

Mr Bill Johnston; Dr Mike Nahan; Mr Nathan Morton; Mr Chris Tallentire; Mr Murray Cowper; Mr Peter Tinley; Mr Ian Blayney; Ms Simone McGurk; Ms Wendy Duncan; Mr Fran Logan; Mr Mick Murray

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## **PREMIER'S STATEMENT**

### *Amendment to Question*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington)** [2.47 pm]: As I was saying before the interruption, I was expecting the Treasurer to speak and defend himself, but apparently he does not want to do that. I was amused by the Treasurer's attempt at attack during question time. It shows that he never listens. The Treasurer has run around the state for nearly two years, and the Premier for six years, complaining about the cost of demand side management. The point I make is that in that entire period of time, they have been in the government of Western Australia. If they do not like something, they should change it; they should not come in here and complain about something that they have 100 per cent control over. If they do not believe demand side management should be used, they should cancel it. The fact is that for seven years the government has paid an increasing amount each year for demand side management. That was a deliberate decision of the former Minister for Energy and has been a deliberate decision of the current Minister for Energy, who is also the Treasurer. That is the government's decision. If it wants to know why it has paid those moneys out, it should not say that in 2006 a decision was made to do something or another; it should admit the truth and say that it pays that money because it chooses to pay that money. That is nothing at all to do with me as the Labor spokesperson for energy.

I make the point that before and after I went to Boston I had been saying the same thing: demand side management is part of the future. I said at the time of the 2013 election that one of the aims for a sensible electricity system is to make sure that peak demand never goes up again. An essential way of reducing costs in the electricity system is to make sure that on very hot days—only three or four days a year—we do not allow electricity generators to go flat chat because two bad decisions would be made.

Firstly, there are greenhouse gas emissions that are not required. They are not required on that day, because something else can be done; that is, demand can be restrained. Demand side management is part of the contemporary response to the inevitable problems of greenhouse gas emissions that are creating global warming, which the Minister for Water is spending money on television adverts to point out to the community. The Minister for Water's TV ads, which you can see because they are run out regularly at great expense, state that Western Australia has a drying climate. All the evidence in the world shows that one of the big contributors to a drying climate is anthropogenic climate change—in other words, greenhouse gas emissions. Restraining peak demand for electricity is going to help fight greenhouse gas emissions.

Secondly, the government has allowed the amount of excess capacity in the electricity system to increase for five out of the seven years it has been in government. It was a decision of the government. One of the reasons for that is that in 2009 the Premier announced that he was going to refurbish a power plant. He spent \$330 million on that. We forget that at the same media conference the Premier also announced the replacement of a gas-fired power station in Cockburn. So there are actually two power stations. The other power station that never gets any publicity went over budget by \$50 million as well. The government spent \$800 million replacing power stations that added 500 megawatts to the system in Western Australia. The government then paid private sector operators to produce another 500 megawatts on top of that, which makes 1 000 megawatts of additional power. Then the government paid \$400 million for demand side management and never asked for the demand side management people to be activated. That is stupid and has led to higher costs in the electricity system. It is one of the clearest examples of bad financial management. If we had a minister with a brain, they would have said, "Call on the demand side management; don't call on the peaking power stations," for those three or four days a year when there is peak demand. What would the effect of doing that have been? First, we would not have been burning gas in those peaking plants that are very, very inefficient. They are effectively a jet engine inside a tin shed. The peaking power stations would not have been turned on, which are, as everyone in the industry understands, a thermal efficiency. In other words, they need a lot of energy to produce a small amount of power. People in the industry have all their fancy terms, but that is the fact. Switching on the gas peaking plants would have been avoided, and we would not have had to pay for the gas going into those plants, we would not have been creating the greenhouse gas emissions that come out the back of those plants and we could have restrained that peak demand.

Another problem with peak demand, which, again, is one of the bad things about this government's financial management, is that peak demand drives infrastructure investment in Western Power. It is well known; anybody who looks at this industry has heard the term "gold plating". Gold plating is the process of fixed infrastructure being given extra investment just to meet those three or four days in February. The infrastructure is there, but it is not needed for the rest of the year. That is another bad decision of this government. This government does not understand that there is actually a new environment for electricity. The energy market reform was copied from

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the Labor Party's promise at the 2013 election. Not one word about the energy market review was talked about by the Liberal Party in the 2013 election. In fact, it went further; it said at the 2013 election that we do not need a market review, because it had done the strategic energy initiative, which it had spent three years putting together at great expense. Again, that is bad economic management. But nobody ever talks about the strategic energy initiative, because it was a joke. At the time of the election, I made the point that to get the strategic energy initiative, we need a short, sharp energy market review. The minister came in and agreed with me. Unfortunately, the terms of reference for that inquiry missed the point. The point about managing the electricity system in a cost-effective way is to meet the challenges of the future, not set ourselves up for the past.

I keep saying that this minister—it is probably not his fault; it is probably the Premier's fault—is very soon going to have the electricity system ready for 1996. Unfortunately, we are in 2016. The future of the energy system, again using industry terms, is about decarbonisation. That is the biggest issue. In 2015, two big decisions were made in Australia about electricity supply. The first was the federal Liberal government's decision to continue with the renewable energy target and the second was to take a 26 to 28 per cent carbon target to the Paris conference. They are the two biggest issues. When I talk to business, as I do every day, as the minister knows, they are the two issues that dominate discussions. Renewable energy is a consequence of those two decisions. I asked the minister and the Premier, as Minister for State Development, what discussions they had with federal ministers about each of those decisions and what briefings they had received from the agencies. Madam Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman), do you know what their answer to that questions was? It was none. They did not speak to their federal ministers and they did not get briefings from the agencies. That is called dereliction of duty. That is part of that example.

I went back and had a look at the 2009 Premier's Statement. The Premier said —

... Oakajee is, in my view, the single most important project for Western Australia's economic development for the next 50 years.

The Premier reckoned it was the most important economic issue for 50 years, but what has he done about it? He has given up. He said on the day —

Oakajee will provide Western Australia with a more sophisticated future with a wider range of industry and employment.

He said it was not just about iron ore. He really should reverse his comments from 2009 with those from 2015. In 2009, talking about Western Australia's economy being dependent on resources, he said —

As a result, however, our economy is highly dependent on commodity prices, which have declined over the past two years.

The Premier went on —

It is the responsibility of this government to ensure that the state's finances are not put at risk as a result of declining revenues and to continue to provide for economic growth.

What happened between 2009 and 2015? The Premier forgot his own words. When I was newly elected, I once heard the Premier say that he never read his own words. Well, I can see that that is true.

There are a couple of things that I cannot believe about the debate before question time. I cannot believe that the Liberal Party thinks that we will not build Metronet, and I cannot believe that the Liberal Party will not build Metronet. An integrated transport plan tied to planning is required for the future of Perth. We will not have a future in Perth without a properly integrated plan. The Minister for Transport made some inane interjections, as he usually does, and we asked him to table his plan. But he cannot do that, because after seven and a half years in government there is not a single word of a plan. The Premier wanted to taunt the Leader of the Opposition about stupid articles on WAtoday about leadership issues. We have a great leader in Mark McGowan, but, you know what else, we have a talented team. We have many people who could lead the Labor Party.

**Dr M.D. Nahan:** You?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, not me. I am not one of those.

On the other side of the chamber, they do not have a single person capable of replacing the Premier, and the Liberal Party knows that. Sure, we have lots of people with talent on this side, and that is why that side of the chamber reflects so badly. There is no doubt that the Premier is not under any pressure to perform; there is no competition for his job. He does not have to worry whether he does a good job or a bad job, which is probably why he has gone to sleep for the last three years. It is probably why he has not made a single decision that will affect the future of Western Australia.

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I was amused by the Australian Associated Press reports about when the Premier went to Jakarta last year. I must say, I love reading the reports in Indonesian on the ABC website, in which two backbench members of Parliament claimed credit for the Premier going to Jakarta, and completely undermined—in Indonesian—the Premier’s visit. However, I love the Associated Press report, which had to be corrected, and states —

(Corrects comment in 13th paragraph to “had not become lazy”, rather than “became lazy”)

The report was initially put up on the web by Associated Press, stating that the Premier had commented that Western Australia had become lazy during the boom. I do not know which report was true. I would love to have heard the tape of that conversation. What was actually said on the tape? I accept the correction made to the AP report, and it now states that the Premier said Western Australia did not become lazy, but I would love to hear that tape, because that would clear everything up by what was actually said by the Premier at that conference. Of course, the Premier was only interviewed twice up there: once by AP and once by the ABC. As other members on this side of the chamber came with me in 2014 up to Indonesia know, there are 80 different media organisations in Indonesia and the Premier gets interviewed twice: “Protect me!” He is the most unpopular Premier of the state, in any state in Australia since 1986.

