in rubbish dumps or left on the islands. It is a really great program

by Pia Boschetti, and I really congratulate her for the continued success of that program and also her absolute commitment to it and the Abrolhos Islands. She has done some fantastic work. She is known as the girl who grows the pearls, so there are also pearls that come from the Abrolhos Islands as well.

While I am on my feet, the Plan for Our Parks program and protecting the environment are important, but I think this is also a good opportunity to think about the planning for, and preservation of, our land generally—that is, things like agriculture, horticulture and pastoral lands. I watched quite a bit of ABC on the weekend. I will not pretend I did not. I was watching *Landline*. I do not know if anyone else saw it, but there was a program talking about Byron Bay and the encroachment of human residential land and other projects on agricultural land. I think that one of the other things we probably need to think about is planning for the protection of our agricultural and food producing land, because this program was very much focused on food security. I find it absolutely mind-boggling that none of the members across the floor who purport to represent agriculture ever seem to raise this issue. I find it very odd. That is probably something that we need to look at in the future and I think that the Cook government does a really good job of thinking and forward planning to make sure that we leave long-lasting legacies. I am particularly proud to mention that is something we have been doing.

We also perhaps need to think about planning and protecting green spaces. It is a strange anomaly that our local governments have an almost laissez-faire permission to decide which trees are cut down for developments. Perhaps there also needs to be things about considering planning for green spaces and protecting trees. A lot of development that happens in our own backyards probably happens without us giving a great deal of thought to the consequences of cutting down trees in or around a particular local government area.

I can think of an example of that in Geraldton itself, where I spent most of my time growing up. It has been quite inundated by white cockatoos and they tend to attack and peck at all the trees and do the things that birds naturally do. People often talk about wanting to manage that and it always struck me as odd that no-one has ever asked the question of why they have ended up there. It is because of the massive land clearing and the lack of trees in the environments that they normally would be that has driven them towards where there are trees. At the risk of sounding like I might be stepping into the Greens' chair across the floor, I think we need to plant more trees.

As an extension of that slight digression, dipping my toe into my love of trees and all things green, I am really proud of the Cook government's Plan for Our Parks. I am proud of the work that it did. I know that the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park was kicked around for about 30 years and it took the WA Labor government to step in in 2019 to finally make it happen. I am particularly proud of it. I think that other members will speak about some of the other parks that have been established across Western Australia, so we will hear a little bit more. We are taking initiative and creating plans. We all know the expression, "If you don't plan, you plan to fail", so it is really great to see that there are plans in place for everybody to see. They are being executed and are creating real jobs for Aboriginal people from relevant areas to bring, learn, develop and share local knowledge.

I know that some of the Aboriginal rangers who have worked in programs around the midwest area have gone into schools to share some of their knowledge. They have talked to me about how much the students in those schools love to hear about the work that they are doing and learning about the country and how people have engaged with it in the past. They have described students' excitement, fascination and genuine interest. I do know about other members, but I have taught in schools and I did not always get fascination, excitement and genuine interest in the things that I was teaching. I think when there are tangible real things that people can see around them, they really see the value and relevance in them. I think the education delivered by those rangers and the people who are helping to work with them is also really important.

The Aboriginal rangers who are working in our parks have also gone out to rivers around the midwest area to teach and deliver programs to some of the students to make sure they understand the ecosystem around the river. It is an adventure for them. It is actually one of the rivers that I remember stomping around in as a child as well and collecting tadpoles and watching them grow into frogs. I still remember how important it was for children to get their hands and feet dirty, engaging with the natural environment and learning about it. Those are the things that really make us care about our natural environment, and our flora and fauna. That is definitely one of the core drivers of the Plan for Our Parks initiative. I am really proud to say that that is something that the Cook government has delivered and continues to deliver. It will be a fantastic legacy of the Cook government and I thank Hon Shelley Payne for bringing it to our attention.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [2.06 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to respond on behalf of the government to the excellent motion but today by Hon Shelley Payne —

That this house commends the Cook government for the implementation of its Plan for Our Parks program, which is the largest expansion of the conservation estate in the state's history.

Although it is always nice to be commended by the house, I get commended everywhere I go for this initiative. We have been on this journey for a while. I meet with a lot of environmental groups. We do not always see eye to eye on issues, but one thing in common with everyone I meet in that environmental space is their particular commendation for our Plan for Our Parks. I thank the member for bringing on the motion.

I also acknowledge Minister Whitby, the Minister for Environment, and his predecessors Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson and Hon Stephen Dawson for their work in this place. I think Hon Stephen Dawson was the Minister for Environment who kicked all this off when we were elected in 2017. He completely changed the game in terms of preserving and protecting our areas of natural beauty and environment for generations to come.

I have been sitting here listening to the debate and the excellent speakers before me. I noticed a couple of school groups coming through and thought, “This is one debate that I am sure would really engage students sitting in the public gallery of the Legislative Council and that they would like to hear about”, because it is about everybody’s future, particularly young people’s. It is a great motion. I know Hon Shelley Payne is particularly passionate about the environment. Members may not know that Hon Shelley Payne has a masters in environmental management, so she knows what she is talking about and has a great passion and understanding of our natural environment.

She mentioned her husband, Mark. I also want to acknowledge him. I think he told me once that he had spent around two years of his life under the water on that beautiful archipelago down in Esperance, fishing and enjoying the natural environment. Mark is a crusader on research into sharks and the importance of the natural environment down there. We have some magnificent scenery down there and some unique and wonderful wildlife. Anyone who has been to the Bremer Canyon can attest to that. I acknowledge Mark and Shelley’s work in preservation, research and the protection of the natural environment down on the south coast. It is wonderful that we are able to do this south coast marine park, which people have been calling for for a very long time. It will be a success. I know that there has been some opposition by the opposition, but it will be a remarkable achievement to preserve that area of the coast. That park will rival Shark Bay, Ningaloo and the Great Barrier Reef as one of the world’s leading marine parks. It was good to hear about that.

How lucky are we to have Hon Rosie Sahanna speak from her perspective? We are so lucky to have someone like Hon Rosie Sahanna in this place—to bring her knowledge and experience of, and passion for, the natural environment. She spoke about how people have interacted with the natural environment for hundreds of generations.

I share with Hon Pierre Yang acknowledgement of the contribution of Hon Donna Faragher, former Minister for Environment. We are going to miss Hon Donna Faragher after 2025; we are now on the hunt for a new favourite Liberal, are we not, Hon Pierre Yang?

Hon Pierre Yang: Yes!

Hon DARREN WEST: We will have to come up with a new favourite Liberal after 2025! Hon Pierre Yang quite rightly touched on the history of Labor protecting the environment. It was a Labor government that stopped old-growth logging in Western Australia; it was a Labor government that protected Ningaloo Reef; it was a Labor government that saved the Beeliar wetlands; and it was a federal Labor government that saved the Franklin and Gordon Rivers in Tasmania from being dammed. We take seriously our responsibility to future generations.

Hon Sandra Carr talked about vision in planning—and that is absolutely what the Plan for Our Parks program is all about—and the importance of looking back through history at when people got it right. There are plenty of examples of when people did not get it right, but she talked about governments getting it right. We believe we are doing that here. I think the most important part of Hon Sandra Carr’s contribution was when she spoke about the interface, over millennia, between humans and the natural environment. That will continue. There is something really good about going out into the bush with no-one else around, and absorbing and experiencing the natural beauty. We plan to keep that going.

Members may be aware that we seek to create, through the Plan for Our Parks program, five million hectares of new conservation reserves by 2024. We are on track; it was not easy through the pandemic, but we are pretty much on track. This is being done on a historic scale, resulting in a 20 per cent increase in our parks and reserves across Western Australia as a minimum. Anyone reading this transcript in the future or listening to this debate should try to get their head around a 20 per cent increase in our current national parks area; it is a major undertaking that has required significant work from organisations such as the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for it to happen. I would like to acknowledge all the hardworking staff at those agencies who are tasked with making that happen. It is a government policy and we have put all the frameworks in place to make it happen, but ultimately it is the staff in our government agencies who need to make it work, and they have done an amazing job. They did an amazing job through the pandemic and all the challenges that that threw up. It has been a difficult labour market, but we have been able to pull all the right people together to make this happen, so kudos to them.

This initiative has expanded and will continue to expand the conservation estate to protect some of the state’s most valuable natural assets, including wetlands, rangelands, forests and marine areas. Scores of threatened flora and fauna species will have their habitats secured. Again, that is for the future. This expansion of our conservation estate under Plan for Our Parks will enhance vegetation conditions and carbon sequestration and will support our aspiration for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. If members are not on the net zero by 2050 train, they had better get on soon. The carbon wars are over; we know what we have to do. The science tells us what we need to do and we are getting on with it. We owe that to future generations.

However, it is not only about conservation. The program will also provide the basis for a new era in working with the state's traditional owners in land and sea management. Of course, that is nothing new. Our first Australians have been managing land and sea and living in our natural environment for many thousands of years. It just makes sense to engage more closely with our traditional owners and First Nations people for the next several thousand years. The spinoffs from that have been profound, and I will talk about that in a while.

Plan for Our Parks involves new agreements with more than 20 different traditional owner groups across the state. It is providing transformative job, training and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people right across every area of land management. At full implementation, this initiative is expected to create over 280 full-time jobs across the state, with around 70 per cent of those expected to be in place by June and the remainder in the 12 months following. It is also providing real and meaningful opportunities for traditional owners and the community to build their capacity, strengthen governance and to directly participate in the joint management of their country. We have already seen significant benefits from that. It just makes sense.

The program offers a valuable opportunity to assist in closing the gap, provides for a practical implementation of the state government's Aboriginal empowerment strategy, and illustrates the government's commitment to agreement-making with Aboriginal communities. Who better for us to work with than our Aboriginal communities and first Australians? There is also a considerable opportunity for further development of nature-based and cultural tourism attractions and facilities, based on the remoteness, isolation, vast open spaces and spectacular scenery of the initiative areas.

Parks are a recognised brand that drives tourism, and the parks will create new reasons for people to travel to the regions. A few speakers have touched on that; what a great opportunity for Western Australians. We saw, when we closed the borders during COVID and pretty much locked up our tourism market in Western Australia, how many Western Australians took the opportunity to explore their own state. We also saw how many were really glad they did that, and will do so again.

The new parks have Aboriginal cultural heritage, landscape and natural features of interest to visitors that can be leveraged by the tourism industry through the creation of new tour experiences. With joint management partners, the parks offer opportunities for visitors to experience Aboriginal culture and heritage, offering a rich new lens through which to view the country. The parks will make an important contribution to our vision to become the premier destination for authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences, as articulated in the state government's *Jina: WA Aboriginal tourism action plan 2021–2025*.

Will it not change the way people think about rock art on the Burrup Peninsula when they go there with a traditional owner who will tell them the real stories about the art, its meaning and its significance? Will that not change their visitor experience, compared with just wandering through?

The emerging carbon farming and nature repair markets offer further opportunities for traditional owners to undertake meaningful work on country and enhance the conservation and cultural values of the parks. I am pleased to report that more than 2.5 million hectares of new reserves, comprising more than 50 per cent of the target area, have been reserved, and there is more to come.

Agreements are currently being finalised and joint management is being implemented with: the Jidi Jidi Aboriginal Corporation, for a new national park at the upper reaches of the Gascoyne River in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Wajarri Yamatji Aboriginal Corporation, for new parks in the Murchison and Gascoyne regions, also in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Malgana Aboriginal Corporation, for new jointly managed reserves that will protect the internationally significant World Heritage values of Shark Bay, again in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Nanda Aboriginal Corporation, for new parks in and around Kalbarri in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Nyiyaparli people, for a new nature reserve at the nationally significant Fortescue Marsh in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Nyamal Aboriginal Corporation, for new parks east of Marble Bar in the Mining and Pastoral Region; the Gija people, for a national park to build on protections of the Fitzroy River, again in the Mining and Pastoral Region; and the Baiyungu people, for new parks in the Exmouth region of the Mining and Pastoral Region.

I also note the recent release of management plans for the proposed south coast marine park in the Agricultural and Mining and Pastoral Regions—a significant milestone for this government. The area is home to southern right whale nurseries, vast kelp forests, vulnerable seal and sea lion colonies, precious reefs, and other marine species. The plans were developed in partnership with traditional owner groups and build on consultation undertaken in 2021. The state government is encouraging community feedback on the plans, which have been released for four months of public comment. I urge members, rather than jumping to the wrong conclusions, to please engage with the community consultation process. This is a project we want to create together. The creation of the park will be an important part of the state's marine conservation reserve system. We have achieved a lot under the initiative so far, and the government is looking to create more reserves over the course of the year, in partnership with traditional owners. The state continues to finalise Indigenous land use agreements to create the remaining areas under the initiative. The government looks forward to reporting back on the achievements under the initiative as we approach the target of five million hectares.

That is what the government is doing. It is a significant body of work. It is a significant undertaking and we have had our critics, particularly those sitting opposite. When we talk to groups of young people, environmental groups, traditional owners and communities, in the main, an overwhelming number of Western Australians are supportive of a Plan for Our Parks. That is why it is important to talk about it in the house today. That is why it is important for members like Hon Shelley Payne to bring us to this conversation so we can have it together, very publicly and openly, and so we can resolve our differences here as to the best way going forward. Over the term of the McGowan and Cook governments, I think we have this one pretty right. I think the areas that need to be preserved will be preserved. There may even be areas that come back again in the future because, of course, we cannot do everything at once. One of the common questions we get when we meet with environmental groups is, “What about our area? Can we put that in the Plan for Our Parks?” We are discovering more and more areas across the state as the communities and people who enjoy those areas hope we can bring them into the Plan for Our Parks.

I am pleased we have been able to talk about this today. We have a very good story to tell. It is yet another example of how the Cook Labor government is managing the future of our state for future generations. It is not easy in government but we get to do some really good stuff and this is one of those really good things we have been able to pull together. I am a little disappointed in the opposition today. I thought there would be some contribution on this because it might be something that everyone agrees is in the interests of all our electorates. I thought everyone would agree it is something we need to do, notwithstanding there would be some differences in how we might go about it. I hope that someone opposite gets up and makes a contribution on this today because we would like to know where the opposition is on this and I think the voting public would like to know where the opposition is on this. It has been a bit light on policies over the last little while, but when a motion like this is brought before the house, I would hope that everyone can get around it because I know the general public supports it. I thank the member for bringing the motion and I am very proud to give the government response. I think all the speeches made today have been really well made.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.22 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to this motion on behalf of the opposition. In all reality, the commitment by the government back at the 2021 election for the Plan for Our Parks initiative with the creation of five million hectares of new national parks, marine parks and conservation reserve can be seen as a noble aspirational target. However, unfortunately, true to form, although it set out to be a noble aspirational target, it has fallen victim to this government’s sledgehammer, no-compromise approach. It is that approach that puts the opposition in a position of not being able to support this motion because, after all, it is the implementation of the Plan for Our Parks program that is creating big issues in many of the communities that I represent and in many communities and industries across Western Australia. I am going to talk about the south coast marine park and others.

Looking at the process, it started with a quick and dirty consultation process that unravelled when community members realised and understood what was going to happen. It was not really consultation; it was essentially, “We’re delivering this and we’re just going to navigate this process so it happens the way we want.” Then, of course, the government dredged up the Wilson report, which other members have referred to today—that is, *A representative marine reserve system for Western Australia* from June 1994. The report is 30 years old. Hon Pierre Yang went back to the 1980s in his contribution. I am going to go back to the 1980s a little bit, too. In fact, one year after that great movie *Back to the Future* was released, the group that prepared this report started coming together and doing the work for it. We are talking about work that started in 1986, the same year as *Top Gun* and the year many of my generation were enjoying the wonderful computing power of the Commodore 64—many years ago. The inconvenient truth of the Wilson report is that it does not recommend the establishment of marine parks of the scale and scope that have been proposed. In fact, the report recognised there is a lack of scientific data relevant to the south coast and it acknowledged that further research was required to identify specific areas of conservation. The government then commissioned a further review of the south coast marine environment between Albany and Eucla. That report was the Carijoa report, *A review of the south coast marine environment and proposed areas for state marine reservation between Albany and Eucla, Western Australia*, which was released in June 2021. Unsurprisingly, that report came to the same conclusion as the Wilson report from 30 years before. The executive summary of the report points out —

The information, recommendations and knowledge gaps presented in this review are based on the most current scientific literature, however, it is acknowledged that the WA south coast is relatively understudied compared to other areas.

There is even a whole chapter in the report devoted to gaps relevant to marine park planning along the south coast. It clearly identifies that the science is not there and that more needs to be done in order to understand the marine environment. Obviously, that begs the question of what additional research was done? As recommended by the Carijoa report, what additional work was done in formulating the marine park boundary and zoning scheme? The answer to that, of course, is none. Instead, the goalposts were moved. Rather than following the usual practice of scientific orthodoxy, as recommended in the report that the government itself had commissioned, it decided to take the precautionary principles approach; that is, “We’ll lock it up because we kind of think there might be something there to protect. We’ll lock it up in exclusion zones and do the research later.” Back in March last year, I called

out the government for not releasing the socio-economic impact assessment that it had done to help justify the establishment of the south coast marine park. The reason for doing that is it is incumbent on government to justify its position, to be able to say why it is taking a certain course of action and what impact that course of action is going to have. A socio-economic impact assessment should form a natural part of a project of this scale. Obviously, it is a very systematic method and process that looks at the particular impacts of a project, engages with the communities, local governments, industry, tourism, traditional owners, and ordinary folk who might use the area. All sorts of people are engaged in a socio-economic impact assessment to then understand exactly what is going to happen as a result of the decisions that are made. The beauty of a process like that is, if it is done properly, it builds trust and confidence and it enhances the relevance and accuracy of the work that is being done. It is a good thing to do because when the government chooses a course of action that has a potential to do damage to livelihoods, a strong argument should be put forward that it is the only option available. The government should do the studies and quantify the impacts and consequences of that decision. However, the government did not release that study because it did not do one.

If we go back to November last year to gain a bit of insight on this, I asked a question in this place to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Regional Development —

I refer to the request for tender for the provision of services for the south coast marine park socio-economic impact assessment—Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development document 2023045.

- (1) On what basis was the tender not awarded?
- (2) Was the contract re-tendered?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

The response from the parliamentary secretary was —

- (1) It was value for money.

It was not awarded because of value for money, it was not re-tendered and —

- (3) A separate decision was made for the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to undertake a baseline socio-economic study.

I am sure members were all paying attention yesterday when I asked a similar and very simple question in the house, referring to the question I had asked in November. The question in the uncorrected *Hansard* reads —

- (1) Given that it was the consensus recommendation of the evaluation panel to award the tender following the confirmation of the availability of the necessary funds from each of the three agencies involved, who took the decision not to award the tender based on value for money?
- (2) On what basis was it determined that the tender did not constitute value for money?

The response in the uncorrected *Hansard* was —

- (1)–(2) The premise of the question is incorrect. There was no consensus recommendation by an evaluation panel to award the tender, so the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development declined all offers. The offered price of the preferred respondent was over three times greater than the pre-tender approved budget, and a value-for-money purchasing decision was difficult to establish.

That was the response to the question. However, the reality is that the tender evaluation panel came to a consensus decision to award that tender to a company called BDO Australia. In email exchanges obtained under the freedom-of-information process, this is clearly the case—even to the extent that the panel had commenced discussions on the process through which the preferred tenderer would be briefed and the practical steps upon their engagement, such as who they were going to talk to and what they were going to do. Further, an email exchange between members of the panel confirmed that each agency had secured the funds necessary to complete the study. I will read from one of those emails. This email of 17 November 2022 reads —

Good news. I've spoken with my Director today and I can confirm we can fund \$150k for the job and I understand from talking with Luke this morning that DBCA will also fund \$150k.

If Shane can confirm GEDC can fund \$20k we are ready to go with funding. I'll let Heather know.

In reality, the tender evaluation panel was overridden by the department. The director general of the department directed to change the recommendation to decline all offers. I quote an email of 15 December 2022 from the contracts and procurement officer in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development —

Hi everyone,

It came to my attention late yesterday that we're going to decline all offers for this process. This wasn't my understanding from early in the week, so it would have been useful to know this information earlier. I'm now in the process of amending the evaluation report to reflect the decline all offers position.

The response was —

Thanks ...

Yes that is correct we discussed the possibility of the DG potentially overriding the decision that procurement arrived at (I.e) decline all offers and go back out to market.

Advice received late Tuesday was not going to override.—apologies of not relaying earlier.

Clearly, the decision was made to override that original decision. Finally, an email of 15 December 2022 reads —

Hi ...

Attached please find the Evaluation Report for ... Provision of Services for the South Coast Marine Park Socio Economic Impact Assessment.

Outcome—Decline all Offers.

That is despite all the previous emails indicating they had accepted the offers and they had even gone as far as working out who to consult in the process. Those emails quite clearly show that in reality the departments had engaged someone under that tender, had awarded that decision and had found the funding but then were overridden. For some inexplicable reason, someone further up the line inside government decided that a proper socio-economic impact assessment did not represent value for money for the government even though it was tendered, procured, agreed and funded. In essence, it was not worth the time and money for this government to have a proper look at what the impact of the marine parks will be on the wellbeing of communities along the south coast like Esperance, Bremer Bay, Jerramungup, Ravensthorpe, Hopetoun and Albany. Instead, after the government overrode that decision and canned the proper socio-economic assessment, it did a quick and dirty desktop study based on generic assumptions on the likely impact. The interesting thing is that it is not only members on this side of the house—opposition members—who are calling the government out on that. I turn now to a media release of 21 February from the President of the Shire of Esperance. He said —

What has been delivered is a vague desktop document, giving ambiguous Key Findings that “the South Cost Marine Park is likely to have some impact” on industry and businesses within our region.

“Presenting ‘likely to have some impact on commercial fishers’ and ‘likely to be impacts on local businesses’ as a serious socio-economic analysis for decision making in a project this substantial is an insult and a disgrace”, ... “What an affront to local fishing families who have said the sanctuary zones presented by the State Government will mean the end of their livelihoods”.

“Our community knew four years ago the proposed park would have an impact on, not just our commercial fishers, but on the entire region. We don’t need ‘likely’, we need to know what the impact will be.”

“What do we stand to lose, socially and economically? How is the State Government going to balance community wellness, business and sanctuary zones with this proposed park? We already have a strong and growing tourism industry, we already have a sustainable fishing industry”, ... “The proposed sanctuary zones are unnecessarily closing down business and industry. It’s entirely possible to implement this marine park to conserve and manage our precious environment, while retaining the region’s industries and economic resilience.”

“This isn’t a socio-economic assessment, it’s an indication of the low value the State Government places on our regional small businesses ...

They are not my words. They are the words of the President of the Shire of Esperance. The disturbing thing here is that exactly the same situation is now playing out with the proposed extension to Marmion Marine Park off the west coast. The WA Fishing Industry Council, the Western Rock Lobster Council, Recfishwest and others are all raising identical concerns as those that have been raised about the south coast planning process. It is not a surprise that the exact same criticisms have been levelled against the Buccaneer Archipelago marine parks planning process.

I do not argue for one second against conserving and protecting our natural environment. We must do that for future generations. I completely agree that we should do that. Many communities I have spoken with—fishermen, business owners, whoever—all have zero issue with the establishment of marine parks or national parks. They support them. Their issue is when the government does not bother to present a defensible argument about why a certain course of action is the appropriate course of action. The government has not done its homework and they shake their heads when all the government can come up with is this 30-year-old report and a quick and dirty—not even a socio-economic analysis really, but just a whole bunch of motherhood statements that do not put the reality in context. Unfortunately, people in those communities realise they are just collateral damage for the steamroller that is this government.

I encourage members of all communities along the south coast to have their say in the public comment period for the south coast marine park. People can find the “Have your say” questionnaire on the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions website. Please have your say on that park. Let us know what the effects will be. The government has not done its homework on the effects it will have on local businesses, so perhaps it is time that people did its homework for it.

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [2.38 pm]: Since we have already had a lot of regional colleagues today speaking about national parks, I thought I would also get up and say let us not forget that here in the metropolitan region, as many members know, we also have many a national park.

I was unsurprised by the comments of Hon Colin de Grussa on behalf of the Nationals WA and Liberals coalition. I was hoping that the Nationals member for the South West Region may have spoken about national parks because the member has a very interesting take on what we should do with trees and national parks. Whereas the Cook government is trying to conserve, this member has already stated that their wish is to go back to cutting them down. It clearly shows there is a huge gap between what the Nationals and Liberals coalition is saying and what the Cook government is achieving.

I congratulate Hon Shelley Payne on this celebration of conservation. This motion celebrates conservation in WA and allows us to highlight what the Cook government is doing on futureproofing and conserving more of this beautiful landscape.

I come from another beautiful country that has made sure to keep its beautiful, stunning landscapes, because it is extremely important. It preserves them for the future; however, it also invests in the involvement of local groups and local people in preserving those areas for the future. It also brings in tourists and tourism. I played tourist recently in a few of those areas. I thought I would highlight a few of those.

I was down south recently and I noticed Walpole–Nornalup National Park.

Several members interjected.

Hon LORNA HARPER: Nornalup. See, I think it should be “Lorna-up”. Every time I saw it I thought it was my name, so I got a bit confused.

I had the opportunity to go down and, if anybody asks, I walked part of the Bibbulmun Track. I have said this several times now—I have walked on several parts of the Bibbulmun Track—not consecutively and not very far; however, I can state that I have done parts of it. We had the opportunity to walk around and look at the beautiful karri trees, the marri trees—the big trees. The trees are so big that I could not see the people on the other side. It was amazing to see what we have preserved down there. It is a landscape that has been there for hundreds and hundreds of years—thousands of years—before colonials came in and basically ripped half of it away. It stood there for such a long time. It has been preserved and now we get the opportunity to preserve and futureproof this area again.

We saw an adventure playground amongst the trees, which I do want to go back and do. I did not have time that day—that was my excuse. I am now a bit more adventurous and I think I will go back down and be happy to do the death slide, as we call it in Scotland; here I think it is called a zip slide. You can zip-line between trees and things like that. What a great way to see the environment! What a great way to get in amongst it; to walk amongst the trails; to walk along and realise you are on the Bibbulmun Track. We then went a bit further south to the treetop walk. That is another amazing place to visit. How lucky are we that we can walk in amongst those gigantic trees? They are massive. I admit I am a diminutive person with a loud voice. I am fully aware of it; however, it took my breath away to be able to stand there, in amongst the trees, and think, “These have been here for hundreds upon hundreds of years. We have preserved this for future generations.” That is amazing.

Hon Shelley Payne spoke about Esperance and marine parks. Hon Colin de Grussa asked many negative questions. I feel that he missed what Hon Shelley Payne was saying about the impact it will have in Esperance and the positive impact it will have on whole area. I have been to Esperance and it has some of the most stunning beaches you will see. They are not quite as good as some in the north of Scotland, but the water is slightly warmer in Esperance. Not much, but it is slightly warmer. I have been down to Lucky Bay, Thistle Cove and other places. Again, those areas need to be preserved for the future.

At the weekend I played tourist again and I went to Jurien Bay and visited the marine park. I have photos and, if members ask me nicely, I will show them. I put on a wetsuit, climbed on the boat, and we went out into the marine park. It was stunning—absolutely stunning—to be out there at seven o’clock in the morning to see the marine creatures and birds. It is another area that we are extremely lucky is being preserved for the future. Those were my tourist areas; however, there are also areas in and around the Perth metropolitan region. I will talk about some that are close to the East Metropolitan Region because that is kind of my jam and where I am from.

Close to where I live is Walyunga National Park. Hon Rosie Sahanna is laughing at my pronunciation as usual; however, I am not sure whether she has had the opportunity to visit Walyunga National Park. I am lucky; I can say I have. We walked the trails and we sat beside the river. It is another beautifully preserved area of our state. It is extremely important to preserve and invest in those and other conservation areas for the future. When we go, we of course follow the rules set by the local rangers to make sure that what we bring in, we take away.

Then we went for a little drive into the hills to another beautiful area and another part of the Bibbulmun Track, which is Kalamunda National Park. The Bibbulmun Track is only a short 1 000 kilometres between Kalamunda and Albany. Personally, the kilometre-and-a-half that I walked is probably enough for me. My husband has walked a lot further and, as we know, Hon Tony Buti, the Minister for Education; Citizenship and Multicultural Interests;

Aboriginal Affairs, has completed the Bibbulmun Track. If members do not have the opportunity to go down south to Walpole and Nornalup, they can walk through the woodlands of jarrah, marri wandoo and butter gums and head across to Piesse Brook. There are echidnas, kangaroos, bandicoots—all sorts. There are toilets and picnic facilities. This is an area where you put your phone away, go up there and have fun.

Again, how lucky we are to have that on our doorstep and be able to visit those things. While we are talking about the future and the Plan for Our Parks, we must also think about the oldest national park here in Western Australia, which, again, is in the East Metropolitan Region—a most marvellous place to live. It is an extensive area of the Perth metropolitan region and one that is vastly maligned by people because we are not next to the beach. We may not be right next to the beach, but we are next to the Swan Valley and those beautiful national parks. John Forrest National Park was Western Australia's first national park. It has been a bit sad over the years; however, luckily for us, there has been massive investment in the park by the Cook Labor government to bring it up to modern standards with better accessibility so that more people can access the park. I have not been up there for a while—I will be honest. I last visited before the trail improvements began; however, \$2.5 million in funding was spent on upgrading hiking trails and there will be a new off-road cycling adventure trail. That is not my thing—I will be honest. Bicycles and I do not get along too well, especially when I went over the handlebars of one as a child and managed to knock some teeth out. That has lived with me until this day. It is not the reason I speak a wee bit funny; that comes with the accent.

The park's upgraded trail network will include trails for all ages, fitness levels and abilities. It will include 10 kilometres of new grade 3 and 4 hiking trails. Sections of the Eagle View, Christmas Tree Creek and Wildflower Walk trails will be realigned to improve trail sustainability, safety and walking experiences. The new eight-kilometre Little Eagle hiking loop will allow visitors to experience new areas of the park, including spectacular views over the Jane Brook catchment, and weave through an impressive wandoo woodland. Wow! What a plan that is! How amazing will that be when it is completed? Other improvements include sealing the Jane Brook promenade loop and upgrading the Glen Brook Trail, including new steps, footbridges and drainage that have improved the walking experience and reduced long-term maintenance requirements. I have friends who require wheelchairs to get around, and our investments in and planning for the future of parks, including improving accessibility, mean that people like my friends can take their wheelchairs along, get out and enjoy what we, people who have the ability to stroll through parks, take for granted. Making the trails more sustainable and easier to manoeuvre will ensure that children with disabilities will be able to manoeuvre through them and parents of children with cognitive disabilities will be able to see their children as the children go exploring, as all children do. Having those safety aspects is hugely important, and having parks as investments for the future is extremely special for us.

I very keenly listened to Hon Rosie Sahanna as she talked about investment in parks in the Kimberley. The Kimberley is one of the most stunningly beautiful areas of Australia. I was lucky to go up the peninsula on the other side of Broome. Hon Rosie Sahanna took me there, around and about, and I will not try to pronounce the names because I do not want to insult anybody with my pronunciation. Hon Rosie Sahanna thinks it is really funny, so I will keep quiet about that. I will in private because she tries to teach me and I roll the Rs, but it just gets too much.

Hon Darren West mentioned the Burrup Peninsula. He is right that having a ranger from the local group of people tour us around Burrup Peninsula, show us the rock art and explain its significance to us took us to a new level of understanding and appreciation. In the same way, many of us here have done the tour in Kings Park with the local ranger and local Noongar person who take people through the history of Kings Park and explain the women's, men's and birthing areas. That gives people a new appreciation of how lucky we are to spend time in parks, plan for our future and continue to preserve these beautiful areas.

We have only scratched the surface today when talking about the Plan for Our Parks. Western Australia has so many national parks. If I remember rightly from my reading, WA has 112 national parks. That is truly amazing. I believe another 20-odd areas will come on. Please do not shoot me if I am wrong about that, but other areas will come on in the next few years.

A lot of WA has very few people living in it, so it gets very hard to consult when a lot of the area is—not uninhabited—not densely populated. If we go to areas, we talk to the traditional owners and the people who are affected. I am always very disappointed when people ask about the fishermen, the timber growers and the like. Yes, it is sad when we move on from older industries to more modern ways of doing things; however, we have to remember that we are just a blip on the landscape in WA. Colonisation of WA started in only 1826. We have not quite reached 200 years since colonisers arrived in Albany, but traditional owners have been here for 60 000-odd years. To make sure that we keep this land as pristine as we possibly can in the future—because we have done quite a bit of damage in the past, cutting down trees—we need to talk to, and we are talking to, traditional owners about how to preserve this beautiful country for the future. Whilst doing that, we can have new industries, new jobs and more tourism, and make sure that we are preserving everything.

I would like to thank Hon Shelley Payne for her motion highlighting the Plan for Our Parks program and for giving us the opportunity to wiggle our way through that and talk about some of WA's 112 national parks and how we are preserving them for the future. How lucky are we that the Cook government is willing and able to put that much money in and continue to invest?

HON MARTIN PRITCHARD (North Metropolitan) [2.55 pm]: I will just be brief. When motions of this sort come through, it makes me think back to when I was in opposition and sitting in a chair near the door. When a motion of this nature came through and we in opposition truly disagreed with it—I think there were nine of us at the time—all nine of us would be railing against the motion. We would try to make an amendment, and then we would get up again and speak on the amendment. We would fight such a motion. From the non-government contributions so far, I take it that the crossbench agrees with the motion because it has not railed against it and the opposition, in its heart of hearts, believes that it is a good motion. I also believe that it is a good motion.

I have two small points to make. I have a little bit of a connection to the Abrolhos Islands. I have family who live in Kalbarri and have a long association with the crayfishing industry. In season, they often go to the Abrolhos Islands with a lot of the fishing fleet and provide some of the services to the fleet that works from the Abrolhos Islands. They work from a number of small cabins there. They, obviously, told me how beautiful and pristine it is. This makes me think that it is pristine but we cannot guarantee that. A lot of individual dedication has made sure it remains pristine. To have a plan and bring it into a conservation estate will mean that we can rely on it remaining there for years to come. Apart from the crayfishing industry in that area, there are other opportunities to have an ongoing tourism industry and such. It is quite important to make sure that there is a plan, and this is one step on that path—or so I believe, anyway. I am very happy for it to be so because I have very fond memories of Kalbarri, crayfishing and the Christmases we used to have there.

Another point I want to reinforce, which I think is a particularly good point, is that if we do not plan these reserves, we often get to a point at which we have built over any opportunity to have those reserves. Kings Park is a particularly notable point. Can we imagine if Kings Park had not been excised from building? What value would the land now have for construction and such? If people had not had the foresight to excise that land to make sure that our generation and many future generations can enjoy it into the future, it would be just another extension of Perth. It would be a concrete jungle. As it now stands, we have an opportunity to use the park for other means. It is one of the attractions that draws people to Perth, rather than all just heading down south to the wineries or up north to the fabulous things available up there. Kings Park is quite important to Perth.

I thought the reference to New York was also very stark. I have had the opportunity and the pleasure of being in New York and have walked through Central Park. When you look outside of that green triangle in the middle of the island, every square centimetre is utilised for office buildings, high-end accommodation and such. If that area had not been excised and the borders strictly adhered to, I can imagine how it would be now; there would be a couple of small green patches and the rest of New York would be a concrete jungle. As much as I am in favour of progress and expanding and building new infrastructure, I also recognise that we need to plan to have green space within that. It helps in many different ways—importantly, with mindfulness and peace. When we are trying to develop a suburb, we have to plan to have green space put aside. We cannot just give developers the go-ahead.

I think that this is a particularly good motion. I was disappointed that all but one of the speakers on this motion were government members. If there was genuine disagreement with this motion—disagreement with commending the Cook government or the implementation of the plan—I would have expected a line of speakers to get up and rail against it and put their views on the record. I do not just mean the opposition; I also mean members of the crossbench, who say that they are important to this house and to good government. As I said, I can only expect that they agree with this motion, because they have not come into this place and railed against it, so I suspect that it is supported.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [3.02 pm] — in reply: I thank all the members who made a contribution today. As Hon Martin Pritchard said, that was mainly government members. I thank them for taking the time to talk about the great work that our government is doing. Hon Rosie Sahanna talked about the Kimberley being one of the last remaining wilderness areas and all the natural attractions up there. We are doing a lot of important work with our joint management with traditional owner groups in the Buccaneer Archipelago and other parts. I thank Rosie for her contribution. It made me think. I talked a lot in my contribution about the work we are doing with traditional owner groups and the \$100 million we put into Aboriginal ranger programs, but I did not take a minute to thank all those traditional owners who are working on the ground to build capacity within their own organisations to start these Aboriginal ranger programs and make them successful.

People like Julie Hayden and Johnny Rodd down in Katanning are doing amazing collaborative work, working with ranger programs in all the surrounding areas. I commend the team at Esperance Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation—Gail Reynolds-Adamson, the chair, as well as Peter Bednall, the CEO. Jennell does a lot of work down there. Doc Reynolds and the whole team do an amazing job. As I mentioned, Robbie Minter has been successful in the Aboriginal ranger program. Just this week he received a grant for all the work he is doing down there. It is not easy for these people; they are out in the regions, dealing with the same issues we are all dealing with out in the regions, plus, on top of that, trying to build capacity and support their own people. It is a lot of work and I commend them for it.

I thank Hon Pierre Yang for his contribution, particularly about our long commitment to protecting the environment and how important it is to talk about the environment and what we are doing, as well as noting the lack of representation on this by the opposition.

I thank Hon Sandra Carr for talking about the importance of visionary planning and how great it is that we are doing this and expanding our conservation estate. She also talked about the Abrolhos Islands and the opportunity we have to share and talk about our history in those parts. I look forward to doing that in conjunction with Aboriginal people into the future. I do not know whether many members have watched *Shipwreck Hunters Australia*, which is a series on Disney+ that was filmed here in WA. One of the episodes is on the Abrolhos Islands and a lot of the episodes refer to the history of our marine areas. I give a shout-out to Johnny, Andre, Nush and Ryan. They are WA locals who have been part of that *Shipwreck Hunters* series with Disney+. I say well done for that. Hon Sandra Carr also mentioned the disability access investments in Abrolhos. I say as well that it was a \$2 million initiative of ours to improve disability access in our national parks. That is another great initiative that we have done to improve our national parks.