I make the point to all my backbench colleagues on the other side of the chamber who are always amused that, on election day, the Labor Party will be putting up posters of the Premier. Will they? In 2005, I had to rush to the printer on the Wednesday before the election because I realised the Liberal Party was not going to put up posters of the Premier—the member for Cottesloe as he then was. I had to rush in and get a special run of posters to ensure that the Premier’s photo was in all the booths, because the one thing we know is when you are unpopular, you are unpopular. As I said in this place last year, the Liberal Party has a choice, and has about two months to make that choice, which is to dump the current Premier, because he is the most unpopular Premier in the state’s history and in any state of Australia’s history. The problem is exactly as the party identified for itself: unlike the Labor Party, which has many people capable of being leader, the Liberal Party has none.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** Can you name any?

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Mark McGowan, the member for Rockingham, is an outstanding leader. We are lucky that we have many other people who are very talented as well. Isn’t it good that we have so many and the Liberal Party have none?

I will just make a couple of points.

Several members interjected.

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

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** In 2015, it was the first time the Premier talked about broadening the economy in his Premier’s Statement. I have them all here if people want to look at them. That was too late. The financial management of this state required the Premier to spend the money on broadening the economy when we had the revenue.

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

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** No, you didn’t! What a joke.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** The Perth City Link!

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** Perth City Link has not even finished yet, Premier.

**Mr C.J. Barnett:** The stadium.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** The stadium hasn’t finished yet. Let us get it straight: you had a choice.

I also love the mention of fiscal discipline in the 2011 Premier’s Statement that states —

“Nevertheless, it is important that the fiscal discipline that has characterised the Liberal ... Government continues.”

The silly member for Churchlands is interjecting about wages growth. During the 2008 election, ads attacking the Labor Party were paid for by the Civil Service Association of WA, because we would not give in to it on wages. The Liberal Party gave in to the teachers union with \$300 million extra. The Liberal Party said to the teachers union in the election campaign in 2008: “Whatever the Labor Party agrees, we will give you \$300 million more.” And the silly member for Churchlands lectures me on this side of the chamber about wages policy. For crying out loud: “The wages policy of the Liberal government at the 2011 campaign is whatever Labor gives you plus \$300 million.” That is the government’s fiscal discipline. The member for Churchlands

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comes in here with these silly comments. No wonder we do not take the member for Churchlands seriously. How could we?

**Mr F.M. Logan:** He is lazy, he doesn't do any research.

**Mr W.J. JOHNSTON:** He doesn't.

He reads in a letter, not understanding what it says. The \$2 billion for the airport rail line was part of our proposals. When he talked about all those figures, he was out by \$4 billion because he was double counting the rail line to the airport. We were trying to help him with that and he did not understand it. We asked him, with the Minister for Transport sitting right in front of him, to just lean over and ask the Minister for Transport how much the Morley rail tunnel will cost. He would not do it. The member for Churchlands always comes in here and talks about us bulldozing houses. That is for the Metro Area Express project. That was the government's project that required the houses to be bulldozed, not Metronet. You have to actually understand the documents that you read, otherwise there is no point bringing them in here. It might sound good and make you feel better, but you have actually got to get to it and the fundamental issue is that the government took a \$3 billion surplus and turned it into a \$3 billion deficit and nobody else did it but the government. I make the point that revenues in 2008–09 were \$19 435 million. Revenues for the mid-year review in 2015–16 were \$25 617 million. That is \$6 billion extra.

**DR M.D. NAHAN (Riverton — Treasurer)** [3.06 pm]: I would just like to comment on some of the things that were said; firstly, GST and the reforms. There is a little trick that the Labor Party likes to say and put over. The real issue is that in order to address the poor distribution of GST receipts around the states, we have to understand the problem. I think the Leader of the Opposition understands; he just repeatedly refuses to recognise this. The issue is not the source of revenue—GST; it is how it is distributed. The way it was distributed did not change when the GST came in. That policy had evolved for many decades before, administered by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, and it did not change. I was very active in the GST debate and we argued very, very strongly for it, but this is the essential problem: we need unanimity amongst the states.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Treasurer, just on that —

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** That was the time to change it, don't you agree?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Here is the debate. Firstly, the Howard government came up with the change. It was wide-ranging and it was going to give the GST to the states as a growth tax; it has been argued for many decades. Secondly, we had to get rid of a whole range of state taxes and Howard also gave a guarantee, which he ensured, that for the five years the pool of GST payments would grow at least higher than the revenue lost and no other state was worse off. That was guaranteed and achieved. We argued—I argued; I was in all those meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and was pushing for this—for moving out of fiscal equalisation. If we had put that as a requirement under the deal, the deal would have been off. South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and then also, before that change, the Australian Capital Territory was not included in the distribution process, but it is now.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** While we are having this conversation —

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Yes, go ahead.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** If at that point, when the GST was a theoretical compensation and you couldn't get change to the distribution there, do you see how much harder it is now when you talk about real money?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Let me go through it.

Before that, Western Australia was generally a beneficiary: a few times it dropped below, and then soon after, we went above it; we got over 100 per cent. Eric Ripper, a fine Treasurer, got together with New South Wales and Victoria and hired Ross Garnaut and somebody else to do a study and argue the case against fiscal equalisation and move to per capita. I participated in that. It faded because for a period Western Australia's share went below 100 per cent, and they were not going to get anywhere with it. It was a good study by the way. I am thinking of the other guy who was in charge of it. For most of the seven years, Western Australia got 100 per cent to 95 per cent of its share. Before that, no state ever went below 94 per cent, at least since the 1950s and 1960s, when it was totally different. We got hit with a supercycle. The system is basically to take the GST payment, or whatever the commonwealth gives for general purpose grants, and distribute it to the states so that everyone stays put. It cannot cope with a massive increase of one state getting a new source of revenue—iron ore, in our case—and being unique. All of a sudden Western Australia was experiencing huge demands for

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expenditure due to a 30 per cent increase in population and demand for \$75 billion in capital works. We were running out of people, running out of teachers, and the system could not cope with that. Another side effect was that the Commonwealth Grants Commission compares state with state. A state could have a unique circumstance. Take Onslow—a little village of 600 people with a \$35 billion plant offshore. It transformed the place. Most of the capital we put in there is not included in the grants commission assessment. Other states do not have that circumstance, so it is excluded. The problem is real, but it is not the GST; it is the system by which it is distributed.

We have to achieve unanimity, and we have to come up with some reform. I have spent huge amounts of time with the very fine Treasurers of South Australia and Tasmania, and they will not give anything up, because without Western Australia contributing \$4.4 billion to them this year, they would be in deficit and they would have chronic problems. We are keeping them afloat. The real problem we have is that South Australia and Tasmania became addicted to the largesse from Western Australia during the boom time, and they have a system under which the money continues to flow even though the largesse has dried up. It is a system that needs changing. However, in order to fix it, we have to know the problem. It is not the source of revenue—GST—it is the way it is distributed. We were criticised for having many goes at this. We were not having many goes; we were sitting, trying to negotiate a better way out of this historical problem. The real issue is: what has the opposition done? Most of the time it said we could not do it and we would not do it, and finally, when we got the \$499 million, it brought over Bill Shorten on the Thursday before it was announced and he offered \$175 million. In other words, he is showing no leadership, so members opposite should not claim that he is. We are trying to get this issue across, and we are working on it like nothing else. The Abbott–Turnbull government is the only government or alternative government at a federal level, going back to Howard and including Shorten, that admits there is a problem and says that it has to do something about it. That is a big achievement. Can we convince the other states to change it? I do not think so.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** That has always been the case. It does not matter who the Treasurer is; that is the fundamental problem.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There are ways around that. Until some recent changes in Victoria and Queensland, four states—New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia—all agreed to go to a per capita basis. That has gone now. I do not understand Victoria’s position, and Queensland is focusing on its navel and doing other things. I must admit that I have come up with a deal. We have a unique payment for the North West Shelf. It goes back into history, but it is diminishing in value because oil prices are going down and the level of production is declining. I have gone to the commonwealth and suggested excising that from the grants commission process—the commonwealth gets 33 per cent and the state gets 66 per cent, as it is currently shared—and that would have a significant benefit over the forward estimates, in the vicinity of \$4 billion. I am going to talk to Scott Morrison about that tomorrow.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** To the detriment of?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Mostly New South Wales and Victoria, because that is the system.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** It is always the way. A gain of a dollar somewhere is a loss of a dollar somewhere else.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Exactly, and it also perversely does not impact the largest beneficiaries. The largest beneficiary by far is the Northern Territory. I have an idea, and the opposition should help me on it, not whinge and whine.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** We are not whingeing and whining; we are just pointing out that there have been a range of responses.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** In order to effect a change, there needs to be leadership at the commonwealth level, and it is going to have to take some pain on this. There will always be winners and losers. We have to convince somebody at the commonwealth level—Scott Morrison—to take leadership on this, and it requires a great deal of effort and some ideas. We came up last year with the idea of changing the mechanism by which they lag revenue. We got Joe Hockey to write to the Grants Commission to ask it to do this, and the commission said it did not want to and, unfortunately, Joe did not do anything, so he gave us \$499 million instead, and I will take that.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** That was to make up for the \$500 million they cut.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, the commonwealth did not cut anything. It does not cut; the system reduced it.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Did the member for Victoria Park say anything? I might add that Shorten is committed to doing nothing. He has repeatedly said that he will do nothing on this.