Hon Lorna Harper gave a very important contribution about using national parks and how important it is for people to get out and experience our natural environment in these areas. I talked a bit about the diversity of our natural environment as well.

Hon Sandra Carr also talked about projects on agricultural land. I give a shout-out to Wheatbelt Connect, which is working across the wheatbelt. I met Sam the other day at the Wagin Woolorama. That is a collaboration between Qantas, ANZ and Inpex looking at not just buying good quality agricultural land and planting it out with trees for carbon credits, but actually working with farmers to look at areas of their land that are maybe not very good for farming that they can help to rehabilitate and use for things like carbon farming and carbon credits. There are also some interesting projects with Qantas looking at future sustainable fuels using mallee and things like that. It is very exciting.

I thank Hon Darren West for his contribution, particularly about jobs, noting the 280 jobs that will be created. Thirty of those jobs will be along the south coast. He also referred to our work with traditional owners.

I have only a minute left, but I want to respond to some comments by Hon Colin de Grussa. He raised some reports such as the Wilson report. He spoke about the lack of scientific data but forgot to mention the University of Western Australia's important work. I mentioned its report *Characterising the fish habitats of the Recherche Archipelago* and the great work it did. He also mentioned the economic impact assessment. It is up there online for anybody to go and have a read. It did not recommend at the end of that report that more work needed to be done. The key findings are there; they are positive findings with the outcome of this report. I am glad that at the end of his contribution he encouraged people to have their say, because throughout the last two years, I have not heard any positive contribution to the development of this park from anyone in the opposition. I am glad that he is now encouraging people to have their say.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS — CONSIDERATION

Committee

The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Dr Sally Talbot) in the chair.

Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations — Eighty-fifth Report — Consideration of the 2021–22 budget estimates — Motion

Resumed from 28 February on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier (Leader of the Opposition) —

That the report be noted.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I welcome the opportunity to once again make a contribution on the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations' eighty-fifth report, *Consideration of the 2021–22 budget estimates*. As I have said, I welcome the opportunity to speak again. I will continue my remarks from the previous sitting week and try to go on from where I left off from last time. If the chamber can recall, I was speaking on chapter 5 of the eighty-fifth report, titled "Provision of information", which I went into in some detail last time I made a contribution to this report. I will try not to be too repetitive and will complete my remarks regarding that matter.

As members know, ministers are entitled to and can exercise the non-provision of information for certain reasons. These reasons can include things such as legal professional privilege and an unreasonable impact on one's privacy and security and of course the safety of those who may be directly or indirectly involved with an agency. Other reasons for the non-provision of information include commercial sensitivities, security reasons and also when the disclosure of information would require a substantial allocation of resources. Those are the key reasons for the non-provision of information; however, it should probably be noted that the entitlement for non-provision does not apply to certain things, which I may have touched on in one of my previous contributions to the eighty-fifth report. Nevertheless, the entitlement does not apply during hearings when members can pursue information and when a minister has advised that the information requested does not exist or is not held within that relevant department that the request is going to. All instances of non-provision are listed on table 4 on pages 11 and 12 of the eighty-fifth report. From my recollection, I went through some of the information on table 4 —

Hon Pierre Yang: Would you like to go through them again?

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: How about I go through some of them, not all of them, honourable member? I will refer to two examples. That should cut it in terms of the eighty-fifth report.

Hon Martin Aldridge: You could list at least the section 82 examples.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Hello, honourable member. Good to see you.

Hon Martin Aldridge: Read them all out. Read out the noncompliance.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: No, I think I will stick to two examples that I have noted, which include the withholding of property condition reports of Government Regional Officers' Housing by the Department of Communities to protect the privacy, security and safety of the occupants. The other example that I might use is the redaction of a police officer's name when accompanying a minister on a chartered aircraft, which, as we know, is for privacy and security reasons. With this in mind, I wish to point the members who are paying very close attention to my contribution to finding 2 of the eighty-fifth report, which states —

The Committee's consideration of the 2021–22 estimates of expenditure was not adversely affected by Ministers' decisions not to provide certain information.

As members would probably agree, it is quite pleasing to hear that the committee was not impacted and it could still perform its inquiry, even with some information being withheld. The committee's examination, despite instances of non-provision of information, in fact emphasises the importance of balancing the need for transparency with considerations such as the ones that I mentioned, which is privacy, security and the like. It is reassuring that the committee's scrutiny was not affected by those decisions and it indicates the effectiveness of the oversight role.

On the subject of non-provision, it should be noted that WA has enacted legislation regarding non-provision of information, which, I understand, is unique to our state's jurisdiction. The honourable member mentioned it just then; I did not quite hear him before, but I will take it that he was talking about section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006. Am I correct?

Hon Martin Aldridge: Was it more a recommendation of one of the royal commissions —

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I am not too sure. No?

Hon Martin Aldridge: — about the non-provision of information to Parliament provisions in the Financial Management Act? That is maybe something for the committee to examine in its next report.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: I am sure Hon Peter Collier is writing down notes on the honourable member's question.

Hon Pierre Yang: He is pondering.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: Yes, he is, is he not?

Nevertheless, I take this opportunity to thank members of this committee who have worked quite tirelessly to collaborate the information that we have before us in the eighty-fifth report. I have made a few contributions on it previously and if given the opportunity, I look forward to making another contribution about the eighty-fifth report and its findings at another time.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Thank goodness the time has just elapsed for the previous speaker, because it will give the honourable member an opportunity to look up the Financial Management Act 2006 and read section 82. When the honourable member does that, she will find that it does not provide an exemption for Labor cabinet ministers. There is no such exemption under section 82. It is part of the statute book of Western Australia, and as a result the honourable member might be interested to know that each cabinet minister is required to comply with that law, not if the honourable member feels like it might be a thing to do, or to spend time reading out the basis for non-provision. It seems obvious to me after that contribution that the honourable member does not understand the provision. The provision simply means that any time a minister of the Crown decides to not provide information to Parliament, for whatever reason, they have to notify Parliament and the Auditor General pursuant to section 82. It is not optional, not if they feel like it, and it does not matter what the reason is; they have to do it. The point at recommendation 2, which the honourable member conveniently seemed to pause at and not read, is that the committee has recommended that this particular list of ministers comply with section 82.

The honourable member may also be interested to read the response from the McGowan Labor government provided on 15 February 2022, more than two years ago. The then McGowan government said that it supported recommendation 2 and that ministers would follow the requirements of section 82 of the Financial Management Act 2006. The government said two years ago that its ministers would comply with section 82.

A question that members might like to consider is now that two years have passed, have the ministers complied with section 82 or not? This question has come up on at least four occasions. I know that pursuant to standing orders, this particular debate was adjourned on 6 April 2022, 26 October 2022 and on 10 May 2023. It appears that in approximately 16 minutes' time, this matter will then conclude, although I think there may be a standing order that will allow some opportunity for an extension. Maybe this would be the opportunity to do that. After four hours of consideration of this report, the house is yet to be informed of whether any of these cabinet ministers have complied with section 82.

I wonder if there is any point in the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations spending time drawing to members' attention the occasions of the non-provision of information if the attitude of the government of the day is to simply say that it supports ministers' compliance with that law, but then takes no active steps to ensure that that actually occurs. At least one of the ministers in the frame of this matter is no longer a minister or indeed a member of Parliament because it affected the Premier of the day, who, if I am not mistaken, was also the Treasurer of the day. Of the eight examples, four applied to that particular individual. Others listed include the Minister for Emergency Services, the Attorney General and the Minister for Housing.

On careful examination of the report, members might note, including the previous speaker, that there were eight occasions of non-provision set out in a table, itemising the alleged basis and reasons for the non-provision. It is worth noting that the committee has not suggested that ministers send a section 82 notice regarding all eight occasions. On careful examination, members will note that the occasions that do say that it is necessary as a matter of law in Western Australia that this be done, are for claims of legal and professional privilege, or when the claim has been for commercial sensitivity or agency resourcing. That is quite contrary to what the honourable member was suggesting to the house—that, somehow, this is some kind of a shield or defence that makes the cabinet minister immune from compliance with section 82. It is quite the contrary. If the shield being put up is of legal professional privilege, then yes, the cabinet minister can assert that, but at the same time as asserting that, they ought to simultaneously issue a section 82 notice at that particular point in time. It will trigger an inquiry by the Auditor General who will then avail herself of that information and provide an opinion to Parliament as to whether that decision by the cabinet minister to put up that shield of legal professional privilege is reasonable or not. That is how the law operates on this particular issue.

The law falls down when there are ministers of the Crown deliberately or incompetently not complying with the law of Western Australia. Despite the fact that two years ago, there was a commitment made that ministers would follow the requirements, it is not readily apparent to the chamber at this time, some two years later, whether that has occurred. As I said, the problem is that in approximately 11 or 12 minutes, time will have elapsed after four hours of consideration of this point.

Of course, this is not the only issue that has been set out in the report by the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. One of the issues that it sets out is a matter to do with the whereabouts of children in the care of the CEO. Members may be aware that there are more than 5 000 children in Western Australia in the care of the state. That is to say that the circumstances of their ordinary homes—some may refer to it as the family of origin—are such that they are at risk to the point that the state intervenes and takes them into care. More than 5 000 children in Western Australia are regrettably in that situation. At that point, the duty falls on the state to be the stand-in parent. One of the things that ought to happen is that the stand-in parent ought to know the whereabouts of the children that are in their care.

In the reporting period set out on page 17, there were 82 children whose whereabouts were unknown at some point in 2020–21. Yesterday, the Minister for Agriculture and Food kindly read into the house the response on behalf of the Minister for Child Protection confirming the numbers for the last calendar year. I do not readily have that information available to me at this time, but I can say with confidence that the figure was less than 82. That ought to be encouraging to all of us. That says that the number of children in the care of the state whose whereabouts are reported as missing seems to be declining. I suspect that also correlates with a period of time when the number of children in care is probably increasing. That tells me that those responsible for the care of these children are now being more attentive to the issue of the whereabouts of those children than was the case some four or five years ago. Again, this is the benefit of the scrutiny provided by the committee and by members to executive government on a very important issue like this—the whereabouts of children in the care of the CEO.

A range of other matters that took place in the agency hearings are set out on pages 17 to 28. It is regrettable that there is not more time to consider this. I encourage members to ask the cabinet ministers whether they intend to comply with section 82 after all of this time.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Thank you, deputy chair, for the opportunity to say a few words on the eighty-fifth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations entitled *Consideration of the 2021–22 budget estimates*. I thank my colleague Hon Klara Andric for her contribution and deep dive into this report on the four occasions of it coming before the Council. I will reiterate her words on finding 2 of this report. It states —

The Committee's consideration of the 2021-22 estimates of expenditure was not adversely affected by Ministers' decisions not to provide certain information.

I think it is important that we look at the words of the standing committee on that aspect.

I do not do this often these days, but if I may, I will go against my own practice on this occasion. The Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations has terms of reference articulated and stipulated under section 3 of schedule 1 of the standing orders of the Legislative Council of Western Australia. It states —

- 3.1 *An Estimates and Financial Operations Committee* is established.
- 3.2 The Committee consists of 5 Members, 3 of whom shall be non-Government Members.

- 3.3 The functions of the Committee are to —
- (a) consider and report on —
 - (i) the estimates of expenditure laid before the Council each year;
 - (ii) any matter relating to the financial administration of the State; and
 - (iii) any Bill or other matter relating to the foregoing functions referred by the Council;
 and
 - (b) consult regularly with the Auditor General.

This committee is capably led by Hon Peter Collier, and I take this opportunity to congratulate him on his re-ascension to the position of Leader of the Opposition. Congratulations, Mr Collier. The committee also has as members Hon Samantha Rowe, as deputy chair; Hon Nick Goiran; Hon Dr Brad Pettitt; and, formerly, Hon Jackie Jarvis, before she was elevated by the government to become a minister of the Crown. She was replaced on the committee by my very good friend Hon Dan Caddy.

I would like to look at the conclusion of the eighty-fifth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations and reiterate the words of that committee, which has three non-government members. These are the words of the whole committee; there is no dissenting report or dissenting motion. It is the unanimous position of this standing committee after its examination of the 2021–22 budget estimates. It states —

- 6.1 The Committee is satisfied that its consideration of the 2021–22 estimates positively contributed to the scrutiny of Government and its operations. The Committee focussed on a number of areas, such as changes to the 2021 Appropriation Bills and the performance management framework, that are not typically scrutinised by other bodies. Of note, the Committee considered the Government's decision to use higher than expected surpluses to fund broad policy initiatives from the following perspectives:
- the impact on the Appropriation (Capital 2021–22) Bill 2021
 - the use of special purpose accounts as a vehicle to manage the funds associated with those initiatives
 - the impact of these policy initiatives on the whole-of-government financial estimates.
- 6.2 The Committee considers that the processes it developed for considering the 2021–22 estimates provided an appropriate level of Government scrutiny. The Committee thanks all Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, witnesses and participating Members for their assistance.

It is worth noting that Hon Klara Andric and a number of my other colleagues on this side of the chamber spent some time looking at this report and examining the findings and recommendations of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations on the 2021–22 budget estimates. I remember my experience of being involved in this process in the last calendar year—the previous financial year—along with my very good friend Hon Darren West, who is now looking after the environment and water portfolios. I recall that process; it is a time when members of the committee and of this place can put pertinent questions to the government. I certainly recall the first occasion, when I was a new member of this place, back in 2017. Hon Martin Pritchard was then government Whip and helpfully allocated a number of sessions for me so that I could have the experience of being involved in the estimates process, examining the government's budget and financial management.

It is also worth noting that this could be the last time we consider the eighty-fifth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations. In two minutes and eight seconds we will bid farewell to this report, and I certainly want to thank the committee for its work on delivering this very sensible, pertinent and unanimous report on the 2021–22 budget estimates. It involved a lot of work and responsibility on the shoulders of the chair of that committee in the fortieth Parliament, Hon Alanna Clohesy. Hon Peter Collier has now taken that baton, and I thank the committee for its work.

Question put and passed.

*Standing Committee on Public Administration — Thirty-seventh Report —
Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition — Motion*

Resumed from 17 May 2023 on the following motion moved by Hon Pierre Yang —

That the report be noted.

Hon SHELLEY PAYNE: It is great to get a chance to continue my comments on this report; I had only a couple of minutes last time. I want to thank the Standing Committee on Public Administration for all its work on its thirty-seventh report, *Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition*. The report was tabled and it revealed a couple of things. First of all, I was very pleased that there was a big section on regional ambulance services. I was also pleased with some of the recommendations, including a recommendation for the Department

of Health to investigate extending the current service delivery model—the majority of work in the regions is performed by volunteers—and replacing it with a hybrid model in which more career paramedics would be deployed to work alongside volunteers.

The report also refers to issues in the metropolitan area. It reveals that emergency ambulance services are under significant strain and that St John Ambulance was unable to achieve its contractual targets. The committee made a number of recommendations on that. I was also pleased when the government released its response, *A new century for ambulance services*, to the committee's inquiry. It refers to a clear need to fundamentally change the relationship between the Department of Health and St John Ambulance. The government gave support or in-principle support to 46 of the Public Administration Committee's 48 recommendations. The government is working through the implementation. In the little time I have, I thought I would talk about what the government has achieved since the committee did this great piece of work and the government provided its response.

At the end of December 2022, a new five-year contract was signed with St John. This is an enhanced contract with key performance indicators to boost accountability. It is also aligned with one of the key recommendations to put additional paramedics in the regions. It combined with a commitment to 31 paramedics in the regions and 34 paramedics for the metro area. This increases the number of paramedics in the bush by more than 25 per cent. Since the new contract and commitment to those extra paramedics, I am pleased to say that the extra 31 paid paramedics are out there now in the regions. For example, there are four new paramedics in Esperance and they have transitioned to the new hybrid model. It has really helped to take a lot of stress off the volunteers, which has been a really great outcome. Geraldton has received four new full-time paid paramedics. Busselton has two. Narrogin has two, which is great for the Narrogin region. It is a real hub for all the surrounding areas and hundreds of patients fly in and out each year. Northam has three new full-time paid paramedics. Newman has one, and east Bunbury has one. Margaret River also has four. There is a roster of eight, which it uses to relieve their paid paramedics in the regions. It is fantastic that it has been rolled out in the regions and is a really great outcome. I congratulate the committee for those recommendations. I also thank Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson for that commitment to the regions. It has made a huge difference. They were struggling with volunteers in the regions and this has really helped to make a difference and, as I said, take off a lot of the weight.

Another initiative was Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson establishing a State Health Operations Centre late last year. A commitment of \$47.2 million was made to establish an operations centre. It will co-locate with St John WA, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the WA virtual emergency department staff. The co-location of those essential services is really a critical strategy in building an integrated statewide delivery service.

[Quorum formed.]

Hon SHELLEY PAYNE: Another great initiative that we announced at the end of January this year is the new patient transport coordination hub, which is being introduced. It will improve planned patient transfers between hospitals. It is expected that the new patient transport coordination hub will coordinate the transport of more than 20 000 non-urgent patients every year. It is part of our \$487 million investment in improving access to emergency care. I know we have had issues with ambulance ramping and I want to give some statistics about how much our ramping hours have reduced across the state—by 21 per cent in 2023 compared with 2022. For example, in December last year, which is busy over the holiday period, there was a 44 per cent reduction compared with December 2022. A lot of the initiatives that our government is doing are thanks to the help of this committee and investing in health. All our commitments are really making a big difference, in both the regions and the metropolitan area. The PaTCH is going to operate seven days a week with dedicated staff and it will operate from 6.00 am until 10.00 pm. Again, it will take a lot of stress off the St John ambulance staff. As I mentioned, the State Health Operations Centre, which will be co-located with the new virtual emergency service department, is looking at providing a seamless service for patients.

Another thing I want to mention is the rescue helicopter service in the regions and our commitment in May 2022 to deliver the next generation aircraft, which have a longer range. The new helicopters, which are under construction at the moment but are nearly ready to be rolled out, will have a 350-kilometre range from their bases at Bunbury and Jandakot. That will expand their range by over 75 per cent. They are capable of being airborne in less than 15 minutes. Since the rescue helicopter service started operating in 2003, they have flown on over 9 000 missions. It has really helped to save lives; it is a great initiative. There are some statistics that the helicopters have flown the equivalent of more than 50 trips around the globe since undertaking the first mission in August 2023. They respond to emergency calls 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It is something that is really important, particularly for people in the regions. With the base in Bunbury and the 350-kilometre range, it will be really great to be able to service even larger areas of the state and reach further into the regions. Thank you very much for that and also to the RAC for its support.

The last thing I want to mention is the help and training we are giving some of the emergency responders to deal better with domestic violence and domestic violence call-outs. This was an initiative of our state government back at the end of 2022 when we committed \$2 million to roll out family and domestic violence training for 000 responders. Under our partnership with St John, the training will be delivered to more than 5 000 first responders and help build the capacity of call-takers, paramedics and volunteers to recognise and respond to family and domestic violence.

St John has responded to more than 6 000 cases involving violence against women, including assault, sexual assault and stabbings, and a further 2 500 cases involving children. Thank you for that. The first cohort from the state operations centre recently completed the training and I look forward to that rolling out as it will make a big difference to the responses they make.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I rise to speak on the thirty-seventh report of the Standing Committee on Public Administration, *Delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia: Critical condition*. The report was tabled in May 2022, almost two years ago. The government response was in August that same year. The Council has considered the report on two previous occasions—16 November 2022 and 17 May 2023. Of course, as members will see from the report, the Standing Committee on Public Administration was chaired by Hon Pierre Yang. It continues to be so, I understand, and I want to recognise that in the meantime, the honourable member has also been promoted to the office of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health. Almost at the two-year anniversary, I look forward to perhaps a status report from the government, indeed from the parliamentary secretary, on the implementation of the very many findings and recommendations that members will find in this considerable report.

I do not think there has been enough progress. I have listened to Hon Shelley Payne talk about some of the initiatives that the government is doing and many of them are positive, but are they enough? We have a situation in which country ambulances in Western Australia are significantly underfunded and at a high cost for patients and consumers. This is borne out in the committee's own report.

The financial information found in tables in this report shows that Western Australia, along with South Australia, are the worst jurisdictions in the country when it comes to financial support for ambulance services. This is more so an issue in our country areas where we rely entirely on volunteers to deliver the important service that they do. We rely on them not only to deliver the service, but effectively to run chook raffles to buy their next heart monitor, their next ambulance or their next electric stretcher. It is not enough to ask them to volunteer their time to train, develop and respond; no, they have to buy increasingly more expensive tools to provide their service. We compare that with any other emergency service organisation in our state and find that similar volunteers volunteering in the emergency service space are not asked to do the same. We addressed that many decades ago. We addressed the inequity and inadequacy in funding, but in 2024 we are still lagging behind the nation in supporting our country ambulance service.

It was interesting to listen to the final contribution of Hon Shelley Payne, who touched on the issue of the emergency rescue helicopter service. What an important and lifesaving service that is. I do not think that is in dispute whatsoever.

Hon Darren West: Introduced and secured by Labor.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: It is a very good point, Hon Darren West. The Labor Party introduced the first rescue helicopter service.

Hon Darren West: You did not fund it. It is fixed.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The Liberal government introduced the first regional emergency rescue helicopter service, which had a very uncertain funding future when Labor came to government. Western Australians have called for an expansion of the service. It is borne out in parts of the report that is before us. But it is also borne out in findings of the coroner. It is borne out in the government's own aeromedical services inquiry. The *Chief Health Officer's inquiry into aeromedical services in Western Australia* was tabled in June 2022, just one month after the standing committee's report was tabled. It recommended the ERHS fleet should be increased by two and a half times its current resource and that, in time, Western Australia will need seven to nine rescue helicopters.

The government trots out its talking points. The emergency rescue helicopter service services 90 per cent of Western Australians. It is something that Telstra would say: "We service 95 per cent of Australians." The reality is that 80 per cent of Australians live in the metropolitan area. They rarely require the services of an emergency rescue helicopter because an ambulance is faster. What members are saying when they trot out those talking points is that 10 per cent of Western Australians who live outside the metropolitan area have access to an emergency rescue helicopter service. They are the ones typically in the south west area within a 300-kilometre radius or so of Bunbury. Half the population outside of Perth has access to an emergency rescue helicopter service.

Western Australian academic research has demonstrated that someone is twice as likely to die from trauma in a region of Western Australia that does not have access to the emergency rescue helicopter service. I agree; it is a lifesaving service. It is an important service. It is servicing only half of Western Australians who live outside Perth. That is the problem. The Western Australian government is swimming in cash. The midyear review revised its operating surplus from \$3.3 billion to \$3.7 billion. That is a \$400 million increase. The government's pet project, the Causeway pedestrian bridge across the Swan River, was announced prior to the last election. It was \$50 million. Then it went to \$100 million. Now we know that it is \$140 million. No-one blinks an eye.

Government is all about priorities. The problem is that this government's priorities are all wrong. It is effectively prioritising a pedestrian bridge across the Swan River with a blank cheque—whatever it costs, whatever it takes—over the lives of Western Australians who do not have access to an emergency rescue helicopter service. Whilst the government members are laughing on the government benches as I make this contribution, I draw their attention to the views of the Deputy State Coroner, Sarah Linton.

In her findings on 17 June 2022, she stated —

In my view, it is appropriate and fair that the Western Australians living in the Mid-West of Western Australia and above be provided with air assets to assist with search and rescues, in the same way that those of us living in Perth and the South West are lucky enough to have access to, noting we also have access to a far more comprehensive ambulance service on the ground. It is unclear from the information available how available the additional rescue helicopter will be to people in the Mid-West. If it is not readily available, then that is of great concern, particularly given the abovementioned election commitment to ensure that such a service is made available to people in the Mid-West.

It is not good enough that the two new rescue helicopters coming online have an additional operating range of 50 kilometres. When the government is criticised over this, its response is that we can now fly to Dongara. I hate to inform the government benches that there is a lot more to Western Australia beyond Dongara. Many of those constituencies are represented by Labor members. At a time when this government is going to post a \$3 700 million operating surplus, its talking point is: we are happy with what we have.

Hon DARREN WEST: I was not going to talk about this report today, but I cannot let that speech go without a response. Hon Martin Aldridge stood up and dumped the bucket on every single hardworking volunteer sub-centre of St John Ambulance across Western Australia who proudly volunteer for their community, proudly fundraise for their community and proudly serve their community in their greatest time of need. Then he dumped the bucket on the RAC rescue helicopter service, which was introduced, and funding secured, by the Gallop and McGowan governments respectively. He did not mention an organisation called the Royal Flying Doctor Service, which the member will one day work out operates aircraft that are much faster than helicopters and can service more remote regions of the state than helicopters. The member will also understand one day that Geraldton Regional Hospital is not a tertiary hospital. You can run a rescue helicopter in the midwest but you ain't gonna make it to Perth with one, and it is quicker in a fixed-wing aeroplane. He will work that out one day, but I am not going to stand by. I am going to stand here and defend every single regional sub-centre. I am going to stand here and defend the helicopter service that we worked so diligently to introduce and secure funding for. I am going to defend the RFDS and all the people in those organisations and commend them for the wonderful role they play in taking care of us in regional Western Australia.

I will not stand for criticism of those services. They proudly provide those services to their community. I think if the honourable member went to the community of Toodyay, for example, and said, "Look, all you've been doing is great but we're going to take it over from here", he might get a fair bit of pushback. Communities like to provide their own services. Of course, we will support them, and we are, as Hon Shelley Payne pointed out earlier, with the provision of paramedics across the state. An expansion of paramedics by a conservative government has never been seen. We stand by our emergency services in the regions.

We made significant changes to the emergency services levy to provide greater funding and resources to all of our emergency services across the state. We stand by them proudly. I am not going to stand by and have comments like those by the member go without response.

That brings me to this report. I have the great pleasure of being a member of the Standing Committee on Public Administration. It was aptly and ably chaired by Hon Pierre Yang, who has no doubt called on all of his time in the military—his training that he has had in the reserves as a captain—to bring his skills to the committee and provide wonderful leadership.

I think it is fair to say that the ambulance system in Western Australia was in a difficult spot. There was poor morale and a poor culture at the time, and that had been built up over decades. It was not a new thing. Many of the people in that service felt undervalued. They did not feel supported and that was where the inquiry came from. It was through understanding that those very vital and wonderful individuals within the organisation had a message that needed to be heard. Our committee heard them, and members may remember that *The West Australian* immediately painted it as some sort of union witch-hunt to bring the ambulance service back in-house. That was totally and grossly incorrect. It was never the intention. What we wanted was a better ambulance service as a result of the inquiry.

I am delighted to stand here today and say that is exactly what has been delivered. We have a better ambulance service as a result. It was nobody's fault. We certainly cannot blame the last CEO, Michelle Fife, who is a wonderful person. We cannot blame her for the problems that confronted her with the ambulance service. She came into the role to try to fix a lot of the issues. I give her great credit for that. She has moved on from the post but gave her absolute all. She could not have been more cooperative with the committee during the inquiry.

St John Ambulance made itself available every time we asked it to appear and give us more evidence. It gave us a better understanding of the issues that the ambulance service was confronted with. I am delighted that the Minister for Health has chosen to adopt the recommendations and make the changes that she has. She certainly has more than a passing interest in the ambulance service, as she has a long history, through the union movement, of dealing with people on the front line. This is a report that was given to a willing minister—for probably the first time ever—a minister willing to make sure the changes were able to be made and the service was able to be improved. On top of all the wonderful initiatives that Hon Shelley Payne has taken the time to outline during her contribution,

ambulance ramping times have decreased significantly as a direct result of the changes that have been adopted by the minister and the government as a result of this outstanding report. I am very proud of this report. This is an outstanding body of work brought together by a bipartisan committee. It was not always easy. We faced challenging circumstances, in which we travelled to regional areas to see firsthand the need for paramedics in the regions.

We saw situations in which the paramedic was the person restocking the ambulance and the volunteers were the ones going out to the jobs. We saw that as an unusual way to go about things. We looked at all kinds of issues that confront our volunteer ambulances in the regions every day, and our paramedics in the cities every day. It was their desires and their needs and their pleas in some cases that led us to make recommendations and share findings. I am very proud of this body of work. It is a wonderful report and all I have heard is gratitude from anyone I have spoken to in the sector—gratitude that we shone a light on the issues and brought them to the government's attention and that the government has responded in the way it has.

I accept Hon Martin Aldridge's premise of the government having a surplus. It has a surplus through good economic management that we are investing back into the regions. That includes securing funding for the Bunbury helicopter. We have worked closely with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and other organisations. We put paramedics into the regions. We are getting on with the job of delivering, in conjunction with the various operators and ambulance services right across Western Australia. We saw examples of a community such as Bidyadanga, which did not have an ambulance. We learnt a lot about the haves and the have-nots in regional Western Australia—it was already in place when we came to government. Rather than sit back and throw stones, the committee got on with the job and made the recommendations that we thought needed to be made.

I do not have much time left to go into the detail of the report. I know that we talked about this report before and I could talk about it all day, because I am very proud of what we achieved, but I want to take the last minute and a bit that I have to talk about some of the people who we met, from the executive management of St John Ambulance down through the ranks. We met people who are in the call centres. Members, put yourselves in a position in which you are sitting in a room and a call comes in, with someone in a highly distressed state on the end of the phone. It could be anything that confronts that person and it is your job to manage that person's stress and anxiety, to calm them, and to get the information needed to dispatch an ambulance to save a life. That is the sort of thing that they do all day, every day, all night, every night, as the case may be. We made changes to the way that the call centre operates. We are bringing that to the State Operations Centre, back together with the other emergency services. That was a major undertaking that the minister has given and that we will deliver.

I think those people are wonderful and I could tell that they were pleased to see us. They were pleased that the committee came and had a look at their workplace to see what they are dealing with. We also went to ambulance stations. We fully understood what was going on in ambulance service delivery in Western Australia. We put it into this report. It is a wonderful report and I encourage anyone who has not read it to take the time to read it.

I think the member could work with the government rather than throw stones, and I am always going to defend everyone involved in the provision of ambulance services in Western Australia.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the contribution of Hon Darren West as well as make a further contribution on this report. Hon Darren West always reverts to this when there is criticism of his government: it is somehow a criticism of the frontline workers, the volunteers, the agencies—it is not! It is a criticism of his inaction—of his government's inaction while it is sitting on a pot of cash. He likes to twist the debate to somehow make it a criticism of the volunteers—oh my goodness! It was interesting to hear his comments about the Royal Flying Doctor Service, because the Chief Health Officer's inquiry made very similar recommendations about how it is underfunded and under-resourced. I encourage the member to speak to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and get a copy of the government's response, because it supported it.

In his last closing contribution, the member spoke about the call centre. The call centre has not changed. St John Ambulance is still taking 000 calls. The state health operations centre—shock—is not answering 000 calls. Again, I encourage the member to get a briefing from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health.

The Deputy State Coroner, in paragraph 496 of her findings, states —

Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Carr from DFES also gave evidence at the inquest to explain further the role that DFES plays in these operations. A/Ass Commissioner Carr performs the role of looking after country operations for DFES-related hazards, which includes fires, floods, cyclones and storms, and the capability of DFES to raise and main volunteer services to respond to those hazards. A/Ass Commissioner Carr gave evidence that DFES have supported three submissions for government funding for a rescue helicopter in the Mid-West Gascoyne region, but to date none of them have been funded.

Perhaps Hon Darren West might seek a briefing from acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Carr or maybe even the Deputy State Coroner to understand what this government is not doing. It is not providing a rescue helicopter service to the midwest. It is refusing the budget funding to do so.

Consideration of report postponed, pursuant to standing orders.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023*Committee*

Resumed from 12 March. The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Stephen Pratt) in the chair; Hon Sue Ellery (Minister for Commerce) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Progress was reported after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon SUE ELLERY: When we rose yesterday, Hon Neil Thomson had asked a question about the percentage of tenants who receive a bond refund at the end of a tenancy. I have the following information, and it includes a correction because I might have misled the honourable member and the chamber when I responded to this issue in my second reading reply.

The data for the period 1 January to 31 December 2023 is that, of all bonds disbursed at the end of a tenancy, 88 per cent resulted in part or all the bond being returned to the tenant. In the second reading reply, I think my comment was that about 87 per cent received the whole of the bond. It is 88 per cent, and part or all the bond is returned to the tenant. I apologise to the member and the house for that error. This is made up of the following: for 38 per cent of bond disbursements, the tenant received a full bond refund, and for 50 per cent of cases, the bond was split between the landlord and the tenant. If it was split between the tenant and the lessor, tenants received on average \$1 455 in refunds and landlords received on average \$515 in bond payments, which is approximately a 75:25 per cent split. That tells us that the current bond amount, which is the equivalent of four weeks' rent plus a pet bond, is more than sufficient to cover any damage that has been done to the premises in 88 per cent of cases. It also tells us that the coverage is sufficient to address any potential damage caused by a pet or to restore any minor modifications to the premises. I note that when we get to the discussion of pets later, in the relevant clauses, the intention is to consult with stakeholders about whether we will need to increase the amount of the pet bond, but we can talk about that when we get to those bits.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I thank the minister. That was where I was heading with that question, and that accords with the numbers available on the National Housing Data Exchange, housing-data-exchange.ahdap.org. It has individualised data for the partial or full payment of bonds. It has a lot of data; I looked at only this year from 1 January to the end of February and there were 12 000 records. I was quite surprised by the number of bond payments made. About 10 per cent of bonds were retained and held by the lessor. The reason for my question was to determine whether there has been a trend. I am not sure whether the officers here would have any idea. Has there been a trend over time for lessors—the 10 or 12 per cent the minister alluded to—to not recover the full amount they require to undertake repairs? I think that is the issue.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It has stayed about the same. When the series went out in 2019, it was 87 per cent, and now it is 88 per cent, so it has not really shifted that much.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We probably could dig into that a little more when discussing the pet bond and other aspects when we get to the clause about pets. There was talk of fumigation costs and so forth. A good property manager or lessor keeps an eye on the tenant through the inspection process, and I understand that if damage occurs, it can usually be managed through a process requiring the tenant to pay. I assume that there will be no change in this legislative framework to stop damage caused by the tenant being paid for prior to the termination of the lease.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Now and continuing, if damage is caused during the tenancy, the tenant can be issued a breach notice and required to fix the problem. If the tenant does not address the matter that has been notified in the breach, the lessor can proceed to terminate the lease, and there is no change in those provisions.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The bond data is not something that I turn my mind to when considering this bill, but is any of that information publicly available or is it best to ask specifically about it at clause 1 of this bill?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The information that I have relied upon is information that was provided to me by the agency, but information on that is available. Hon Neil Thomson, for example, looked at the National Tenancy Database. That is where the information is publicly available.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: The Leader of the House mentioned in her opening remarks that in the last calendar year, 88 per cent of bond disbursements resulted in all or part of the bond being returned. Does she know what percentage of bond was returned in full as opposed to returned in part or not at all?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, and I indicated that in my answer. In 38 per cent of bond disbursements, the tenant received a full bond refund, and in 50 per cent of the cases, the bond was split between the landlord and the tenant.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I assume that for the remaining 12 per cent, no bond was returned at all, and it was all recovered by the landlord or the lessor.

Hon Sue Ellery: That is correct.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: Does the minister have any data on pet bonds?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not have it here. I can see what might be available, but I certainly do not have it at the table.

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I refer to consultation. The Leader of the House and the minister in the other place mentioned two primary stakeholders, being the Make Renting Fair Alliance, which is a conglomerate of a number of groups, and the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia. I do not accept the view of the Minister for Housing that REIWA represents property owners and lessors; I think that is a mischaracterisation of what REIWA is. But is there a body in Western Australia that does represent lessors; and, if so, how was it consulted in the drafting of this bill?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am told there are two other bodies. One is a group called the Property Owners Association of Australia and the other is the Property Investors Council of Australia. Both those bodies were consulted throughout this process, from the beginning to the end. It may be that—my shorthand—towards the end of getting this bill ready for Parliament, we really focused on the groups that were actively engaging on particular issues, and that came down to the Make Rent Fair Alliance and REIWA.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I want to touch on the consultation regulation impact statement and the decision regulatory impact statement. The first comment I make is I am glad that the department did that piece of work. I think it is probably more than some other documents that have been done for some of the bills that have been presented in this place. I acknowledge that there has been a fair bit of consultation from the department and I put that on the record. However, notwithstanding that, I have some concerns about the decision regulatory impact statement, which I think could have done a bigger task on the economic analysis of the impacts on the actual rental market. I think that the work that was done by the department focused in on specific decisions that arose from the consultation RIS, and then really sort of came up with detailed decisions around the options, but what I could not find in those documents was a clear economic rationale on the matter. Given that we on this side certainly have raised—I think, just to be fair, the Leader of the House has also acknowledged—the fact that there was some concern about the impact on the market, that consideration was given. I guess the difference between the opposition and the government is that we feel that the balance is not right, and that is why we oppose the bill.

I note on page 12 of the decision regulatory impact statement a reference to the Queensland Housing Legislation Amendment Act, which was assented to on 20 October 2021. It referred to the introduction of without-grounds termination, family violence protection, minimum housing standards and allowing tenants to keep pets. There appears to be a difference between the legislation that was introduced there and ours, insofar as we do not have the provisions for without-grounds termination. What seems to be included in ours that was not included in the Queensland legislation is the 12-month effective moratorium on rent increases. That is the difference between the two. I do not know what the underlying legislation was for the Queensland act and whether it already included a 12-month moratorium on rental increases, but I assume that it did not.

This decision was then looked at. The average cost of the reforms was between \$16 and \$107 a year for an investor. I found that quite surprising. This was a piece of work done by Deloitte Australia. There was a conclusion that house prices will decline by between \$71 and \$462 in the long-term. I found that extraordinarily precise, from the point of view of an economic analysis, and extraordinarily small. Notwithstanding that, there was an acknowledgement that there was some impact. Then it referred to the upward pressure on rents at 0.02 per cent over the long-term. I found that quite extraordinary and a little hard to believe.