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**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** He is in opposition.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** He is making promises that when he gets into government he will do nothing.

I turn now to the GST share issue. The mechanism works, but we have actually had two major changes to it, and each of those major changes has downgraded our share. The commonwealth changed the way it considered mineral revenue and made a range of other changes.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** You accepted that; you agreed to it.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Even if we walked away from the table, it would happen.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** But Treasury considered the agreement that the grants commission had put together.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is because on minerals we benefited a bit, but with other offsetting changes we lost overall. Overall, we were downgraded. The point I am making here is that the member says that the share was always predictable, but it was not. The system has changed, and we have had downgrades. Also, in the midyear review, we again downgraded our share level, and at the next budget, unless something changes, we will reduce our share level again because of recent changes in data and, more importantly, the methodology of the grants commission. We know the general trends, but in the midyear review, we downgraded this year's, next year's and the following year's share for a variety of reasons. We have had declining shares. The general trend has been predictable but the direction has been worse in any case. The key point is that the reason we have such a small share is that we are getting iron ore revenue and other revenue, but that is evaporating, and the share has continued to go down. There was also the impact of the largest super cycle in this nation's history and its large demand for expenditure, and it is gone. It is a flawed system. When there is a shock like that and the system is not made for it, the system should be adjusted, and the grants commission has failed Western Australia.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Are you still arguing for contemporaneous assessments or has that gone now?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Last year, that is what we asked for.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** What are you looking for this year?

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I am working on the North West Shelf excision.

Let us talk about expenditure. I left the Institute for Public Affairs in 2005, and I was a columnist for *The West Australian*. I watched the growth in revenue in Western Australia at that time, when it was getting near 100 per cent of its GST. I think transfer duty peaked in 2007 at \$2.5 billion. The previous government was rolling in money.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** We were not rolling in money. It was not the Labor Party; it was the state of Western Australia.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The government saved most of it. It did not spend too much in capital, but there was some there. However, one of the legacies—this is the key issue going forward—is expenditure on salaries. When we came into office, salary growth was running at 12.2 per cent. There were increases in both the number of workers and salaries. In each of our years, it generally did not grow that rapidly, but it grew quite significantly. Why?

It was because when we came into office in 2008, we also did not have teachers in front of classrooms. We had to go to England to get policemen. We opened a recruitment office for the Department of Health in London to hire doctors and nurses—everybody. We scoured the world for public servants because a lot of public servants not only were leaving to go to the north, but were otherwise going elsewhere. Just like McDonald's, Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton—just like every business in Western Australia—we had to increase our wage rates to meet the market. In fact, we had to pay higher wages than those in Victoria, otherwise we would not have had any people—we would not! You guys in opposition might have liked that as opposition members, but as local members representing your constituents, you would have been very angry.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** That wasn't the reason you're in government.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is what we had to do! The McDonald's in my electorate told me that it was paying the highest wages at that time in the world. We also had to increase our staffing levels. Why? Over that period, there was a 30 per cent increase in population—just like you guys were doing. That 12.2 per cent increase in salaries was, to a large extent, to address the same things that we subsequently had to address: getting frontline people into the government sector and into the front line. That is what we had to do. That is the reality and that is the issue that we have to deal with going forward.

Several members interjected.

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

**Extract from Hansard**

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**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** That is what we had to do, and that is the legacy. We have also put in efficiency measures, one after another, across the board. We have tried a range of things, including changes to wages policies, agency efficiency reviews and leverage efficiency reviews—back to zero-based budgeting. Do you know what? Members opposite fought every one of the changes; they argued against all of them. We have implemented an aggregate, admittedly from the forward estimates, of \$25 billion worth of savings. Expenditure growth is at record lows. Members opposite whinged about every one of the measures that we put in, including postponing the Metro Area Express.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** When, as a state, we experienced the largest revenue shock in the nation's history —

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You knew the state of the books before the election.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** I will go back to that. We have experienced the largest reduction in revenue that any government has ever experienced since the Great Depression. What did we do? We adjusted expenditures, including capital.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** You adjusted before that happened; that was your problem. You cut the fully funded promise before you actually lost the revenue.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** No, we did not. We adjusted, and members opposite whinged about every expenditure and everything, so their credibility is on the line and no-one will believe them. The key thing is that I heard the member for Victoria Park say the other day that I should have known that iron ore prices were quickly going down to \$50.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** He knew!

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** He knew only after the fact. The real issue is the member for Churchlands' point: right up to an election, the government of the day and the opposition are on an equal footing. We get the pre-election financial review. It is not the government's statement; it is Treasury's statement. There was a forecast and a warning that iron ore prices are highly volatile and highly depended upon. What did members opposite do? They went out and incurred massive increases in expenditure, just as we did—we did too.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The point is that members opposite are saying that they would not be in the same position that we are in. When it came to measuring what they would really do, members opposite went into the campaign promising to spend more. Did they say anything about iron ore prices at that time? No!

**Mr B.S. Wyatt** interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** After members opposite put together their campaign for 2013, having been given that information from Treasury that they criticised us for, what did they do?

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** There was massive expenditure.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** We announced savings —

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Savings were fake! Treasury said that they were all fake!

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Fake! Your largest saving was getting rid of Roe 8 and it was not even in the market.

Several members interjected.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Fake! The truth is in what the member did, not what he said. He increased expenditure more than we did.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Treasurer, you are asking for this response, but it is going to get really hard for Hansard. Just focus on your speech. Thank you, Treasurer.

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** Okay. I will go on to demand side management. I have made some comments about it. Demand side management is a very good program. It is too expensive as it is now. The member for Cannington tried to weasel out of his backflip about his new-found friends in Boston.

Several members interjected.

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**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** The reality is that members cannot say “carbon” if they do nothing.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, I know that me standing up has no impact, but think of the Hansard reporters who are trying to take notes. Think of the workers in the room. Thank you very much.

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

**Dr M.D. NAHAN:** We will talk more about demand side management. The member for Cannington has been caught out criticising demand side management and going to see his buddies in Boston. He is clearly on their side because he does not care about the cost of electricity; he just cares about getting ahead in politics. That is a measure of the man.

*Division*

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms J.M. Freeman) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (18)

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

Noes (34)

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

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Pairs

Mr M.P. Murray	Mr A.J. Simpson
Mr P.B. Watson	Mr J.E. McGrath
Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr R.F. Johnson

Amendment thus negated.

*Consideration Resumed*

**MR N.W. MORTON (Forrestfield)** [3.31 pm]: I rise to make my response to the Premier’s Statement this afternoon. This is the Leader of the Opposition’s chance in his reply to the Premier’s Statement, in the year leading up to an election, to show what a statesman he is and how he presents himself as an alternative Premier to the people of Western Australia, but what does he do? He calls the Liberal Deputy Premier a dog. What a misogynist. He shows his leadership to the people of Western Australia by calling the female Liberal Deputy Premier a dog. It is disgraceful.

**Mrs M.H. Roberts:** You’re the only one to do that.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** It was disgraceful. If I had to choose a role model for my children between Liza Harvey and Mark McGowan, I know in a heartbeat whom I would choose. It was disgraceful.

What have we learnt over the last three years? I have learnt that WA Labor does not care about WA. Its members will probably start squealing and saying that I am talking rubbish, but I will articulate my views over the next 20 minutes or so. WA Labor will not stand up for a greater share of the GST. We heard the Leader of the Opposition beat his chest this afternoon in his reply to the Premier’s Statement here in the chamber and say how he will stand up for WA and the GST. Words are one thing but actions speak louder than words. In my time in this place, all I have seen is that every time the Premier, standing up for WA, tries to get a better GST deal for WA at the Council of Australian Governments meetings, in the media, all the Leader of the Opposition does is criticise the Premier. This is another chance for the Leader of the Opposition to show that he can be a statesman. He could have said, “On this issue, I stand shoulder to shoulder with the Premier; we want to see a better deal and I support the Premier in his approaches to the federal government to get a better deal for WA”, but what



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does he do? He takes the easy line, the path of least resistance, and that is to criticise the man. Then he says that the Premier has not got any better outcomes for Western Australia. I do not know where the Leader of the Opposition was last year, but I am pretty sure that the Premier came back with about \$500 million extra. I would call that a fairly good outcome. Yes, we all admit that the GST system is broken, but at least the Premier had the intestinal fortitude to go to Canberra and get a better deal for WA.

When we have had unprecedented population growth, WA Labor has always criticised us for spending money. Let us look at where that money goes. The Leader of the Opposition stood here today and asked: where does the money go; what do they spend it on? Let us have a look. We have built 41 new schools and rebuilt 12; opened 37 Aboriginal kindergartens, built 21 child and parent centres across this state—and he asks where the money has gone. We have built new hospitals. This Liberal–National government has invested in schools in Fremantle. We are refurbishing schools in Armadale, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie, areas that Labor has completely neglected. This government has gone about making sure that the children who live in those areas have access to quality educational facilities. But the Leader of the Opposition still wonders where the money has gone. I pose questions to him: Which classroom does he suggest that we not build? Which child does he want to see not in a classroom? When it comes to hospitals, we have spent \$7.2 billion rebuilding the health system. Which hospital bed does the Leader of the Opposition suggest that we remove and which sick person does he want to see us not care for? I would love to see his answers to those questions.

Where do we spend the money? I have covered schools and hospitals. The power network has increased. That is what happens in a population boom—more people live in more houses in more suburbs, which we need to service. Obviously, the power network must grow and roads such as Gateway are built. I am yet to hear criticism from people in my area about the Gateway project. People love it. Public transport is also increased. That is where the greater majority of our spending has gone. While I have been in this place, WA Labor has spent the last three years banging on about how much they hate Elizabeth Quay, the Perth Stadium and the Forrestfield–Airport Link. Its members have criticised Fiona Stanley Hospital day in and day out. They have had a go at us about the Perth Children’s Hospital and the Midland Public Hospital. I was there for the opening of the Midland Public Hospital and I can say quite safely that there was competition to get on stage to have photos taken because of the line-up of Labor members wanting pretty pictures to put in their newsletters and, no doubt, on social media.

Of course, they have contempt for the WA police, and that has been playing out in the media of recent months. It is amazing, because I have spent a little bit of time doing some research over the summer break and I came across some comments. I will try to read it without laughing because it is an interesting comment. It is in *Hansard* of March 2009; the member for West Swan stated —

... the government is cutting infrastructure projects and putting great uncertainty around other projects. The government has already announced that it will not go ahead with iconic projects that would really transform the state.

Okay! She continues —

The new major stadium would have given Western Australia a world-class venue for generations to come. We could have been actively involved in the FIFA World Cup soccer bid; we could have been actively involved in trying to attract international Twenty20 cricket matches. Along with these big-name projects, a range of other projects ought to be happening in this state, but are now under threat—projects such as the Midland health campus, road projects around the suburbs —

I assume she is referring to something like Gateway or Berkshire. She continues —

and upgrades to essential infrastructure such as bus stations.

Perhaps she is referring to the underground one, which will open imminently. She continues —

At a time when the government should be creating confidence in the community by having an infrastructure agenda, it is actually creating uncertainty.

My God. If she were in the chamber now, I would love to see how red her face would go. That is exactly what this government has done and the member for West Swan, along with her colleagues, has spent the last three years criticising the government for doing exactly that. Does she want to have her cake and eat it? I do not know. She cannot sit on the fence.

WA Labor has no credibility on law and order. Labor members sit in this place and try to criticise the Minister for Police and the government and they carry on, but, as I detailed last year, when the doors are shut and they think no-one is looking, their true colours come to the fore, as I exposed last year with this freedom of information response that I received about Labor’s cabinet document relating to the release of prisoners. I will

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only quickly go through this. Basically, Labor wanted to extend the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy by releasing prisoners to freedom. It wanted to broaden the interpretation of the term “minimum risk” for people on community-based service orders: did they really break their conditions? It wanted to specifically target offenders who would receive a sentence of imprisonment of less than two years. I would have thought that is a fairly significant sentence behind bars. Labor wanted those offenders to be dealt with in the community, not behind bars. When we look at what this proposal would have done, we can see that, based on the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, 2 640 offenders would have been released onto our streets for crimes such as homicide, sexual assault, robbery, extortion and unlawful entry—people you would take home to meet your mum! That is Labor’s tough stance on law and order. It is very tough indeed. I am sure that everyone would feel safe with Labor at the helm, running our law and order agenda!

I have an article from *The Esperance Express*. The shadow Minister for Police stands in this place and criticises the Minister for Police and says that she is doing a terrible job. The article is headed “Thin blue line remains stretched” and states —

THE State Government’s pledge —

That is the former state Labor government —

to put additional numbers of police on our streets has been hit hard by the departure of 292 Western Australian police officers ...

It then goes on to detail how poorly it performed —

“In November last year Michelle Roberts conceded during Question Time that Labor faced a tough task fulfilling its election promise.

This is a quote from her —

“It is obvious that not enough has been done to recruit and retain police officers under this Labor government.”

I rest my case there. WA Labor really has no credibility on law and order—none at all.

I want to make another point about law and order. Members opposite talk about methamphetamine and the epidemic in the community.

**Mr G.M. Castrilli** interjected.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** Yes, apparently it is our fault. Yet this party wants to legalise cannabis. I spent 10 years in high schools teaching kids the harmful effects of those sorts of substances, and blind Freddy knows that cannabis is a gateway drug to harder drugs. I suspect that methamphetamine is a harder drug, so I do not think that policy supports the eradication of methamphetamine in our community.

Furthermore, WA Labor cares only about the unions and WA Labor. It does not care about ordinary Western Australians. It cares only about itself and it will stop at nothing to look after itself. How do I know that? I know that because I have it right here in black and white. I am about to read into *Hansard* some FOI material that I received last year. It relates to the WA Labor Party in government wanting the Western Australian taxpayer to pay union delegates to do political campaigning for the party. Some people would call that corrupt perhaps; I do not know. The cabinet document relates to state industrial relations systems. Recommendation 4, “Time Off For Public Sector Union Delegates”, states —

Approval is sought for public sector union delegates to be provided reasonable paid time off from work, to attend a union meeting to discuss the proposed federal industrial relations agenda.

Unions will play a critical role in raising public awareness about the proposed federal laws. The role of unions themselves, particularly State-based unions, is under attack by the Federal Government and this attack could have serious implications for the Labor Party.

Public sector awards and agreements generally provide union delegates with paid time off to attend “union business”. However, the scope of such provisions is usually confined to time off for activities such as training, organising, recruiting and attending negotiations. Such provisions would not arguably encompass time off for broader purposes, such as strategising or developing union campaigns. Some public sector awards and agreements specifically state that delegates “shall not be entitled to paid leave to attend union business” other than as prescribed by the award or agreement.

The proposal to provide public sector union delegates with paid time off to discuss the ... Government proposals recognises the legitimate role of unions, as well as the Western Australian Government’s role as a “best practice” employer. While detractors may perceive such paid time off to be politically-motivated, and therefore inappropriate, the issue transcends politics. It goes to the heart of unions’ role

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in Australian workplaces, as well as the Western Australian Government's rights and obligations as an employer.

To avoid doubt about what constitutes "reasonable" time off from work, it is proposed that union delegates be able to take up to three hours' paid leave to attend a union meeting. Nothing would prevent an employer and a delegate agreeing on additional unpaid leave.

The proposal to allow delegates reasonable paid time off may have a financial impact on public sector employers. Some employers will incur a direct cost by arranging a replacement for the delegate (eg. particularly for nurses and teachers). Other employers will incur an indirect cost vis-a-vis the delegate's absence from the workplace (ie. lost productivity).