My questions on this, because I think they are important, are: Was any economic analysis undertaken like the work that was done by Deloitte on behalf of the Queensland government; and, if not, why not? Was there any consideration of the impacts of house prices on rental investments and specifically on rents themselves?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The short answer is no. If we think about the timing of this exercise, the consultation regulation impact statement—the big consultation piece—started in 2019. Then COVID happened. COVID has had a significant structural impact on our economy, the rental market, housing supply and the housing market. As a government, we could see that. We could see what was happening with that. I think it is unfair, in a way, to judge where we have landed on the CRIS and the decision regulatory impact statement, because they began pre-COVID, then we got COVID and the world changed. The CRIS and the DRIS were done with the best intentions, but they were caught in a time when things fundamentally shifted. No, we did not do a specifically separate piece of economic work. We could see what was going on in the market and we made a judgement accordingly.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: That is true; we certainly can see what is going on, and we have data that was provided by the Housing Industry Forecasting Group such as forecasting on dwelling commencements, for example. We know that dwelling commencements is a big part of the rental market; in fact, we would like it to be a bigger part. I believe that something in the order of 20 per cent of the rental market is tied up with new housing. I could be wrong on that, but I understand that the vast majority of new rentals are actually in existing houses. In fact, if we look at the Perth median rent and vacancy rate that was presented by the Housing Industry Forecasting Group, that is page 4 of the paper released in June 2023, we can see that since 2013, the median rent was below \$500, then dropped down to \$350 and then went up to \$550. We see that there was a trend of an inverse relationship between the vacancy rate and the median rental rate. We also note from that report that there has also been a terrible drop-off in the number of lot commencements or lot finalisations, I think it is. It is much reduced.

Committee interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 742.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE**ONSLOW POLICE STATION****118. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

- (1) Have any concerns been raised with the minister or the Western Australia Police Force regarding the present condition, including minimum workplace health and safety standards, of Onslow Police Station?
- (2) If yes to (1), what were these concerns and when were they raised?
- (3) If yes to (1), what measures have been taken to address these concerns?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the minister representing the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(3) The Western Australia Police Force advise that the agency has not received concerns regarding the present condition of Onslow Police Station. Following a risk assessment undertaken by the agency in January 2023, maintenance works are continuing to be undertaken to ensure adherence to workplace health and safety standards.

COMMUNITY PROTECTION (OFFENDER REPORTING) ACT 2004 — REFORM**119. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:**

I refer the minister to his commitment to make legislative amendments to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004, in response to recommendations from the fifty-second report *Punitive not protective: When the mandatory registration of young people is not based on risk*.

- (1) Does the Labor government remain committed to making amendments to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004?
- (2) If yes to (1), when will the legislation be introduced into Parliament?
- (3) If no to (1), why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the minister representing the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(3) The drafting of amendments to the Community Protection (Offender Reporting) Act 2004 is in progress. It is anticipated that legislation will be introduced into Parliament this year.

MARMION MARINE PARK**120. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:**

I refer to the proposed extension of Marmion Marine Park.

- (1) Has the draft indicative management plan for the proposed marine park been finalised?
- (2) If no to (1), when is it estimated that it will be finalised?
- (3) When does the government plan to release the draft IMP for public comment?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The planning process for the proposed expansion of Marmion Marine Park is ongoing. A date for the release of the draft indicative management plan has not yet been determined.

NATIONAL WASTEWATER DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM**121. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:**

I refer to recent figures released by the national wastewater drug monitoring program confirming increased consumption of methylamphetamine in Western Australia by 40 per cent over the last year.

- (1) Is the state government's methamphetamine action plan working?
- (2) What adjustments will have to be made to make the plan work more effectively?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The national wastewater drug monitoring program report released this month shows that methylamphetamine consumption in Western Australia is approximately one-third less than it was compared with when it peaked under the former Liberal–National government in 2016. In addition to

incredible drug-suppression operations being carried out by the WA Police Force, Labor's hard borders severed bikie-controlled drug supply chains during the pandemic, seeing meth consumption plummet. Subsequently, the state government has introduced the toughest anti-bikie laws in the country and given police the power to conduct regular drug searches at 22 entry points into Western Australia. As a result, drug offences in Western Australia decreased by 33 per cent in 2023 compared with under the Liberals and Nationals in 2016. We will continue to look at ways to further reduce the harm this abhorrent drug causes, unlike the Liberal Party that has no policies to keep the community safe.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES PROGRAM — FUNDING

122. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the minister representing the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 92 asked yesterday with regard to community centres funded under the Empowering Communities program.

- (1) As part of the contract extensions, have all community centres been offered a new service agreement for a period of five years from 1 July 2024; and, if not, why not?
- (2) If no, will the minister advise which centres have not been offered a five-year service agreement, and for each of these centres what is the proposed length of their extended contract?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response has been provided by the Minister for Community Services. The Department of Communities advises the following.

- (1)–(2) All Empowering Communities program centres have been offered an extension to their existing service agreements from 1 July 2024. Nine centres have been offered a 12-month extension to their existing service agreements.

ELECTRICITY — OUTAGES — KALGOORLIE

123. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the live activation of non-co-optimised essential system services as part of western energy market reform of 1 October 2023 that replaces historical frameworks for network central services and dispatch support services.

- (1) Is the provision of Kalgoorlie's power supply captured under WEM's non-co-optimised essential system services incorporating system restart services as the Australian Energy Market Operator procurers system restart services to restart the south west interconnected system in the event of a widespread blackout?
- (2) If yes to (1), who is the provider?
- (3) If no to (1), when will Kalgoorlie's power supply be safeguarded under WEMs' non-co-optimised essential system services?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1) No. The Australian Energy Market Operator has existing system restart services contracts, procured under the wholesale electricity market rules, that would enable it to restart the entire south west interconnected system in the event of a widespread blackout. Western Power has a separate SRS contract to restart the Kalgoorlie system when that system is islanded.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Western Power will soon commence the procurement of new non-co-optimised essential system services reliability services, including SRS services, for Kalgoorlie.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY — CHAIR

124. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the government media statement giving thanks to outgoing Environmental Protection Authority chair Matthew Tonts and announcing that deputy chair Lee McIntosh will take over as acting chair of the EPA.

- (1) Given the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia Green Web report highlights that regulatory regimes, particularly with regard to environmental approvals, are taking far too long and application of the rules is increasingly unpredictable, why has the government appointed a former activist from the Environmental Defender's Office to oversee approvals?
- (2) As Ms McIntosh is part of the current problem of ever-changing guidelines, shifting goalposts and ongoing and unrealistic regulatory creep in assessing green environmental and cultural heritage requirements, why has the government made this appointment when more suitable candidates are available who would be more balanced in their opinions?

The PRESIDENT: I am just contemplating some of the nature of that question, but I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment to see whether he has an answer.

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

Thank you, President. I think I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment I provide the following answer.

- (1) As per the Environmental Protection Act 1986, the deputy chair performs the functions of the chair in the event the chair is unavailable. Ms McIntosh has been the deputy chair of the EPA since 2020 and has more than two decades experience practicing as an environmental lawyer. She brings a broad range of experience and knowledge on environmental due diligence issues, heritage, offsets, and assessment and approvals processes.
- (2) The assertion behind the member's question is misleading. If the member wishes to understand the basis of the government's critical work to overhaul the environmental approvals framework, I invite him to seek a briefing from the Minister for Environment's office.

URBAN TREE CANOPY DASHBOARD

125. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the minister representing the Minister for Planning:

I refer to the 2023–24 budget estimates questions prior to hearing when the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage stated —

The procurement process is underway for data delivery in 2024 and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage will then have access to update the Tree Canopy Dashboard.

As it is now 2024, when will the urban tree canopy dashboard be updated and publicly available?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following response was provided by the Minister for Planning.

Landgate has now contracted a party to procure the data and the dashboard will be updated when the process is concluded.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES — RENT BIDDING

126. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Minister for Commerce:

I refer to question 1249 asked on 17 October 2023 in which the minister informed the house that tenants asked to offer more than the advertised price for a rental should contact Consumer Protection.

- (1) For each month of the period of February 2020 until today, how many complaints relating to rent bidding has Consumer Protection received?
- (2) Have any complaints resulted in further action being taken under Australian Consumer Law?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) There have been two complaints related to rent bidding since February 2020—one in September 2023 and the other in October 2023.
- (2) No. In the first instance, there was no evidence of rent bidding, and the complaint was resolved. The second complaint was not progressed as the alleged conduct was not a breach of Australian Consumer Law.

AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRIAL HEMP CONFERENCE

127. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer the minister to the upcoming biennial Australian Industrial Hemp Conference, the premier gathering of its type here in Australia, due to be held in the Hunter Valley in mid-April.

- (1) Will the Western Australian government be represented at that conference?
- (2) If not, how does the minister intend to ensure that her department stays across the latest research and industry concerns, not least as they relate to hemp growth in her own electorate of the South West Region?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Not applicable.

DRUGS — ONLINE MARKET — TESTING

128. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the story on the ABC website on 12 March 2024 entitled “Canberra pill-testing service finds methamphetamine in counterfeit diet pill” in which a concerned parent presented a sample of a diet pill their child purchased on the clear web after a noticeable change in behaviour.

- (1) Is the minister aware of the story and that a young person was able to purchase methamphetamine on the clear web and have it sent to their house?
- (2) How does the minister suggest concerned parents or people taking supplements and unregulated stimulants purchased online have them tested?
- (3) Would the government consider opening a facility like CanTEST in Canberra where people can have their legal and illegal drugs tested to ensure safety, particularly in the recent explosion of the unregulated online drug market?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Health.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) Given the unregulated nature of the online supplement market, I encourage people who use supplements to purchase them through reputable stores or pharmacies located within the community.
- (3) There is no intention to introduce a drug and pill testing service in Western Australia.

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES — PAYMENTS

129. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to Western Power’s extended outage payment.

- (1) From 1 January 2024 to date, how many claims have been made for the \$120 payment?
- (2) From 1 January 2024 to date, how many claims have been made for the \$240 payment associated with the severe weather event?
- (3) Why is it necessary for the claimant to await restoration of power before being able to submit a claim, even though the 12-hour threshold could have been met days prior?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I note that this information was correct when this question was lodged yesterday, 12 March 2024. I provide the following answer on behalf of the Minister for Energy.

- (1) There have been 7 087 applications for the \$120 payment.
- (2) There have been 27 671 applications for the \$240 payment following the severe weather events.
- (3) As detailed on Western Power’s website, there is no requirement to wait until restoration of power.

BRIDGETOWN CAMP SCHOOL

130. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I thank the minister for the response to question without notice 84.

- (1) What is the current status of the camp school buildings?
- (2) Have any of these buildings been deemed unsuitable for occupation?
- (3) If yes to (2), why?
- (4) What remediation works are underway to rectify this?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The lessee, Fairbridge Western Australia Incorporated, is not operating Bridgetown Camp buildings because of low throughput.
- (2) No.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) Not applicable.

TRANSPORT — TRELIS —
STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS EVIDENCE

131. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the answers to supplementary information provided to the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations regarding the 2022–23 annual report that revealed that two employees are currently working in the department who have misused TRELIS more than once.

- (1) Was the minister aware of this prior to signing the answer to the standing committee?
- (2) Are both of those employees still permitted to access TRELIS?
- (3) If yes to (2), why?
- (4) If no to (2), what other employment restrictions are in place for these employees in light of their status as repeat offenders of TRELIS misuse?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

On behalf of the minister representing the Minister for Transport, I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

- (1)–(4) Both matters relate to officers who had accessed a TRELIS record or processed a transaction for someone in circumstances that may have been perceived as a conflict of interest. Both officers were formally reprimanded with improvement action. After the improvement action, access to TRELIS was reinstated. As for all employees and agents, the Department of Transport monitors access for TRELIS breaches. There has been no repeat behaviour by either officer in three years.

ABORIGINAL MEDICAL SERVICES — TRANSITION CARE PROGRAM

132. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the answers to question on notice 954 given yesterday in the other place.

- (1) What was the intended location of the two undelivered pilot programs?
- (2) Which month in 2022 did the Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service commence service delivery under the pilot?
- (3) Which two pilot Aboriginal community–controlled health services did not build capacity to deliver the transitional care program?
- (4) Are the South West Aboriginal Medical Service and Broome Aboriginal Medical Service delivering the transitional care program?
- (5) How many individuals were readmitted to hospital and how many clients passed away?
- (6) Was all the announced state investment of \$1.8 million expended?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Health.

An answer will be provided on the next sitting day.

POLICE — OPERATION REGIONAL SHIELD — STAFFING

133. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

- (1) How many officers were employed in Operation Regional Shield on 1 January 2023?
- (2) How many officers referred to in (1) were Aboriginal?
- (3) How many officers are currently employed in Operation Regional Shield?
- (4) How many officers referred to in (3) are Aboriginal?

The PRESIDENT: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Peter Collier: Matter of time—matter of time!

Hon Sue Ellery: No, that will never be me ever again.

Several members interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

Thank you, President, who I note is not well—so you are forgiven.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you for your understanding.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force has advised me of this answer.

- (1) There were 35 officers.
- (2) The agency cannot identify the diversity profile of officers from the deployment schedule. Additionally, employees can choose not to give information on their personnel diversity profile.
- (3) There are 24 as of 13 March 2024.
- (4) Refer to answer (2).

WEST COAST DEMERSAL SCALEFISH RESOURCE

134. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries:

I refer to the minister's decision to reallocate 20 tonnes of demersal scalefish catch from the commercial sector to the recreational and fishing tour operator sectors within the west coast demersal scalefish resource.

- (1) How much of the 20-tonne reallocation was being fished by the commercial sector prior to it being surrendered through the voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the reallocation is temporary and that the 20 tonnes of catch will be restored to the commercial fishing sector?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

On behalf of the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Fisheries, I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided by the Minister for Fisheries.

- (1) Prior to the voluntary fisheries adjustment scheme, the entire 20 tonnes were available to be fished by the commercial sector.
- (2) The 20 tonnes have been temporarily reallocated to the recreational, including charter, sector while in recovery. The access arrangements will be reviewed once the resource has fully recovered.

BORDER SEARCH AREAS

135. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to creation of border search areas via an amendment to the Misuse of Drugs Act last year.

- (1) On how many occasions has a BSA been initiated and in which location or locations?
- (2) How many searches have occurred within a BSA and in which location or locations?
- (3) Have any prohibited drugs, controlled plants or precursors been seized by WAPOL; and, if so, what were the particulars of these seizures?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question. On behalf the Minister for Emergency Services, the following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

The Western Australia Police Force advises that between 27 June 2023 and 27 February 2024 —

- (1) There were seven authorised and initiated: Albany port, one; Esperance port zone 1, one; Esperance port zone 2, one; Perth Airport zone 2, two; and Perth Airport zone 1, two.
- (2) In total, 70 searches were conducted of 53 vehicles and 17 persons: Albany port, 36 vehicles searched; Esperance port zone 1, 16 vehicles searched; Perth Airport zone 2, one vehicle searched and 10 persons searched, and 11 in total; and Perth Airport zone 1, seven persons searched.
- (3) Approximately five grams of cannabis was seized from a vehicle at Albany port.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICE — PAEDIATRICIANS AND SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

136. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 106, asked yesterday, with regard to the number of children on the waitlist to access a paediatrician and speech pathologist via the metropolitan Child Development Service. Of the children referred to in the answer, how many are primary school-aged children waiting to access —

- (a) a paediatrician; and
- (b) a speech pathologist?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

- (a)–(b) It is 4.8 months.

SYNERGY — COAL IMPORTS

137. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to Synergy's unprecedented action to bring 103 000 tonnes of coal from Newcastle to Collie last summer. As at 12 March 2024 —

- (1) What is the current blending ratio of imported Newcastle coal to local Collie coal?
- (2) How much of the imported Newcastle coal has been blended to use for electrical generation?
- (3) How much of the imported Newcastle coal has been burnt for generation?
- (4) What is the anticipated date on which all the imported Newcastle coal will have been burnt for generation?
- (5) What was the total cost of bringing the coal to Collie?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. As the member pointed out, this answer is current as of 12 March 2024. On behalf of the Minister for Energy I provide the following answer.

- (1) The current ratio is fifteen to one.
- (2) Just over 84 000 tonnes of the coal have been blended.
- (3) Of the 84 000 tonnes, approximately 82 000 tonnes have been burnt for generation.
- (4) As the blending ratio changes to meet operational requirements, a date is not able to be provided.
- (5) Synergy operates in a regulated competitive market with other market competitors. The costs associated with the coal purchase are subject to a confidential contract which prevents Synergy from disclosing this information.

NATIVE ANIMALS — PETS

138. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to concerns raised by animal rescue organisations regarding the treatment of rescued native animals that cannot, for one reason or another, be returned to the wild.

- (1) Is it government policy for those animals to be sold into the pet trade?
- (2) If yes to (1), how many native animals have been sold to the pet trade since January 2024?
- (3) Is there a time limit on how long registered native animal rescue and rehabilitation organisations can hold and care for native animals?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

A response to this question will be provided to Hon Neil Thomson on Thursday, 14 March 2024.

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS

139. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the government media release titled "Coffee cups in WA to go compostable with single-use plastic ban" and the ABC news article of 2 March in which Minister Whitby is quoted as saying that "more than a billion single-use plastic items, including more than 154 million coffee cups, will be saved from landfill annually."

- (1) Are the compostable single-use paperboard cups that are still allowed able to be composted in Western Australia?
- (2) Are the FOGO facilities used by local governments able to compost these single-use paperboard cups?
- (3) If yes to (2), why does the WA government's Recycle Right website state that these should go into the red-lid general waste bin?
- (4) If they are not compostable, what happens to these disposable cups?
- (5) Does the government intend to create facilities that can compost single-use paperboard coffee cups?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1)–(5) To meet the requirements of the WA ban, coffee cups must be certified to Australian Standards for composability. This certification ensures that they can be managed by existing facilities licensed to receive

food organics and garden organics—FOGO—wastes. As a transitional measure, the WA government is currently advising that all single-use coffee cups should be disposed via the general waste bin. This is due to the continued existence of noncompliant products in the market, and the challenge for consumers and FOGO facilities to differentiate between compostable and non-compostable cups. The state government is actively working with the retail and organics processing industries to identify an appropriate point to update the official advice to allow disposal of cups in the FOGO bins.

CYBERSECURITY — GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

140. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the Minister for Innovation and the Digital Economy:

I refer to my question without notice 110 regarding agency compliance with the WA government's cybersecurity policy.

- (1) How many agencies have achieved each level of cybersecurity maturity?
- (2) If this information is not available, how does the Office of Digital Government monitor and ensure compliance with the policy?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. However, the answer is that it is requested the honourable member place the question on notice, as more time is required to assess cabinet confidentiality and security implications before responding to the question.

ALCOHOL-INDUCED DEATHS

141. Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Health:

I refer the minister to the recent Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education report which, based upon Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, showed that in 2022 as many as 1 742 deaths across Australia were classified as having been alcohol-induced—six deaths per 100 000, the highest rate reported in a decade.