That is damning. Basically, WA Labor is saying that union delegates can do some campaigning for the WA Labor Party and the Western Australian taxpayer will cop the hit. I did a few rough calculations from my days as a deputy principal. This would have serious financial implications for the education system alone. I am not taking into account nurses at hospitals, fireys or police. There are 799 public schools in Western Australia. The idea of three hours of paid leave is half a day roughly in school terms. A deputy principal would be paying for someone to be out of the classroom for half a day and they would also have to pay for someone to be in the classroom for half a day, so essentially it is a full day. When I was doing it, it was about 500 bucks a day for a teacher. With 799 public schools, that would be about 400 grand—thank you very much—to the unions to campaign for the WA Labor Party. There is a total of 1 100 schools in WA, which would take the cost up to \$550 000—and that is only for the education system. If this was the WA Labor Party's approach to governance, no wonder minister after minister after minister in the previous Labor government was paraded before the Corruption and Crime Commission. No wonder minister after minister after minister was sacked from cabinet. But who else was at the table when this was discussed? The Leader of the Opposition was there. The shadow police minister, the member for Midland, was there. The member for Girrawheen was there.

A member interjected.

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** I think you have to be in your seat, champ!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Bassendean, you have to be in your seat.

*Point of Order*

**Mr J.M. FRANCIS:** I would say that the member for Bassendean has been here long enough to know not to interject when he is not in his seat.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms J.M. Freeman):** I have just told him. Thank you, minister.

*Debate Resumed*

**Mr N.W. MORTON:** Just to recap, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Midland, the member for Girrawheen and the member for Cockburn were at the table, yet the Leader of the Opposition stood in this place today and said, "I want to see an honest government. The Labor Party will deliver an honest government." Half of the Labor Party was there defrauding the state and the Western Australian taxpayer, yet he reckons that the WA Labor Party will deliver an honest government. I do not think so. It has its fingerprints all over this. WA Labor cannot be trusted to govern this state, because it does not actually care about it. While it continues to hate what we do and how we progress the state, we will get on and continue to deliver for the people of Western Australia.

We are delivering across this state with some of the projects I have talked about so far, but nowhere is it more evident than in my electorate of Forrestfield. We have seen upgrades at Maida Vale Primary School, Darling Range Sports College, East Kenwick Primary School and Forrestfield Primary School, and now, because we saw the need, Woodlupine Primary School is also getting an administration upgrade. We have seen train station upgrades at Maddington and Kenwick. We have seen road upgrades, with the Gateway WA project, which I mentioned before, and the important interchange at Roe Highway and Berkshire Road. I had the pleasure of joining the minister and Ken Wyatt, the federal member for Hasluck, at that interchange the other day. It is a \$45 million project. It was a black spot. On average, there was an accident there every 10 days, but that hazard has been eradicated. That is a fantastic outcome for the local community.

A new noise wall has been installed along Roe Highway at High Wycombe. The 40-kilometre-an-hour flashing speed signs continue to be rolled out at Dawson Park, Woodlupine and Wattle Grove Primary Schools, and I think a couple more were announced in a recent round.

Let us not forget the Forrestfield–Airport Link, which is a transformational project for my community. It will deliver a 20-minute commute to the city. It will have a major bus interchange and a rail connection to the airport that will service the airport from the city and from my community. It will also service the member for Belmont's

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community. Importantly, the station will provide 2 000 to 2 500 car parks, as well as a major bus interchange and the ensuing development that will happen around it.

In conclusion, this government will continue to deliver for WA, it will continue to deliver for Perth and it will continue to deliver for the electorate of Forrestfield.

**MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Gosnells)** [3.51 pm]: I rise to speak to the Premier's Statement. It is disappointing when one has to follow a member who resorts to those sorts of stereotypical attacks. I am still wondering why the member for Forrestfield needs to seek documents through freedom of information. He is a government member; surely he can access these documents. No doubt he will be happy to table them if there is any substance to them. But such is the way of things.

People in my electorate talk to me about many and varied issues, but there is a recurrent theme: namely, the wealth of the state not being satisfactorily distributed. There is a problem with the priority setting of the government of the day. The electorate might not have the figures on the tip of their tongue but they are well aware that Western Australia has record state debt. The deficit is enormous. In 2014–15, Western Australia's state debt was 102 per cent relative to revenue. People can sense that that is a dramatic increase on the 2007–08 financial year, when Western Australia had a fairly moderate 44 per cent deficit relative to state revenue. People are aware of the government's spending problem. They feel that their priorities—the things they are interested in, like expenditure on public transport and upgrades to schools in my electorate—are being pushed back or forgotten.

I will refer to some comments I have received lately from people in my electorate. I have been talking to people in the Maddington area who currently live in the member for Kalamunda's electorate. I spoke with Mr Ireland in the past few weeks. He said, according to my notes —

“Even if you've got a car, you need public transport. If I need to get into Perth, I use the train.  
Dean Nalder —

If members will pardon the expression —

... if I could get his testicles in a gripper, I'd rip 'em off. You don't have to be Einstein to know Barnett's gone. — he thinks he's here to tell the people what to do. Fiona Stanley Hospital — I go there for treatment — it's an empty building full of people who don't know what to do. At night I look over to the shopping centre and see drug dealing and prostitution and there's never a Police Officer to be seen.

People like Mr Ireland are not living pleasant experiences. They recognise that there are many positives, but those are the issues that people in my electorate want improved.

There are issues when it comes to fairly basic things such as improved street lighting. Mr Girsang of Forest Lakes recently thanked me for getting his street lights fixed. He had an issue with a street light that had been off since he reported it to Western Power in February 2015. My electorate office was able to get the matter fixed. It took my electorate office four months' chasing to get that matter sorted out and a string of other cases as well. There are many people with problems. They do not feel that the government is giving their interests priority. They are of course aware of things like \$440 million of expenditure for Elizabeth Quay and the \$1 billion-plus on Perth Stadium. Perhaps occasionally people like Mr Ireland will be able to go to Elizabeth Quay and enjoy some event there. When they look at it, they wonder whether that \$440 million was money well spent. Only time will tell.

I note in passing that the Minister for Lands foreshadowed some improvements to the Strata Titles Act. He has talked about some strata title reforms, but he has been promising those for a while. I am concerned that with the passing of the parliamentary year—we are only at the beginning of it at the moment—perhaps other things will get in the way of his ambitions to improve the Strata Titles Act. It is something I am very interested in. I am disappointed already to see that in his statement yesterday he spoke about only establishing professional standards for strata managers and not requiring the compulsory registration of strata managers; something that strata managers, the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia and many other professional bodies are calling out for. They want us to explore and expand on the possibility of people living in strata titles, but they want to have good quality strata management. That takes a strata manager registration board. It cannot just be left to something like the establishment of professional standards. The minister put forward a very vague notion.

After question time yesterday, the Minister for Police indicated that she had at long last received the answer to my question on notice from October about the revocation of gun licences for people who are the subject of a violence restraining order. I was very disappointed that after asking the question in October and being told in November by the police minister—now Deputy Premier—that the question was being finalised, that more work was being done. Now that I have the answer I am told it is not possible for WA Police to obtain the information

**Extract from Hansard**

[ASSEMBLY — Wednesday, 17 February 2016]

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without compromising core policing activities. All I asked for was the number of times a gun licence had been revoked because of the existence of a violence restraining order. I asked for figures for a series of financial years in the normal way that these sorts of statistics are monitored. Now I find that the police service is incapable of providing that statistic; yet the Law Reform Commission is providing advice to government at the moment on ways that the Firearms Act 1973 could be reformed. The police minister has committed to an extensive rewrite of the Firearms Act yet we are not able to access the statistics on this important issue of what goes on when a violence restraining order is issued. I am very concerned about that. If it means that people with VROs are able to access firearms, I am worried about the implications. I am concerned that we are hearing from a police minister who is prepared to weaken Western Australia's gun control laws. I am worried that will lead us to an eventual move towards a US-style of gun control, or non-gun control. That is of grave concern to me. The whole issue of gun control is one that I think members in this place need to be ever vigilant about because some people want to weaken existing gun control laws.

I turn now to some of the issues in my shadow portfolio. There is no doubt that over the course of the summer months some dramatic events took place. There was an appeal against a judgement by Chief Justice Wayne Martin on the Roe 8 environmental approval process and the issue of the ministerial statement via the Minister for Environment. Chief Justice Wayne Martin's judgement has been appealed. It has been suggested that the Environmental Protection Authority reassess the Roe 8 proposal. That will involve the hiring of a new panel to assess the project. I do not believe that panel has yet been constituted. People around Perth who have been approached to go on the panel have actually declined. I do not know how the minister will progress that if he is not able to get anyone to go on the Roe 8 reassessment panel. Then in late January an investigation was announced into the EPA itself on how the EPA uses its policies, guidance statements and position statements. The minister has told us that he has appointed Peter Quinlan, SC, Sunili Govinnage and Eric Heenan to that review panel, but how many reviews do we need into the Environmental Protection Authority? I am going to go over some of the documents that have been published and, in some cases, tabled in this place in recent years—reviews that have been established by the current government into the actions, procedures and powers of the EPA.

In August 2009, we had the fairly comprehensive review into the role and structure of the Environmental Protection Authority, chaired by Bernard Bowen—a former chairman of the EPA—which made some excellent points. It pointed out the importance of good policy. But we do not want an EPA doing only assessments and waiting there and assessing projects as they come in. We want an EPA guided by good policy settings. That was highlighted in the 2009 review that the government accepted and took on board. It states —

“more effective, timely and coordinated assessment and decision-making for development proposals and better environmental outcomes in Western Australia.”

That was the direction set by the then Minister for Environment, Hon Donna Faragher. Then look at what was produced. There was much mention of the need for the EPA to be guided by good policy settings and to make sure that policy work was properly funded as well—that it was not seen as an add-on and that it was actually core business. There is a great rationale for that. If we have the right policy settings in place—I will come to a few examples—it is very easy for a proponent to see whether their project fits within the parameters set by the policy. Perhaps they will not need to go to an assessment because it could be said that, yes, the project will fit within, say, the sulfur dioxide limits of the Kwinana airshed, or it does not, and that can be worked out. It saves the proponent going to a lot of expense and grief if they are told up-front that they are not successful, or they know up-front that they are going to be successful and perhaps saves the state from the need to go through a lengthy process. That is why these policy settings need to be properly in place. But what have we seen in recent months? At the stroke of a pen we have seen the revocation of three environmental protection policies that relate to wetlands—the Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Lakes) Policy, the Environmental Protection Gngangara Mound Crown Land Policy and the wheatbelt wetlands environmental protection policy. Compare that with the effort that goes into preparing policies, and if I have time I will point out in the act where it states how that process is conducted. It is a very extensive process with enormous community consultation. Drafts are prepared and published in the *Government Gazette*. They are available for comment and then a document is finalised. It is a very lengthy process. It takes a minimum of 18 months to two years to get something like that through. There are no shortcuts. But when it comes to revoking the policy, the minister is able to do that at the stroke of a pen. That to me is completely wrong; it is against the spirit of those environmental protection policies and it is against community expectations.

We have not only seen the revocation of three environmental protection policies, but also if we look at the EPA's website, under the heading “Policies and guidelines”, and look at the archives, we will see that some 50 other policies, position statements and guidance statements have been revoked in the last two years. We have never seen so many documents revoked before, but under the current minister we have had a mass revocation of 50 or

so position statements, guidance statements and policy positions previously published by the EPA. That is a dramatic number of revocations. I am prepared to concede that some of those 50 documents may have gone out of date and may no longer be relevant, but when we read them and see the quality of science in them, the quality of referencing in them, we may find that they are useful and I do not believe they deserve to be relegated to some archive. They are relevant to the decision-making and consideration of future projects presented for assessment. They vary. As I say, there are some that could be revoked, but there are some that in my view are extremely useful and should never have been revoked.

I will choose an example: “Guidance Statement for Management of Mosquitoes by Land Developers: No. 40” was revoked on 11 February 2014. It is a fairly straightforward and sensible policy. We know that in some areas there is a problem with mosquitos. Why would we not want a document advising developers on how to pursue a development but at the same time being mindful of the mosquito issue? It simply made the recommendation, or the recommendation was made to the minister, that the mosquito issue should be considered as an environmental factor. That means whenever a project comes up that is likely to involve putting people close to a mosquito area a formal assessment should probably be done. That is reasonable. Why would we not want that to happen? This is the problem we face. We are in a situation in which the minister, the government of the day, wants the EPA doing assessments only on major resources projects, major infrastructure project and major urban development projects. It does not want to do things as they arise or as they are needed because the line in the guidance statement that says that a mosquito issue should be considered an environmental factor. That effectively is a trigger on why or when it would need to be properly assessed.

I turn to another document that has been revoked—the “Conservation of Roadside Vegetation” bulletin released in June 2008. We all know that roadside vegetation is incredibly important, especially in areas in which the only remaining native vegetation is often located on the roadside. It is like a transept that runs through the area of vegetation that was once there. If people travel in the wheatbelt, they will see cleared paddocks everywhere with the last bit of vegetation on the roadsides. I think this document makes some very reasonable points about how the EPA should proceed with looking at road construction projects that will be damaging to roadside vegetation. It states that when there is a project that will be damaging in such a way, it should be referred to the EPA under part IV of the Environmental Protection Authority Act and therefore most likely be subject to a formal assessment.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE:** This is again an example of how the revocation of this particular EPA bulletin means that we do not have clarity about when a certain type of proposal should be referred to the EPA for formal assessment. It is as if we want to constantly manage the workload of the Environmental Protection Authority. That is wrong and it is not helpful to us at all. It means that we have this constant risk of the accumulation of a thousand cuts; that we have all these problems or proposals that might not seem too serious or environmentally damaging, but when you add them up they can be enormously damaging.

Related to the activities of the EPA, I attended a briefing from the Department of Environment Regulation on amendments and changes that it is proposing to put forward to the licensing regime. It was interesting because it was a briefing for industry, and it seemed from the discussion that there had been quite an extensive discussion with industry, but there was no mention of a discussion with the community. The discussion had been just with industry, not with people who may have been able to bring forward a different perspective. That was disappointing. When I brought up how we tackle the problem of cumulative impacts with the chief executive officer of Department of Environment Regulation, I was told not to worry because they have environmental protection policies that can deal with cumulative impact. Potentially, he is right. Environmental protection policies are documents like the “Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Lakes) Protection Policy 1992” and the “Environmental Protection (Kwinana) (Atmospheric Wastes) Policy 1999”, which sets the parameters for the air quality we want in the Kwinana area. Environmental protection policies are a great way to do things, but we have a government that is revoking EPPs at the stroke of a pen. The problem we are facing in Western Australia today is that although we have a government that talks about marine protection in the Kimberley and likes to get out and improve the quality of visitor centres in national parks, which is all worthy stuff, there has been a fundamental erosion of environmental regulation in the state. That is my real concern.

On so many fronts we see an erosion of standards and local community people upset at having to face a dreadful project that they are fearful will be foisted on them in their community. There is no mechanism within government to deal with that, to hear their concerns and to enable them to make some sort of criticism of the project, other than a licensing process. We have our part 4 environmental assessment process and our part 5 licensing process, which is where lots of things seem to have been handballed. The understanding is that any appeal during the licensing process is only on the conditions that go on the licence; it is not about whether the project should go ahead. People are taken in to a process in which going ahead with the project is

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a fait accompli and all they can argue about is the nature of the conditions. That is not good enough. People deserve the right to critique a project and have it formally assessed in a way that leaves open that it may in fact be found that the project cannot go ahead at all. That is completely wrong. It goes back to yet another review document—forget about the review document the minister announced in January this year—that the EPA published in January last year titled “Environmental Assessment Guideline for Application of a significance framework in the environmental impact assessment process”. This document is about how it is determined which projects should be assessed and which should not. Again, we find reference to the importance of policies; that policies can be in place that will determine whether something should be assessed to provide guidance to proponents. This document refers to the factors that will be used to determine whether the EPA does a formal assessment. Some of the key messages mentioned in this document include —

- As soon as there is confidence that a factor is not a key environmental factor, that factor will receive no further consideration by the EPA.

Lots of people are really upset with that, because they are saying, for example, that they have an issue with a particular piggery. I have spoken about the G.D. Pork Holdings piggery and the bio-organics plant. I have heard about a waste drop proposal in Hazelmere that will impact people in High Wycombe, in the member for Forrestfield’s electorate. I am hearing examples of people not being able to have a say because at some very early stage of the process someone has said that the environmental factors do not warrant formal assessment by the EPA. That is why so much disappointment and angst has been brought upon people.