- (1) Given that the report was issued in November of last year, how many alcohol-induced deaths were recorded here in Western Australia across the whole of the 2022 calendar year?
- (2) How does that 2022 figure relate to the number of alcohol-induced deaths reported in recent years?
- (3) Of those alcohol-induced deaths here in WA, what was the highest underlying contributory cause?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

- (1) The Australian Bureau of Statistics data for the 2022 calendar year recorded 151 alcohol-induced deaths in Western Australia.

Answer (2) is in tabular form. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

- (2) ABS data for alcohol-induced deaths reported in Western Australia in recent years:

Calendar Year	Alcohol-induced deaths
2018	135
2019	143
2020	171
2021	151
2022	151

- (3) The ABS has not provided a further breakdown of the contributory causes of death in this data. Detailed cause of death data for 2022 is not yet available for analysis by the Western Australian Department of Health.

OFFSHORE WIND FARMS — BINNINGUP

142. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the planned offshore wind farms in the Indian Ocean, 20 kilometres off Binningup, Geographe Bay, where the government intends to station 200 turbines.

- (1) Has there been a comprehensive scientific study to help understand how this proposal will affect marine life, including whale migration patterns, dolphin behaviour and ocean floor ecosystems?
- (2) Particularly given that the completion of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road will draw travellers away from Bunbury, what consideration has the government given to the effect of the proposed wind farms on tourism for the region?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1) The consultation process on offshore wind farms announced by Minister Bowen is a commonwealth-led process. While understanding any potential impacts on marine life is of critical importance, this will need to be addressed as part of the commonwealth consultation process.
- (2) Consultation with the tourism sector is expected to occur as part of the commonwealth consultation process.

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES — RADIO REPEATERS

143. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the recent extended power outage in the Western Power south west interconnected system.

- (1) Were any of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services radio repeaters unserviceable as a result of power loss or any other associated technical issue?
- (2) If yes to (1), what was the location of each repeater and the length of each outage?
- (3) Has DFES enabled technology yet that will allow for remote monitoring of repeater sites?
- (4) What is the installed battery redundancy at DFES repeater sites?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I answer on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services. I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advises the following —

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) No.
- (4) It is 48 hours.

FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION — FIREWOOD CONTRACTS

144. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to short-term contracts with previous firewood buyers and the offer made to them of \$76 a tonne plus delivery for wood from stockpiles.

- (1) How was the price of \$76 a tonne determined?
- (2) Does it conform to part 8, section 59, of the Forest Products Act 2000?
- (3) If yes to (2), what is the component of profit for the Forest Products Commission?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The Cook government has now ended commercial logging of Western Australia's iconic and unique jarrah and karri forests—a policy that the opposition wishes to reverse. A new forest management plan commenced on 1 January 2024. The resource referred to was produced under the previous *Forest management plan 2014–2023* and the price offered reflects the average price of the resource in 2023. This price conforms to the Forest Products Act 2000.

POLICE — CHILD PROTECTION

145. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the incorrect answer to question without notice 1111 on 20 September 2023, which was thereafter the subject of a correction and apology on 10 October 2023.

- (1) Is the Minister for Police aware that the Minister for Education has informed the house that on 14 November 2019 the Department of Education first learnt of police investigations into a contractor who was taking indecent photos of children in primary and secondary schools?
- (2) Is the minister aware that the Minister for Education has also informed the house that the Western Australia Police Force was the agency with the responsibility to inform the working with children screening unit of this matter?
- (3) Does the minister recall that as part of his correction he informed the house that WA Police did not do this until 15 April 2020?

- (4) Is it usually the case that WA police takes five months to fulfil this responsibility?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I answer on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services who is absent on urgent parliamentary business. I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Police.

- (1)–(4) The Western Australia Police Force advises that the working with children screening unit—WWCSU—falls within the responsibility of the Department of Communities. The WA Police Force notified the school on 14 November 2019 as the mandatory report is not sent to the Department of Education. On 1 July 2023, the WA Police Force and the WWCSU implemented an automated, near real-time information sharing process. From this date, the WWCSU is notified automatically when a working with children cardholder is charged with an offence. Prior to this date, the system relied on manual effort to identify a charged person as a working with children cardholder and ensure WWCSU notification.

TRANSPORT — TIER 3 LINES — AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY CHAIN IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

146. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the study into recommissioning sections of the tier 3 rail network and the \$72 million allocated under the agricultural supply chain improvement program.

- (1) Has the minister received the completed study; and, if not, when does the minister expect to receive the study?
- (2) Will the minister make public the outcome of the study?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?
- (4) Did the study or will the study undertake a cost–benefit analysis of the recommissioning of the rail lines, compared with investing the ASCI funds into the road network?
- (5) If no to (4), will the department undertake this?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I answer on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services. I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following has been provided by the Minister for Transport.

I note the member has asked question on notice 1941, with identical wording. I refer the member to that answer, which will be provided in line with the standard time frame for questions on notice.

GRIFFIN COAL — CONSULTANTS

Question without Notice 107 — Answer

HON MATTHEW SWINBOURN (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.04 pm]: I would like to provide an answer to Hon Dr Steve Thomas' question without notice 107 asked yesterday.

I seek leave to have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

[Leave granted for the following material to be incorporated.]

-
- (1) This matter is ongoing. The payments made to Ashurst for legal services pertaining to Griffin Coal is confidential.
 - (2) Eighteen solicitors from Ashurst have worked on various issues relating to this matter.
 - (3) No.
-

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICE — PAEDIATRICIANS AND SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS

Question without Notice 136 — Correction of Answer

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 pm]: I wish to correct the record in relation to the answer I provided to Hon Donna Faragher's question without notice 136. This is the actual answer provided by the minister —

The PRESIDENT: Sorry, did you provide an incorrect answer earlier?

Hon PIERRE YANG: That is correct, President. The following answer is the correct one —

- (a) It is 8 308 children.
- (b) It is 3 514 children.

I apologise to the house and the member for the oversight.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023*Committee*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Dr Brian Walker) in the chair; Hon Sue Ellery (Minister for Commerce) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Committee was interrupted after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: What I was getting to, following the minister's point about COVID and all the disruption in the market, is that there has been an inverse peak in the vacancy rate. The vacancy rate peaked from about 2017 to 2021. During COVID it dropped considerably; after 2021 it got down to around one per cent. As the minister rightly pointed out, it is running at about 0.7 per cent. There is an inverse relationship between that and the rental price. The relevance here is that the percentage of investment loans for new construction was 14 per cent in 2022 and 20 per cent in 2023. Did the government consider the real cause of some of these challenges for housing affordability in the state, which, quite frankly, is that there is insufficient investment in new rental housing? I think probably the number one factor is that we have a low level of investment. The argument we have put is that the government has gone to quite a lot of trouble to create a very complex piece of red tape that, as far as I can see, will penalise lessors. I will ask another question about that shortly. In the main, the government could have done more to really improve the construction market and encourage the development of new residential tenancies, particularly in new homes. What was the government's thinking on that, given all the work it did on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill 2023?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The bill before us is about the rights and obligations of renters and lessors. To the extent that it fits within the spectrum of housing-related matters—obviously it plays a part—no claim has been made that this is going to address supply issues. No claim has been made to that effect. This legislation was not designed to do that; it is not its intention. This is about the rights and obligations of renters and lessors and trying to get a balance in those rights and obligations. I make no apology for the fact that this bill does not address supply; it was not intended to. I do not know that I can take that issue much further.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: In the minister's reply to the second reading debate, she tried to provide some comfort to the lessor community that she had tried to get a balance, and she referred to some of the comments from my colleagues on the crossbench about how far this bill would go. In fact, the minister said that what was discussed in the chamber reflected the broad views that had been received in the consultation process. But on several occasions, she has said that she is trying to get the balance right between the lessors and lessees. When I go through the key points on the Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's website in terms of this bill and what it does, I struggle to find anything in there that actually helps the lessor. Those seven key points refer to tenants keeping pets; allowing minor modifications; rent increases being limited to once every 12 months; a bond disposal process; a disputes process; rent bidding; and a court process for recourse so that tenants can get relief when landlords take retaliatory action. What in this bill, if anything, will encourage, help or assist lessors?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The member can look at one item alone: the dispute resolution procedure. Under the current regime, disputes are settled in the Magistrates Court. The member would be aware that the Magistrates Court, for example, does not issue reasons for decision. One of the key policy aims with the changes that we are making to the dispute resolution procedure is that the Commissioner for Consumer Protection will, one, publish reasons for decision, but, two, establish a set of precedents and publish those so that in dispute matters of a similar nature, the parties will have a much greater degree of certainty about where that decision will land and the likely outcome of taking a similar matter to the commissioner for resolution, for example. That is a very significant improvement on the current situation. It means that lessors will get consistency in decisions. Currently, with absolutely no disrespect to the court, the decision is dependent on the views of the particular magistrate presiding over the matter. The intention here is to effectively build up a bank, if you like, of precedents to provide much greater certainty to lessors about what they can and cannot do in the event that they are in dispute with the tenant. That is a very significant improvement. The other measures will provide a much greater degree of certainty and clarity for everybody, including lessors.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Will this process reduce the amount of time spent on these cases in the courts?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We would anticipate it might, but there are a couple of factors. Quite a number of matters do not go to the Magistrates Court because it is an onerous, confrontational, time-consuming and quite intimidating process to go through. We might expect on that ground alone that the commissioner might get a lot more disputes than we have seen reflected in the number of matters going before the courts, but I suspect that we will be able to put the themes of those disputes into bundles of similar issues. I also expect that once that bank of decisions has built up, and it will not happen immediately, we will see a reduction in matters for dispute resolution—full stop. It is also the case that this is a two-tiered system. The commissioner will not deal with some matters, for example, when the sum of money is greater than the bond that is held or a termination, and the Magistrates Court is, if you like, the Court of Appeal in the event that the party is not happy with the commissioner's decision. I do not know

what the actual percentage change will be in what does or does not go before the court, but it will be a very significant change that will try to remove red tape for everybody and try to ensure that everybody gets clarity about what is and is not reasonable.

Of course, for some matters the particular set of circumstances will be different, but that is not to say that once the commissioner has made a series of decisions about the kinds of themes, we will never hear a dispute again because it will always depend on the circumstances. The idea is to make it easier for everybody, including lessors.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Does the minister think that the workload of the commission will be significantly impacted by the amendments?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I do. The government has already decided to resource the commission accordingly because it is a significant addition to the functions of the commissioner.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Will there be an overall reduction in cost for both lessors and lessees to front the commission?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, there will be because there will not be a fee. They will also not be losing time, which is what happens for property managers, for example, when a matter goes to the court.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The minister's comments are encouraging. We would like to see a transparent approach when reporting on the performance of this legislation after it becomes law. Has some thought been given to the annual reports providing some performance indicators around the management of these matters inside the commission vis-a-vis the current process?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I am advised that it is expected that the commissioner will report in the annual report on the number of matters heard and the general patterns, if you like, of what has been observed in the new process.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: In terms of best practice regulations, we are unhappy with a number of aspects of this legislation. Some of them are unknown, so it is fair to say that the government and the opposition have to make a judgement call in terms of the effectiveness of some of those matters. We both share similar concerns around landlords who may not do the right thing by their tenants, or things that will become vexatious that might otherwise have been considered to be okay, but, obviously, some practices seem to have driven the need for this legislative response.

Is there any scope, not within the legislation but within the government, to assess this and provide some sort of performance report on the outcomes of this legislation that would provide comfort to industry, particularly those investors who we want to encourage, that this is actually going to work? Was any consideration given to that by the government? During the determination of this legislation, was any consideration given to the potential for a sunset clause within certain elements of these provisions?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No. There was no consideration of a sunset clause. Good policy practice says that you would constantly review how the processes are working. This is an outward facing service, if you like. We will find out pretty quickly if it is not working because none of these stakeholders are shy, in my humble opinion, about coming forward.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: If I could draw back to that issue around balance. To my mind, at least, I still think, notwithstanding some of the assurances you have given with respect to the Dutch, and I do hope, for the sake of everybody, that there is a reduction in the red tape, you could say, and possibly some diversion from the Magistrates Court. I think that would be useful. I note in the decision on page 45 of the review that the respondents noted concerns. These were from one of the advocacy groups with respect to the tenant's advocacy —

The current process of bond disposal is cumbersome and administratively expensive, particularly in the case of abandonment;

That was actually a comment. Maybe I will step through these, but, if the member could possibly comment on that in relation to abandonment and what that actually means.

The concerns in the review continue —

The existing bond disposal process is biased towards lessors because they often have the benefit of representation by the property managers, who are familiar with the process;

I found that a rather unusual statement because it seemed that there was a bias. I was wondering what that bias was, given that, in your presentations to this place, it is more that it is complex. On those two points, did you have any comment, and how will the bill deal with that abandonment case, and what were your decisions in putting this bill together because there was some perceived bias towards lessors?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I have two things. Abandonment is referring to what is done with the bond when a tenant abandons the lease. This will be much easier for the lessor because they will not have to go to court to get a decision made about that money. The commissioner will be able to make a decision about that. The commissioner will need to go through the 14-day process to make sure there is not another person who can be contacted to pursue that, but it will be much more streamlined and will not require time to go to court or the court's time either.

On the second point of the existing process being biased because lessors have the benefit of representation by property managers, this whole new system is about the commissioner being available to resolve disputes without parties needing to have representation. It will be on the papers, which parties will be able to provide, and there will be forms and templates and all that sort of thing, and a bank of decisions which kind of set precedence on particular areas. With the current process, the people in the review are for the changes because they say the existing court-only process is intimidating for tenants and that the lessors have the benefit of being represented by a property manager from the real estate agency. In the first instance, under the new system in the legislation in front of us now, those things will not be necessary, and it will be a decision of the commissioner.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We hope you are right. The member mentioned in her response forms and precedents. Is the department up and ready? Is the department ready to go with all of this and able to make this work?

Hon SUE ELLERY: An awful lot of work has gone into this to date. We anticipate being ready for 1 July. I am hopeful that, with due consideration of the house, we might even finish this bill tomorrow. That would be great if we did. An awful lot of work has been done already. We anticipate being ready to go on 1 July. There will be ongoing work and consultation around regulations and the like as well.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I would just like to piggyback on the line of questioning by Hon Neil Thomson about the commissioner. The member mentioned building up a body of evidence on the decisions that have been made public. Is that under proposed section 11E, “Disputed tenancy matters”?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, if you read together proposed section 11E, proposed section 11J, which is about the notice of decision, and proposed section 11K about publishing decisions and reasons.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: There are some prescriptive reasons or disputes in the bill around modifications and pets. Is this disputed tenancy matter considered largely a catch-all by the commissioner, and will there be regulations to back that in terms of what is considered a disputed tenancy matter?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The powers that the commissioner will be able to exercise in the dispute resolution process will be around minor modifications, pets and bonds. There is a head of power in proposed section 11E in the event that it became obvious that there was some other area that needed, and would benefit from, having that kind of less adversarial approach to resolving disputes. There is a power to add to that, but there is no plan at this point, and there is no sense of what that might be or whether we need to do it at all.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Is that head of power in proposed section 11E, which mentions that regulations have been made to prescribe a disputed tenancy matter by the commissioner?

Hon Sue Ellery: By way of interjection, the power to determine the dispute will be about three matters: bonds, pets and minor modifications. There is a head of power, the regulation-making provision within the bill which says if we think we need to give her the power to resolve other matters, we have the capacity to do that.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Okay. Will that be through regulations?

Hon Sue Ellery: Yes.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Okay. But there is no thought to do that or it is only if some unforeseen circumstances arise? Is the idea to keep it quite prescriptive around what the commissioner will be disputing?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We already know what the biggest areas of dispute are now, and we can anticipate what they will be going forward. Bonds is the major one. There are new provisions obviously around pets and minor modifications. We anticipate there will be some around that as well. Like I said, there is the provision within the act. In the event that some other area became really obvious that it was a problem—I do not know what that might be—we could add that to the list. There are three things now that can be resolved using this dispute resolution process. It might be at some point in the future that there is a fourth. We do not anticipate what that might be. We have no plans to add another one. But the power is there in the event that we need it.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: There are now these three provisions for the commissioner. If something falls out of those three provisions, where can a renter go currently? There are some provisions by which the matters of retaliatory actions by the lessor or the tenant go to the courts. Ignoring that workflow and input into the courts, where can a renter go?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is the Magistrates Court.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I hope to get through clause 1 relatively quickly. Before we get to the clause-by-clause part of the debate, I want to touch on the things that were not included, given the decision. A couple of items in the decision regulatory impact statement were not considered. They are not things that we necessarily want to be included, but for the record I would at least like to get an understanding of the rationale of why they were not included. Without-grounds terminations and fixed-term tenancy agreements were included in the decision regulatory impact statement. Of course, there were all of the other items such as the disposal of security bonds, dispute resolution process, frequency of rent increases, modifications to premises, and pets. Those things were included.

As far as I can tell, the two things not included in this bill are without-grounds termination and fixed-term tenancy agreements. If I am right, can the minister just elaborate on why they were not included?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is actually only one—no grounds apply to both of those matters; they are both linked to no grounds.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: And are they not included in the bill?

Hon Sue Ellery: Correct.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The first recommendation is that without-grounds terminations by the lessor be replaced with a list of grounds for termination. Recommendation 2 is a related matter. It states —

That fixed term tenancy agreements of any duration continue to be permitted, but that termination of a fixed term tenancy agreement by the lessor only be permitted without reason at the end of the first fixed term.

Those matters have not been included; is that correct?

Hon Sue Ellery: That is correct.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I thank the minister for the interjection.