The information you get through the freedom of information process is interesting. I have been doing some FOI inquiries about the revocation of wetland policies and there is some really good stuff about the importance of EPPs. A letter from the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority to the Department of Parks and Wildlife states —

Environmental Protection Policies (EPPs) are established under Part III of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act) and carry the force of law. As a policy instrument, they are generally used to provide a clear statement of intent to use the enforcement power of the EP Act in order to address an environmental issue, or to provide the ability in certain areas under controlled conditions to permit activities that would otherwise be unclear under the EP Act.

A preliminary review of the need for and effectiveness of all current EPPs, undertaken by the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, suggests that the three above EPPs may not be effective or may be outdated or redundant through the introduction of other regulatory and non-regulatory mechanisms.

The minister has received this advice that there are a few EPPs floating around that are not doing much of a job. Let us look at which EPPs we are talking about because the list on this letter is not the same as the list we got in November when we saw the revocations. The EPPs that we are talking about include the “Environmental Protection (South West Agriculture Zone Wetlands) Policy 1998”, which was revoked because it was deemed to be ineffective, because there were only two wetlands listed on it and the department was hesitant to add any more. It is easy to say that that was not effective. The next is the “Environmental Protection (Gnangara Mound Crown Land) Policy 1992”. It is possible to argue that there are other satisfactory measures to protect the Gnangara mound. The third EPP is not the major policy that was revoked—the Swan coastal plain lakes policy—but the “Environmental Protection (Peel Inlet–Harvey Estuary) Policy 1992”. The minister was getting advice and talking about revoking the environmental protection policy that protects the Peel–Harvey estuary. I looked at that and, fortunately, with the help of the member for Mandurah, we were able to bring a bill to protect the Peel–Harvey estuary into this place. As a result of that bill, I think the government went shy on the idea of revoking the Peel–Harvey EPP. Fortunately that EPP remains, but, of course, we saw that the Swan coastal plain lakes EPP was to be revoked because it protected the Beeliar wetlands, and it was suddenly thought it could be problematic for the Roe 8 project.

All these things come together in a way that suggests that this is about political convenience and working out how to get things through administratively, not about getting the best environmental outcome. That is what really disappoints me. I am very concerned that people have been let down by the current process. It is really disappointing that there was no community consultation prior to the revocation of those policies, because the community put enormous effort into, especially, the Swan coastal plain lakes EPP. That EPP was to have been revised. In 2005, when Hon Judy Edwards was Minister for the Environment—a great minister—she wanted to expand the EPP to cover all wetlands, not just those where there is actually a body of water, to recognise that many important ecological wet areas dry out at this time of year. Many significant wetlands are currently dry, but the rains come and there is water there.

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That expansion of the environmental protection policy to include all wetlands was not successful, but we had the “Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Lakes) Policy” in place, which is now gone after all that community effort. Naturally, people are very disappointed and anxious about it. It remains to be seen what the government will do when we have the appeal against the Supreme Court decision and a reassessment of the Roe 8 project. It has already been said today that this will be a major issue in the lead-up to the next state election—people’s awareness of the significance of the Beeliar wetlands and their awareness of the fact that the Roe 8 project does not solve any problems at all and will, in fact, create more. Anyone who has driven along Tydeman Road when there are trucks wanting to get into that North Fremantle area will have noticed that it is absolute chaos. Why would the government want more trucks there?

**MR M.J. COWPER (Murray–Wellington)** [4.21 pm]: I rise to contribute to the policy agenda for 2016 and what it means to the people of the area of Murray–Wellington. Of course, the number one issue in recent times, and for some time, has been the catastrophic impact of fires in the area. I spent a quiet New Year’s Eve with my wife and reflected on the challenges we can expect in 2016. A few days later, with the advent of some lightning strikes in Lane Poole Reserve, a number of spot fires broke out, which were attended by aerial bombers to try to deal with those particular locations. Evidently, the fire got away. Because of the extreme conditions, it burnt in the forest at Lane Poole Reserve at the back of Waroona for a day or so and then came racing down the hill to the south side of Waroona. This was almost 12 months after another challenge that Waroona people faced when we lost a number of homes, but, thankfully, no lives were lost. On the particular night when the fire raced through the south part of Waroona, it came down the hill through Drakesbrook, taking out wineries, abattoirs, farms and bridges on South Western Highway. The old Nestle factory on the south side of Waroona has now been destroyed. For those people who might know it, there was an old Nestle milk factory on the south side and that has been significantly damaged. The fire jumped the Hamel stops over the railway line, and if it were not for some fantastic work by volunteers, it would have taken out the historically listed Hamel Nursery. For those who do not know, over a number of years Hamel Nursery has been promulgating a whole host of varieties of trees, native to not only Australia and Western Australia, but also overseas. There are some examples of magnificent oak trees that were saved, and I was back in there the other day looking at that particular situation. It needs some work, but I will discuss that at another time with the appropriate ministers.

The fire continued on and went across to the east of Waroona, down what is called Drakesbrook, and proceeded through the back of farmlands. It raced along at great speed. It got all the way out to the coast, where it approached the Yalgorup National Park on the banks of Lake Clifton. It jumped Forrest Highway, and some of the stories that have come to me from the people of Lake Clifton are hair-raising. There is one story in particular. A local farmer, Rod Tyler, decided that he would stay and defend his house from the encroaching fire that was coming from the east. His wife, Debbie Tyler, stood in the middle of Forrest Highway. For those people who are familiar with the area, it was where the rumble strips are when you are northbound. There is a rumble strip just before you get to the Old Coast Road turn-off, and she stood in the middle of the road with her two children, watching the 50-foot high fire go over the top of her and cascade into the forest and race towards Lake Clifton. One can only imagine the situation. Numerous 000 calls were made by people right across the district, but the ferocity and the speed of the fire were such that not a lot could be done to try to get resources to assist people when they were needed. The fire also very much threatened the town of Preston Beach. On three occasions the people of that town had to be evacuated to the beach from their homes when they were threatened at that location. There was some great work by some great people down there, including Noel Dew, the Waroona shire president, who managed to rally the people, along with an old colleague of mine, John Watson, the former superintendent, and his lovely wife, Lorraine, and also the local store owner, Clint Vagg. They were very much instrumental in keeping that community together, and it demonstrates the leadership that these people have in their local communities in being able to pull together during very tough times.

Of course, that was only day two of the fires. The next night the fire was still ignited in the forests above the town of Waroona and was travelling slowly in the forests at the back of Yarloop. We can probably all recall where we were on that day, looking up to see this enormous thunderhead cloud. It looked very much similar to a tropical storm. It was actually a huge smoke cloud that was generating its own weather patterns. It had lightning and was looking very, very angry. Everyone in the district could see that something bad was going to happen, and it did. In the afternoon the fire was sitting at the back of Yarloop and a number of farmers were on the Darling Scarp, to the east of Yarloop, running ploughs along the edges of their farms so that they could try to mitigate the effect of the fire. The fire was approaching at a reasonably manageable pace, but the problem was the huge fireball behind it. Department of Parks and Wildlife crews and dozer operators came in. Of course, many, many stories will come out of these fires, but the dozer operators to whom I spoke told me that on something like 90 occasions they were water-bombed so that they did not catch fire. The stickers on the dozers were melting and the windows were all smashed from the heat, yet they boxed on. The farmers there were trying



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to assist the DPaW firefighters. The farmers were obviously very much interested in ensuring that there was some sort of combatant against the cause of the fires, and of course their homes and their livelihoods were dependent upon it. I hope that the circumstances that proceeded at that point in time will be subject to inquiry. We now know that the inquiry will be conducted by Mr Euan Ferguson, whom I recently had a chance to speak to. I believe that some circumstances attending the approach of the fire towards Yarloop really need to be examined in a bipartisan way by this place. No matter what side of the house members sit on, it is in everyone's interest to know why certain things occurred. I do not want to pre-empt what that inquiry will look into, but I can certainly tell members this: some events took place that I am hoping will be highlighted by Mr Ferguson's investigation into this fire. I am trying to advise members to brace themselves for some fairly significant revelations about what occurred, because this cannot be repeated.

Some would say, and I heard the Premier say, that nothing would have stopped that fire, and perhaps that was true at that particular time. What has happened in fires that have occurred subsequent to the Waroona fire, such as the one at Lake Clifton on Monday, the one running at Brunswick Junction as we speak—another fire in my electorate—the fire at North Dandalup, and the fire at Hoffman that we believe was deliberately lit? The one last Sunday afternoon, just up the road from my place in Nambeelup, near North Dandalup, was deliberately lit. The secret to combating these fires is the rapid response of the volunteers and farmers, and the resources made available by everyone to get on top of them. The fact that they were able to get to the fires before they got away is the key lesson that we all need to learn.