What was the rationale for not including them?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think I addressed this in my reply to the second reading debate, and I have addressed it in answers to parliamentary questions as well. The government took the view that given the state of the rental market and that the problem of the rental market was supply, we did not want to take any action that may have resulted in putting someone off from making a decision about what they do with their investment. That is the decision that we made; that is, we will not pursue that set of circumstances. If the honourable member follows the debate, Hon Wilson Tucker tried to make the point about what the science and economics were behind that. It is a judgement call, and in our judgement, in our current state, when we really need to address supply, do we put something in place that may change someone's mind about making an investment? That is a judgement call, and there are people, including two members sitting behind Hon Neil Thomson, who have a very different point of view about that. I understand and respect it, but that is not the view of the government.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I just put on the record that we support that judgement call about those one or two matters—depending on how we look at them. Given the potential state of nervousness that lessors might have about these new laws, I hope there is some level of communication going on with real estate agents through the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia about the changes. The minister can comment on that as well, if she likes. Regarding making sure lessors are informed of the new laws, is there an ironclad guarantee that the government will not progress those other changes if the vacancy rate suddenly goes up a little and we have less pressure on the rental market?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are not going to because it is not in the bill before us. It is pretty clear that we are not going to because it is not in the bill. Who knows where the market will end up. None of the advice available to me from REIWA or anybody else in the residential construction market is saying to me that there will be some sudden spike in vacancies, so I do not see a change in economic circumstances or the state of the rental market in the foreseeable future. Governments should never say they will hold a position irrespective of what is going on in the market. They need to take account of what is going on in the market, but in the current circumstances and with all the predictions available to me, we will not get to 2.5 per cent to three per cent vacancy rates in the foreseeable future.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I just follow up on that. There are two parts to this question, which is about tranche 2. Is there an expected time line for tranche 2? There has been talk about it being later this year. The second part of my question follows on from Hon Neil Thomson's line of questioning. I am trying to understand what is expected in tranche 2. If there will not be no-grounds evictions, what will be the substance of it?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is not a defined time period to deal with tranche 2. If the member goes to the consultation regulatory impact statement about the Residential Tenancies Act that was issued in 2019, a previous Minister for Commerce made a decision to split the matters in the CRIS into two tranches. Tranche 1 is what we are dealing with now; tranche 2 is all of the other things that were in the CRIS. They include, for example, minimum standards. There is a whole bunch of other things in there. Work on tranche 2 is ongoing. It is a complex set of policy provisions that we have to work our way through, and we are doing it diligently. We have already done some of them and we are part way along the way with others. Then there is the work that is being done at national cabinet. At national cabinet it is being determined that from WA's point of view, we will work with the other jurisdictions on what policy settings might look like for standardised no grounds, for example, but we are not committing to doing it in the life of this government. The Premier has made that clear and I have made it clear. That does not mean we will not do the work with the other jurisdictions on what a best practice model might look like, bearing in mind that there are variations between all the jurisdictions. We will work on that, but we have no intention of making that policy change in the foreseeable future.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: What is WA's role in the national cabinet discussion, and who is responsible for having that discussion and working on the uniform policy position?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The Minister for Housing is responsible for feeding in what the Premier takes to the national cabinet. Everybody in the national cabinet knows what Western Australia's position is. We have said that we are happy to participate, but we are certainly not leading the work and we are not going to change our policy on it in the foreseeable future. As to who feeds information to the Premier when he goes to national cabinet, it would be Minister Carey. My office works very closely with Minister Carey, and if information or policy assistance is required, we work together on that.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Is it a national cabinet discussion that moves the needle that then agrees on this national approach, or is someone allocated within a government department somewhere in WA having those behind-the-scenes discussions?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, nobody is doing that. If work were to be done on that now in Western Australia, it would be led by Minister Carey. That work is not being done right now. We have said at the national cabinet that we are happy to work with the other states on what a best practice model might look like. We are not going to lead the work. We are not going to implement it. That is not our policy position. Work on that particular matter is not being done in Western Australia right now.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Given that the minister has ruled out revisiting no-grounds evictions within the term of this government, she said it might be on the table in the next term of government if Labor —

Hon Sue Ellery: I didn't say that.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: The minister did not say that?

Hon Sue Ellery: No. Tell me when I said that.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: So what is the government's position on no-grounds evictions moving forward in light of the national cabinet discussion?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I understand that this issue is important to the member. I do not know how to say it another way. We are not doing it for the reasons I have outlined. This government is not doing it. I cannot possibly speak for a future government; I will not be part of it.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I am just trying to work out whether the minister is taking it off the table until the next election or she is taking it off the table for the next term of government if Labor were to be re-elected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I cannot possibly make a commitment about what the next government may or may not do. First, I will not be a part of it —

Hon Martin Aldridge: It won't be a Labor government either!

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is funny. It cannot be an alliance because, well, the member does not want to be part of one.

Honourable member, what the Premier has made clear and I have made clear is that this government is not shifting its position on that issue.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I will follow up on that. Since we debated this yesterday, there is a headline in *The West Australian* online this afternoon that reads "Cook Government didn't consult counterparts over no-ground evictions ban but insists it would hit rental stock". I am just trying to understand, if the government is ruling it out categorically now—this is the strongest I have heard the minister say it—on what basis is it doing that? As I said yesterday, lots of states have done this, but there was no consultation with them around what impact it had on their rental stock; in fact, there is no evidence, to the best of my knowledge, that it does impact rental stock. Therefore, I am trying to understand: on what basis is this so categorically a no, given that every other state is doing this?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I feel like I might be talking to myself!

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: Sorry?

A government member: I got the message.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: Why?

Hon SUE ELLERY: This lot behind me read the code.

Honourable member, I have a couple of things. None of the other jurisdictions consulted with us about what their policy position would be, and I am not offended by that; I would not expect them to. We each make our own decisions as they impact our respective communities and, of course, we will always stand up for what is right for Western Australia. This is an easy segue that the honourable member gave me. Therefore, I have already outlined the reasons. Our judgement is that there may be a risk to investors' decisions on the critical issue that we need to address, which is the supply of rental stock. We did not want to take that risk. The member may disagree with me, and if he follows the —

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: By interjection, though: what is the evidence of that judgement?

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is the argument that Hon Wilson Tucker has been trying —

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: I am trying to work it out. You didn't consult with stakeholders.

Hon SUE ELLERY: He has been trying to skewer me on it.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: I am just trying to understand on what basis that decision was made.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I know the honourable member is trying to understand it; I am trying to help him understand it. The position we took was that it may have an impact on an investment decision by someone looking to buy a rental property to rent out, and we were not prepared to take that risk. It is as simple as that. Now, the member will disagree, and he will say, "Well, I think you should've relied on economic study X or economic study Y, and I think you should've taken a different decision." I respect that that is the member's point of view, but we took the point of view that this was the right thing to do at the right time given the state of the market, and that we really need to properly address supply and not put something in the way that may be an impediment to supply. I get that the member does not agree with that, but that is our position.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: This may frustrate the minister, but I will continue down this line of inquiry. Can the minister confirm that the Minister for Housing, Hon John Carey, and the minister herself did not consult or look at other jurisdictions when they came to the decision to not include no-grounds evictions?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There are two different questions in there. There is a question about whether we consulted and there is a question about whether we looked at the policies of other jurisdictions. Of course we looked at the policies of other jurisdictions; that is the standard way of conducting the process by which a decision regulatory impact statement is done—it looks at what is being done in other jurisdictions. Therefore, of course we looked at what was being done in other jurisdictions, and that happened at officer-to-officer level. Did Minister Carey or I ring up our equivalent ministers in each state and territory and ask them? No, we did not, and they did not do that to me, and I would not expect them to. But, of course, looking at what is the state of play in other jurisdictions was part of the information that was put in front of the government. Of course it was.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I take the minister's point when she mentioned that if the government were to remove no-grounds evictions, that is a potential risk that would affect the housing supply, and I understand that. But there are approximately 700 000 renters in WA, and I think they deserve a bit of insight into the sausage making, if you will, of how that decision was arrived upon, rather than just that there was a risk. We have heard that the housing minister did not consult, so I guess my question is: who was consulted within WA to arrive at the decision to not remove no-grounds evictions?

Hon SUE ELLERY: All the relevant stakeholders were consulted. I think they are even listed. This was a very consultative process. A document goes out in the first instance, which is called a CRIS, or consultative regulatory impact statement, that asks stakeholders a series of questions and what their view is on those questions. From that, a DRIS is prepared for consideration by the government. The DRIS looks at the questions that were asked, and, on the one hand, this group of people we consulted said this and, on the other hand, this group of people we consulted said that. This is a very deeply consultative process. On top of that, since I have been the minister, which was December 2022, as is my practice and how I do my business, I have regular meetings with all the stakeholders across my portfolios. I have had numerous meetings with all the stakeholders about what the DRIS might look like and what the government's thinking was, and I tested various ideas with them. Therefore, this has been a deeply consultative process.

I think it is quite mischievous to suggest that there is anything in the proposition that neither Minister Carey nor I consulted with ministers in other jurisdictions. We would not do that and we do not do that. We rely on the advice that is provided to us by the officers—"Here is the regime in each jurisdiction around Australia." Occasionally, they might even say on a particular issue, "Here's what they do in New Zealand or somewhere else." That is normal practice when developing this kind of regulatory policy change. That is normal. That headline is a bit cheeky in that it suggests that there is some inadequacy in John Carey not ringing up the Minister for Housing in Victoria, South Australia or Tasmania. It suggests that he has done something wrong. That is not the way that these policy formulations happen.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: This is where we are coming from, though. I am pulling up all the other states because I am trying to understand. New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia this year, Tasmania and the ACT have all come to the same conclusion—that landlords should not be able to terminate without grounds. It feels like there is a bit of a vibe around why we should not, but I think there is a legitimate question that this place should ask. I come back to the evidence, both around best practice for what works in other jurisdictions and what is best practice for renters. It feels to me like there must have been some very strong evidence to suggest that it would somehow stymie investment. If so, what was that evidence? There is strong evidence on the other side that best practice for renters, across the country, is to get rid of no-grounds evictions. Was there any clear evidence that said that that would stymie investment, or was it just a bit of a vibe?

Hon Sue Ellery: A bit of a what?

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: A vibe. It is a reference from *The Castle*.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I know. I get the reference; I love the movie.

I have known Hon Dr Brad Pettitt for a long time and I know that he is a smart person. I have known Hon Wilson Tucker for a shorter period of time —

Hon Wilson Tucker: And you're still not convinced!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would still say that he is a smart person. I think they understand what I have been saying to them, but they disagree with it. That is okay; they can disagree. They can keep prosecuting the argument that because I cannot pull out an economic study and say, "Here is the economic study on which we made this particular policy decision", they can say that this was a faulty decision. I understand that that is the point they are making.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt interjected.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Look at how many questions Hon Wilson Tucker has asked me. I get the argument that those members are putting; I really do. The decision was made that, given the particular circumstances in Western Australia, we did not want to take the risk. Now, those members can say, as they did in their contributions to the second reading debate, that that was too timid. I get it. I get that that is their point of view, but that is what we decided.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I find myself in furious agreement with the minister at this point in time.

Hon Sue Ellery: Now I am anxious!

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Look what I have done! I wanted to pass that on.

Members know that I am from New Zealand. As a young person growing up, I lived under the Muldoon prime ministership. We had a thing called a maximum retail price, which tried to stop inflation. It did not work. Price controls do not work. There are all sorts of impacts from interventions in the market. I suggest that the crossbench members in this place look at some of the challenges faced in some of the more interventionist markets, like San Francisco. There is an article in the *American Economic Review* from 2019 headed "The effects of rent control expansion on tenants, landlords, and inequality: Evidence from San Francisco", written by Rebecca Diamond, Tim McQuade and Franklin Qian—I think that is how to pronounce that surname, but I probably got it wrong. The abstract to that article is quite pertinent to this discussion. I think it is a case of how far one goes. That is the bit on which I think we disagree with the government—that is, how far it goes and whether to have any further controls. I am talking particularly about price controls and not so much about no-grounds evictions or no-grounds termination of contracts. Those issues are related. I will quote the abstract because I think it is something that needs to be considered. It states —

Thus, while rent control prevents displacement of incumbent renters in the short run, the lost rental housing supply likely drove up market rents in the long run, ultimately undermining the goals of the law.

This study is detailed in the article in the American Economic Association's *American Economic Review*, volume 109, number 9 of September 2019. People can make up their own minds as to the veracity of that. I know that those studies exist across the world. I know that there are concerns about the scope of some of the rental controls that were introduced in New Zealand under the previous Labor government. I am hopeful that standards will be addressed when the government does the so-called phase 2 reforms, as they could have a deeper impact. There can be a one-size-fits-all approach to standards for heating and things like that. That can create additional cost, particularly for older homes when something might be hard to retrofit. I will finish on this point, but in consideration of the so-called phase 2 reforms and the message that has been sent to the marketplace, it is not just about what we are doing here today but also the intent and residual concern in the marketplace about excessive controls and the impact that they might have on the marketplace going forward.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Deputy chair.

Hon Neil Thomson: I've got you stirred up.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Yes. What I would say is that no-one is talking about rent controls; we are talking about no-cause evictions. They are very different things; they are miles apart.

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Sandra Carr): Honourable members, I will interrupt for a moment. The debate should be happening between the minister and the speaker on their feet.

Hon Sue Ellery: No; they can go for their lives!

The DEPUTY CHAIR: I would appreciate it if you would return to that.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: On that basis, I will return to a different line of questioning around housing standards. Obviously, I think that rental standards generally are important. There has been some really good work on that. As the biggest owner of rental housing in this state, does the government know what the standards are across its housing stock in terms of energy efficiency and the like? If the minister knows the answer to that question, how is the government measuring and enforcing those conditions in terms of both social and public housing?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not in a position to answer that. I am not the minister with responsibility for public housing, so he would need to direct that question to Minister Carey. I am happy to take something on notice to see whether I can get an answer for the honourable member, but there are other ways to pursue that question. On the question of minimum standards, that was one of the issues that was hived off and put into the second tranche. That work will be done in the second tranche. In terms of giving the member data on what is and is not a minimum standard right now in public housing, I am not the right minister to answer that question.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I have just one other broader question. I do not need to know the data, but does the minister know whether the government is reviewing whether public housing has insulation or fans or other energy-efficient aspects as part of the department of housing's building condition assessment program? Is she aware of that? If not, I can certainly ask the minister. Obviously, it is an important element as we go down this route.

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I am not. The member would need to address that question to the relevant minister. What I can say to the member is that this legislation will also apply to public housing in terms of the rights and obligations of renters and lessors. In working on the matters that are before us now and in working on the matters that will be in tranche 2, we will consult with them because it will impact them in the same way that it impacts private renters and lessors. We will work with them on that. In terms of the specifics about public housing stock, the member will need to address that question to Minister Carey.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I am going to go back to no-grounds evictions. We have determined that there was no consultation with east coast counterparts; that is fine. The article mentions that the Minister for Housing, Hon John Carey, insists that removing no-grounds evictions would hit rental stock. The language the minister has used so far is that there is a risk and the language that the housing minister used is that he is confident that removing it would have a detrimental effect on housing stock. I am trying to understand where that confidence or insistence is coming from. We have determined that there was no consultation with other states. I am trying to determine what consultation there was about no-grounds evictions specifically and what were the inputs and drivers. We know that a fair amount of consultation was undertaken by this government. Can the minister boil this down and perhaps give me the names of the proponents who raised concerns about no-grounds evictions specifically?

Hon SUE ELLERY: While I wait to see whether the officers can find anything more specific that I need to say, let us deal with the first proposition, because I think the member mischaracterised what I said about consultation. I said that it is silly or mischievous to think that there is something awry in the Minister for Housing for Western Australia not personally consulting with the Minister for Housing in any other jurisdiction about the development of this policy. I did say that I am sure that there were conversations officer to officer and, indeed, material was provided to government about the policies in other jurisdictions. That happened, but let us put that to one side.

I am happy to answer the member's questions, but if he really wants to get across this policy, he should read the consultation regulatory impact statement and the decision regulatory impact statement, because it is all laid out there. Three hundred and fifty submissions were received in response to the CRIS, and there is probably a list of them somewhere that we can get for the member. When it came to the particular policy point of no-grounds evictions, from the point that I got the portfolio, which was in December 2022, I liaised with the Make Renting Fair Alliance, including Shelter WA and all the members of the alliance, and with the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, both of which had different points of view about no-grounds evictions. Before I got the portfolio, a whole lot of work had been done on the CRIS and in preparing the DRIS, when more stakeholders were consulted than just those two groups.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: We know that the DRIS recommends the removal of no-grounds evictions. I believe the minister mentioned previously that the pandemic played a role in the government not supporting the recommendation from the DRIS. Can she confirm the time line of when the decision to not remove no-grounds evictions was taken?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It was a decision of cabinet and I cannot remember the date. The point I was trying to make about COVID is that I think it would be unfair to judge where we ended up and say that somehow the DRIS or the CRIS was inadequate. I think that would be unfair because they were started when the market was at a very different point. That is the point I was trying to make—nothing more or less than that. That was the point about COVID. The process started and then there was a gap, because we all then had to scramble and pivot to put in place moratoriums and all sorts of things to protect people during the peak of the pandemic. Then we could revisit policy settings more generally going forward in a post-COVID world and, by that point, the market had fundamentally changed. That is the point I was trying to make.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Is the minister able to give an approximate time frame for when that decision of cabinet was made? The first time that I saw that no-grounds evictions were not supported by the government was last year at a press conference with former Premier Hon Mark McGowan. The then Premier basically scrapped no-grounds evictions and took them off the table very quickly in a very flippant manner. I have had some discussions with people about how the decision was arrived at and, apparently, there was a conversation between the then Premier and REIWA and a captain's call decision was made and was publicly announced, and here we are. Can the minister elaborate on when that decision was made or how it was arrived at?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is not unusual at all for the Premier of the day or even the minister of the day to say, “This is where we think our government is going to be on this position.” That is not unusual; it is perfectly normal. The former Premier, the current Premier, former ministers for this portfolio and I regularly met with stakeholders. The former Premier regularly met with the Western Australian Council of Social Service and others, for example. I have no clue whether there was some particular meeting when he said something to REIWA. I would not know about that. I know that it was my job to present the cabinet submission, and I did that and a decision was made in the terms that we see in the legislation before us.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Is it fair to say that in the consultation process with proponents who were for and against no-grounds evictions, it came down to the Make Renting Fair Alliance on one hand and REIWA on the other?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honestly, I feel like I have said this about five thousand times. There was a long process. It started in 2019. By the time I took over the portfolio, views were coalescing about the key issues in tranche 1. Although I certainly took note of all the work that had been done on the CRIS, which led to the DRIS, and I was aware of all the different views, in the consultation about what the government might consider putting in legislation for tranche 1, I was really dealing with the alliance and REIWA. I meet a lot of people and I go to a lot of events and functions, and I cannot stand here and put my hand on my heart and say that nobody else raised it with me because I just cannot remember. Bear in mind that I meet WACOSS about a whole bunch of things and, in a meeting with WACOSS, which is also a member of the alliance, it might raise this. I also meet WACOSS when it comes to see me as part of the alliance. I meet Shelter about a whole lot of things and it is also part of the alliance. A lot of conversations went on. It is certainly accurate to say that when the finer points of the policy were being settled, after all the consultation and whatever number of submissions were received, the two major groups that I was dealing with were REIWA and the alliance.

The DEPUTY CHAIR (Hon Sandra Carr): Honourable member, I have been listening to the debate very closely. There does seem to be some degree of repetition taking place. I urge you to perhaps refresh your line of questioning.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: This is the last question that I have on no-grounds evictions. I take the minister’s point, and I largely understand—I am not quite the whole way there—how the government got to this position. I want to get some level of insight into or have something to take away with me when I talk to people about why the government made the decision to remove the no-grounds eviction as part of this reform. What can I tell them? What assurance or import or insight can I give to them other than that it was a risk or the housing industry insisted that it would affect supply? What else can I give them?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The honourable member can tell them whatever he wants. It is not my job to tell him how he needs to consult with his constituents. He might like to re-read *Hansard* if he is unsure of anything I have said, but that is for the member.

Hon Wilson Tucker: I am not unsure; I am just a little disappointed.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can live with it. I do not mean that disrespectfully at all. It is for the honourable member to determine how he wants to characterise this decision. I do not expect him to defend the government’s decision; we are capable of doing that ourselves. I do not take anything away from the strength of feeling that he has on this issue; I understand it and I respect it.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I have one last question on no-grounds evictions before we move on. I understand that there are seven existing grounds for evicting people, including being a nuisance and not paying rent. What certainty would landlords need to have as investors when there are clearly already existing grounds? I note that Canberra has the highest vacancy rates in the country at the moment. It was also the first jurisdiction to introduce no-grounds evictions. There is a really good reason for that. I want to come back to that. There are existing grounds. Does the minister have any examples of what certainty investors would need to have clear and existing grounds?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I understand the question, the member is asking what certainty I think investors would need. I cannot tell the honourable member that. All I can tell him is what I have said before, which is that in our judgement in the current circumstances, making all the other changes that we are making, we did not think it was appropriate to take the risk that we might influence someone’s investment decision when the biggest issue we are facing is supply.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: Madam Deputy Chair —

Hon Sue Ellery: Oh, come on! You said it was the last.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: That question was on no-grounds evictions. I have some questions on rent bidding. The proposed changes to rent bidding relate to the solicitation of the bid. I am pretty sure that every other state and territory has also included that same provision. Victoria is moving to remove or outlaw the acceptance of a bid. Did WA consider a similar model to Victoria and taking a more comprehensive ban of rent bidding?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, we did not consider it when drafting the legislation. There is a view that says we might end up with a perverse effect whereby the prices are put up, if you like, to artificially try to get around that. I know that a couple of other jurisdictions are looking at doing it. We will see how it goes for them, but there is no intention for us to do that in the short to medium term.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: When these laws come into effect, how will the government measure them to ensure that rent bidding does not happen?

Hon SUE ELLERY: This is a very exciting part of the portfolio. The department will have secret shoppers! Spies will go out and make mock applications to test whether the system is working as it should. I am being flippant when I say “spies” because they are not really spies.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: That is very exciting. That is my excited voice.

Today I asked a question about the existing rent bidding wars. Two complaints relating to rent bidding have been made since February 2020—one in September 2023 and the other in October 2023. That is obviously a very small number that have gone to the Consumer Protection division. The government is beefing up these laws under this reform. It seems like there is an education piece in the public about these laws and the existence of the complaint avenues. What is the government doing in that space?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is currently not illegal to do that. It is not surprising that more formal complaints have not been made. I also make the point that, anecdotally, all the members of the Make Renting Fair Alliance were telling me that is what was happening, and others.

Yes, an education campaign is being planned because a lot of changes are being made. We will seek to ensure that people understand their rights and obligations.

Hon WILSON TUCKER: I believe that the penalty for engaging in rent bidding is \$10 000. That seems quite a large amount. How was that figure landed upon?

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is the maximum amount. The penalty is up to \$10 000. It does not mean that every offender will receive that fine; it will depend on the circumstances of the case.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2: Commencement —

Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE: I want to ask a question about implementation. I understand from the information I received during my briefing that there are three phases of the implementation. Phase 1 will occur immediately upon the passage of the bill, which are the technical amendments, disclosure of bond data, rent bidding and retaliatory action provisions. Phase 2 is targeted for mid-2024 and includes the rent increases, pets and minor modifications provisions. These amendments require changes to the standard agreements, new regulations and the development of new processes. I think the minister touched on this in her second reading reply. I am paraphrasing the minister; I think she said that engagement with stakeholders had commenced, but obviously the government would not anticipate the finalisation of regulations until Parliament had spoken.

What is the government engaging in with stakeholders? I presume it is the minor modification provision and pet bonds, amongst other things. Can the government share what it is thinking about those landing points in terms of its engagement with external stakeholders?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Certainly, engagement has commenced around the matters that the member mentioned—minor modifications, pets and bonds et cetera. I am not sure whether I can be any clearer for the member. The way that the department does this is by asking stakeholders a series of questions and then asking for their feedback. The closer we get to landing a position, the better. The department often does workshops on a range of matters. Some questions have been sent to the relevant stakeholders around minor modifications. For example, here is a list of possible minor modifications: is that list appropriate? Should anything be added or removed? That is the sort of consultation that happens.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.

JOHN BELL — TRIBUTE

Statement

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [6.21 pm]: Today marks a part of my life that has always been very difficult. In 1996, my father was killed on a routine drug surveillance flight at Manypeaks, with two police officers and a customs officer. They were Charlie Scott; Steve Hill, federal officer; and Peter Siep. They were investigating drugs of an unknown substance found washed up on the beach when their Cessna 337 stalled and crashed. All three officers were based in Albany. My father was a former whale spotter employed by the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company. He was well known for a rescue that occurred in 1965 when one of the chaser skippers had put his foot in a rope and had taken his leg off as he fired a harpoon. On that day, dad landed the plane in the open seas and rescued Ches and repatriated him to Emu Point. My dad was awarded a medal for bravery that was presented here at Parliament House. I often walk around and wonder which places in Parliament he walked.

It was a very difficult time for us as a family, as members can imagine, but on the nineteenth anniversary of the accident, my brother’s two twins, Harrison and Grace, were born. It is their birthday today, so it is a bittersweet

day. The funny thing is that the aeroplane my dad flew in was a 337 and Harrison was born at 3.37 in the afternoon. If people believe in that sort of stuff, they know they are up there looking down on us. I wanted to pay tribute to those brave men who lost their lives that day and tried to keep our lives safe from the scourge of drugs. Thank you.

LGBTQIA+ INCLUSION

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [6.24 pm]: Two weeks ago, I stood in this place and spoke of my frustration of the WA Labor government's inaction on law reform on LGBTQIA+ rights. I shared three stories from the community that I hope members remember. They are waiting for the government to follow through on its promise to abolish the Gender Reassignment Board of Western Australia and protect LGBTQIA+ rights. I again stand and remind the government and Labor MPs in this place that the party made an election commitment in 2017. I know that the LGBTQIA+ community is still waiting for that to come to fruition.

An announcement was made of a new inclusion strategy, but I am hearing universally that that is not enough. What is needed is the law reform that was promised, and we need that reform to be delivered before the March 2025 election. The outdated legislation continues to affect real people's lives, whether it is harmful conversion practices that seek to change a person's sexual orientation and gender identity, which remains legal; the process of trans and gender-diverse people to legally update their gender, which remains the worst in this country; or intersex babies and children who continue to be subject to deferrable medical interventions without their personal consent.

Today, I want to share another story—just one. This is Michelle's story. I flag up-front that it has content that some might find confronting, but it is an issue that we must confront. This is Michelle's story —

My name is Michelle, I am a 56 yr. old woman with innate variations of sex characteristics also known as intersex, I was born and live in WA and I'm the President of Intersex Peer Support Australia. 1.7% of the population are born with natural variations of sex characteristics, we have existed since the beginning of humanity and today we still fight for our existence.

When I was born Doctor's didn't know what box to tick on my birth certificate and many lab tests later, they decided to tick Female, but that wasn't enough for them, I had to look female. At the tender age of 4, I had surgery on my genitals without my personal informed consent. This surgery was harmful, it caused irreversible loss of sexual function, the inability to ever orgasm, it caused trauma, shame, permanent scarring, and PTSD.

What was the purpose of surgery? It was so I would fit into a binary box because to be different was just not acceptable to doctors or to society, nor is it today.

Clinicians at Perth Childrens Hospital are still performing human rights violations on babies, and young children as we speak. Labor thinks that cutting a little child's genitals at a young age (often before 2 yr.'s old), removing reproductive organs that produce hormones, performing vaginoplasties, clitoral reductions and many other harmful procedures on babies is ok.

Would it be okay if your clitoris was cut off because it was too big, or your penis was turned into a vagina because it was too small?

The ACT government doesn't think it's ok, it's now a criminal offence to do so, Victoria will have legislation by the end of the year, so why —

Does Labor still —

think it's ok?

That was Michelle's story. I thank her for allowing me to share her story in this place. I have many other stories to tell. I want to tell these on a regular basis because we need to understand that by not following through on this election promise that real people's lives are continuing to be affected. I really hope this government follows through on its promise to bring LGBTQIA+ reform to this Parliament.

HOMELESSNESS — ENTRYPOINT PERTH

Statement

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [6.28 pm]: I would like to raise a concern on behalf of a WA resident. Tracy is in her 50s and has been homeless for five years now. Tracy reached out to me when I did a call-out to renters to hear some of their rental horror stories. Tracy contacted me via social media and shared her story with me. I was not really sure where to direct Tracy initially, so I did some digging into the Office of Homelessness page on the government's website and the first service listed is called Entrypoint. I believe it is a not-for-profit organisation. It is a separate entity, but it receives government funding. The description for Entrypoint is that it provides a free assessment and referral service assisting people in Western Australia who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to access an accommodation and support services. It mentions that Entrypoint Perth can be contacted on Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 7.00 pm, and on Saturday from 9.00 am

to 5.00 pm. I asked Tracy if she knew about Entrypoint and had tried to contact it previously. The response from Tracy was, “To be honest, like many other homeless people I’ve met, I rang every few days, and then once a week. After the first year, I gave up because I got no response. The crisis care line just rang out. Even a police officer tried to ring for me. It just rang out for him too.”

This obviously surprised and certainly shocked me. Entrypoint is the first port of call for services listed on the government’s homelessness services webpage. We are talking about a very vulnerable cohort of people who are trying to access this service in a time of crisis. In the past year, Tracy has tried calling multiple times and had no luck. I tried to call Entrypoint. A couple of weeks ago, I called it four times. I was put on hold for 15 minutes each call; it rang out and I left a message. That happened weeks ago and I am yet to receive a call back. I am certainly not here to throw barbs or cast aspersions at people in the not-for-profit sector or the hardworking people of Entrypoint, but it raises significant questions about how adequate the funding and resourcing is for Entrypoint if a person can be waiting for up to a year, and, in my case of calling on behalf of Tracy, multiple weeks, to actually get a response.

I asked a question about this. I put on my data engineering hat and was really looking for some key performance indicators and some metrics around call volume, the number of staff and Entrypoint’s obligations. That question is on notice, so I am still waiting for a response. I will continue to ask questions on this and will certainly have more to say in the future.

I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Housing and his office and advisers who have made themselves available. They have been willing to talk to try to give Tracy an avenue for a short-term solution in the face of Entrypoint not picking up the phone for her. Some advisers have reached out and, hopefully, we have got some small relief for Tracy, but the answers to some larger questions are still pending and I will certainly have more to say on this in the future.

PILL-TESTING SERVICE

Statement

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [6.32 pm]: Tonight, I want to talk about pill testing as a safeguard. Recently, there was an article in the newspaper about pill testing not being implemented by this government, including at Bunbury’s Groovin the Moo, which has unfortunately been cancelled. What a shame that is. Today, I spoke about diet pills laced with methamphetamine in the Australian Capital Territory where there is a test centre, and it found out that there was indeed meth in those pills. Those pills were given to a child, by the way. The only solution offered to that was the advice to not buy supplements from the internet, which is not very workable.

It is a shame that our government’s view around this remains rigid and that it does not necessarily view its obligation as providing safeguards and harm-reduction measures beyond simple prohibition and providing limited education. If prohibition were effective, we would not have seen a recent spike in drug overdoses and deaths due to illicit substances. We also would not have seen the massive increase in metabolites in sewage water. It has been well documented that prohibition does not work. We can see this with alcohol consumption, teenage pregnancies and the continued use of illicit substances. One of the reasons that prohibition does not work is that alcohol, sex and drugs are thought to be fun. Members may agree with that, or not, and it is absolutely their right to have that opinion, but it is going to be very hard to legislate against fun.

I am not advocating on behalf of people who use illicit substances, but it is an absolutely realistic point of view that people will use them, especially at music festivals. Apart from the benefits of pill testing to the individual, there are also benefits for the community. If someone suffers a drug overdose or a negative reaction of some sort, that flows over into their family and their community and puts extra pressure on our healthcare system. Young people sometimes do risky things. Their brains do not mature until the age of 25. People can do all sorts of things from the age of 18 onwards, so that is possibly seven years of partying without full critical-thinking abilities, and it is known that they do not always make the best decisions for themselves, or for others for that matter. These people also deserve protection and for the law to work for them too.

It is interesting to note that policing with sniffer dogs shows there has been an increase in risky behaviours when one would think it would be the opposite. A recent survey found that if a festival attendee is aware of a police presence as they come onto the festival property, 30 per cent choose to hide the substance in their body, which poses a risk of something lodging in their body and also the protective covering breaking, which can lead to unregulated absorption and possibly a much higher dose than they had wanted to take. Of the people who are approached by police sniffer dogs, 70 per cent decide to take their whole stash in one go. Once again, that leads to a higher risk of overdosing. Both these behaviours are driven by panic and the fear of being caught by the police. This fear of being caught also leads to people waiting too long to seek help for a suspected overdose. A definite stigma is still associated with that.

There is low-level evidence that pill testing appears to reduce the cutting in of other substances with poor safety profiles. We are looking specifically at fentanyl here, but also some of the newer opioids that are being developed

and finding their way into MDMA or ecstasy in particular, and methamphetamines as well. The problem with those new drugs is that the ambulance people may not know how to deal with them; we do not necessarily have the antidotes for them and a small amount can be much stronger and have a greater negative effect on a person.

In the Netherlands and Portugal where pill testing is seen as a commonsense strategy, it was found that the drug dealers actually sold better quality product after that strategy was implemented, which I thought was interesting—an unexpected side effect. That basically happens because if a person gets something tested and finds out that it is not what their drug dealer told them it was, apparently that is bad for business.

It would be interesting to see whether there is a financial benefit to pill testing and whether that would safeguard our young people further. It is a shame that we need to have financial validation for those sorts of things. This is a harm-reduction intervention, not an intervention to legitimise the use of these substances. I just want people to be safe.

DUNBLANE PRIMARY SCHOOL — SHOOTINGS — ANNIVERSARY

Statement

HON LORNA HARPER (East Metropolitan) [6.38 pm]: I am sure that today many honourable members received the same correspondence that I did from the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance. When I opened the email and read its contents, it brought me back to something that happened 28 years ago today. At about 8.15 am on 13 March 1996, a licensed gun owner aged 43 years was seen scraping ice off his van outside his home at Kent Road in Stirling, Scotland. He left soon afterwards and drove about five miles north to Dunblane. The licensed gun owner arrived on the grounds of Dunblane Primary School at around 9.30 am and parked his van near a telegraph pole in the school car park. He cut the telephone cables at the bottom of the telegraph pole, which served nearby houses, before making his way across the car park towards the school buildings. The licensed gun owner headed towards the north-west side of the school to a door near the toilets and the school gymnasium. After entering, he made his way to the gymnasium, armed with four legally held handguns—two nine-millimetre Browning HP pistols and two Smith & Wesson M19 .357 Magnum revolvers. The licensed gun owner was also carrying 743 ammunition cartridges.

In the gym was a class of 28 primary 1 pupils, preparing for a PE class in the presence of three adult members of staff. Before entering the gymnasium, it is believed that the licensed gun owner fired two shots into the stage of the assembly hall and toward the girls' toilets. The licensed gun owner entered the gym and started shooting rapidly and randomly. He shot PE teacher Eileen Harrild, who was injured in her arms and chest as she attempted to protect herself. She then stumbled into the open-plan store cupboard at the side of the gym, along with several injured children. Gwen Mayor, the teacher of the primary 1 class, was shot and killed instantly. The other adult present, Mary Blake, a supervisory assistant, was shot in the head and both legs but managed to make her way to the store cupboard with several of the children in front of her.

From entering the gymnasium and walking a few steps, the licensed gun owner had fired 29 shots with one of the pistols, killed one child and injured several others. Four injured children had taken shelter in the store cupboard along with the injured Harrild and Blake. The licensed gun owner then moved up the east side of the gym, firing six shots as he walked. He then fired eight shots towards the opposite end of the gym. He walked towards the centre of the gym, firing 16 shots at point-blank range at a group of children who had been incapacitated by fear from his earlier shots.

An older primary 7 pupil who was walking along the outside of the gym at the time heard loud bangs and screams and looked inside. The licensed gun owner shot in his direction and the pupil was injured by flying glass before running away. From his position in the middle of the gym, the licensed gun owner fired 24 shots in various directions. He fired shots towards a window next to the fire exit at the south-east end of the gym, possibly at somebody who was walking across the playground, and then fired four more shots in the same direction after opening the fire exit door. The licensed gun owner exited the gym briefly through the fire exit, firing another four shots towards the cloakroom of the library, striking and injuring Grace Tweddle, another member of staff at the school.

In the mobile classroom closest to the fire exit where the licensed gun owner was standing, Catherine Gordon saw him firing shots and instructed her primary 7 class to get down onto the floor before the licensed gun owner fired nine bullets into the classroom, striking books and equipment. One bullet passed through a chair where a child had been sitting only seconds before. The licensed gun owner then re-entered the gym, dropped the pistol he was using and took out one of his two revolvers. He put the barrel of the gun in his mouth, pointed it upwards, pulled the trigger and killed himself. A total of 32 people sustained gunshot wounds inflicted by the licensed gun owner over a three-to-four-minute period, 16 of whom were fatally wounded, including Gwen Mayor and 15 of her pupils. One other child died en route to hospital.

Who were the victims? Gwen was a 45-year-old Scottish primary school teacher. She was a mother of two daughters and a wife. She lived happily in the very small sleepy town of Dunblane. She taught primary 1 at Dunblane Primary School in 1996 and had 28 pupils in her class. Some of the children who died were Abigail McLellan, aged five; Victoria Clydesdale, aged five; Sophie North, aged five; Ross Irvine, aged five; Mhairi MacBeath, aged five;

Melissa Currie, aged five; Megan Turner, aged five; Kevin Hassell, aged five; John Petrie, aged five; Joanna Ross, aged five; Hannah Scott, aged five; Emma Crozier, aged five; Emily Morten, aged five; David Kerr, aged five; Charlotte Dunn, aged five; and Brett McKinnon, aged six.

If we look back, 28 years later, we know that those 16 children would be in their 30s by now. They could have had their own families. Some of them could have been members of Parliament. In fact, we have members of Parliament here who are younger than the children who were killed would have been. They were all killed by a licensed gun owner who held those guns legally. Every time I am in this place on or near this date, I will stand and make sure that we never forget the names of the children who died. I will never utter the name of the licensed gun holder; however, every time I get an email talking about gun ownership, that will be my response. If saying the words “Megan Turner, aged five” does not shock you to the core and put the hairs up on the back of your neck when we are talking about the licensed gun holder, I do not know what will. We need to make sure that we do better and better protect people. That happened in Scotland and it was followed six weeks later by a gun atrocity here in Australia. What happened in Scotland and what happened here was shocking and abhorrent. We should never forget the victims of gun violence.

PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the House)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [6.46 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.

Many of the provisions relating to greenhouse gas follow the existing petroleum legislative regime. This approach allows for the existing suite of petroleum regulations for each act to be amended to include the greenhouse gas provisions due to the similarity of operations. 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 only for 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 that 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 transfers.

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.

The greenhouse gas storage and transport framework is pivotal in reducing carbon emissions and mitigating the impacts of climate change. These amendments are important for our state's future and will provide the resources and industrial sectors with opportunities to decarbonise. Without robust initiatives, Australia's efforts to combat climate change would be significantly hindered. Therefore, it is imperative to recognise the vital role that greenhouse gas storage and transport plays in our economy and our collective efforts towards a sustainable future.

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

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

[See paper [3009](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

PETROLEUM AND GEOTHERMAL ENERGY SAFETY LEVIES AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Sue Ellery (Leader of the House)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [6.56 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.

Pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is not a uniform legislation bill. It does not ratify or give effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party; nor does this bill, by reason of its subject matter, introduce a uniform scheme or uniform laws throughout the commonwealth.

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

[See paper [3010](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 6.58 pm