When the fire came to the back of Yarloop, there was a phenomenon called a katabatic wind. I understand the term comes from the US, and refers to winds generated from a high plateau that roll down a hill, creating a turbulent environment. In this turbulent air, three levels of the fire front come together. A fire front will move through the trees, through the middle of the canopy and along the ground, and when those three levels combine in the katabatic wind it creates almost a blast furnace situation, and when they occur nothing will stop them. In a matter of seven minutes the town of Yarloop was destroyed, and along with it the lives of two men. These katabatic winds occur all along the Darling Scarp, so we are all on notice. Where the Darling Scarp exists—whether it be in Bindoon, Kalamunda, Kelmscott, in the electorate of the member for Gosnells, or in the electorate of the member for Darling Range, at Serpentine, Jarrahdale, Keysbrook, and North Dandalup—any town at the bottom of the hill is in trouble. Further south there is Waroona, Yarloop, Harvey, Wokalup, Brunswick Junction, Roelands, Burekup, and all the way down to Dardanup. These places are all under potential threat from katabatic winds. When they get away in certain conditions, nothing will stop them.

Yarloop had a very proud history. It was developed by the Millar brothers, who came out from England and were regarded as significantly well-credentialed tradesmen. They initially established a mill at Denmark, where I have some history; I lived down there for four years. Then they applied for a contract to supply jarrah paving blocks for the streets of London. They did not expect to win the contract, but they did, and then they had to work out where they were going to get enough jarrah trees to be able to supply the demand. That is why Yarloop was established. A number of mills sprang up throughout the Darling Scarp, including Hoffman, Wellington, Dwellingup and Mundaring. Timber mills existed throughout the Darling Scarp. With the effort to fulfil this contract came the establishment of the workshops at Yarloop. They were regarded as being some of the most significant steam workshops anywhere in the world. They had a complete set of dies, and virtually everything had to be built from the ground up—all the steam trains and all the carriages. There was an extraordinary display there of all the period machinery. It was comparable with any mining town in other parts of regional Western Australia in that era.

Along with the mill came a bunch of people, mostly young men from England. They came from all walks of life, but mostly English; there was a very strong English influence. With them came a great deal of skill. People do not know this, but the lathes in those workshops were some of the biggest in the world, and they were used to machine the guns on Her Majesty's battleships. Many of those guns were made right here in Yarloop. By 1914 Yarloop was thriving and was one of the biggest towns in the south west. At the outbreak of World War I, many of the men decided to enlist in the Australian Army, thinking that that would give them an opportunity to go back to England to visit their families and be back before the end of the year, or so they thought. Many men enlisted from Yarloop. They went to Albany and got on the ships, and they thought they were heading back to England. However, when they got to the Straits of Gibraltar, they chucked a righty and went to Egypt instead, and were among the soldiers who were thrust upon the shores of Gallipoli. Many never saw Australia or Yarloop again. It is interesting to note that Yarloop produced two Victoria Cross winners. There is a very strong vibrance about Yarloop and that is why it should be rebuilt. The descendants of those men are still there. They are defiant, resilient people and they need our support—not just some fleeting attendance from time to time, but for months and probably years ahead. At the moment, they feel abandoned.

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As members can imagine, when a fire comes through it is very emotional. The adrenaline rushes as people fight the fire. It is the old flee-or-fight syndrome. They are up and about, very much wanting to take on the fight. That has been the case for some time, but after three or four weeks go by they begin to tire. With the other fires that have manifested themselves around the district, this has weighed heavy on their minds. I saw one of the chief fire control officers in the area, Blue Wilson, at the fire at Nambeelup. He is a wonderful man. John Twaddle has been the fire captain and fire control officer at Waroona for 40 years—another great man.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.J. COWPER:** Phil Penny is a fire control officer who has the world on his shoulders. I thank them all. I thank all the volunteers. I thank the members of this place who have spoken about the volunteers from their area. I saw the wonderful men and women from the electorate of the member for Vasse in the area, and I thank them.

We need to show some tangible support. If members are not doing anything on Saturday, my Rotary club is hosting another fencing day. The Rotary club has raised over \$250 000. Anyone who cannot afford to donate money can show some support and get down there, and contact the McLarty family at Boan Swamp. We are meeting at eight o'clock on Saturday, and we will be going out for a day of fencing. If anyone wishes to show support for the people, they should do it in a tangible way and come and do some fencing. That is one action that will be very much appreciated. Rebuilding Yarloop is a must. I am not sure whether cabinet has discussed whether it will or will not be, but I could tell members now that it will be rebuilt, because the people want it. They will not let it die.

Going forward, we need to be able to better utilise our aerial systems. I saw a fire lit at Lake Clifton and it was contained in a very short time. It was deliberately lit; I have the photos to prove it. These pilots—Graham and Terry—are based in Bunbury and do a fantastic job. I thank them and I thank all the other pilots who are based out of Jandakot and everywhere else. Most of them are ex-SAS soldiers. They are very quietly spoken, very effective people. They are driving 1 500 horsepower air tractors, not including their helicopters, and they certainly do a wonderful job. There is a fellow by the name of Raa Wheeler or Raalin. He has an unusual name; his father's name was Rae and his mother's name is Linda, so they called him Raalin. Mr Wheeler is a plane enthusiast. He has his own 1.4-kilometre strip at Coolup called Wheeler Field. It is privately owned and he maintains this airfield, and has done for about the last 17 years. In the five weeks leading up to last week, over 1.5 million litres of water was put on planes and sent out to fight fires in the district. There is no doubt that the strategic location of this particular field has saved many homes and many lives. Over 400 landings and take-offs—particularly when they were loaded with water—have blasted the top of this dirt runway and it is in serious need of some maintenance. The Shire of Murray has been very good. It is going to supply all the machines required—water trucks, tankers and the like—but we need to get some money out of the state government's coffers to be able to re-shoot it. Mr Raa Wheeler and his volunteers worked that field excellently, with great efficiency. They are as good as any crew on top of an aircraft carrier. They had seven-and-a-half-minute aircraft turnarounds. Members can appreciate that time is everything in a fire. Those planes could get in and out, the helicopters refuelled and the maintenance continued, and food supplied, from the time the sun came up till the time the sun went down; they were operating that field at full strength.

I refer to the battle of "Doc" Mannings on the east side of Harvey on Monday two weeks ago. Those planes were instrumental in containing the fire as it turned back on the town of Harvey. The fire crews were able to attack it once it came out of the forest and onto the farmland. They chased it down and they killed it, only to look around and see that somebody else had lit another fire. On the same night, somebody lit another four fires in North Dandalup at Hopelands Road. We can understand nature taking its course—lightning and the like—but when somebody deliberately lights a fire, it is very hard to deal with.

We are trying to deal with the recovery phase of the Yarloop situation. It is very hard to deal with the recovery phase when we are still dealing with the response phase of other fires. A range of people swung into action to try to do the recovery phase. I had the chance to speak to Ken Michael on the phone, the former Governor of Western Australia. He is a wonderful man. There needs to be some action very soon down on the ground. At the moment, two people are on the ground going around spraying the asbestos. It will take too long; time is our enemy. We need more resources on the ground to deal with the issue so that people can return to their homes. Those who did not lose their homes in Yarloop have still not been able to return to them. It is important to get them back in there. If members go in the forest today, they will see green shoots are already springing out. Nature is taking care of the forest itself; it is showing renewal. We need to be more responsive as a government, as a Parliament, and as the people of Western Australia.

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These fires have brought out the best in people and the worst. I will not highlight the worst ones because they are just unbelievable. There are far many more very good stories to be told. This story will go on for some time. In the last few minutes, I would like to touch upon some other issues that are very important to the people in my area in response to the Premier's remarks.

Agriculture has always been a big part of my electorate—I refer to the milk, Harvey Fresh and Harvey Beef. When the fires cut access to the highways, what happened to agriculture? People in Perth were starting to run out of milk. It was a paradoxical situation. I went down to the Binningup surf club for a meeting, and they were going to have a cup of tea, but they did not have any milk. Only half an hour earlier I had been at a farmer's house and watched him pour out 5 000 or 6 000 litres of milk onto the ground because they could not get the trucks in. In this review, we need to look at better ways of dealing with how we access and egress in and out of the fire zone. We had a 30-kilometre exclusion zone around Yarloop. I can tell members now that we had our planes on the ground because some very diligent police officer would not allow a fuel truck into the airport. Dairy cows need to be milked; they cannot just stop getting milked. We had horses and cattle and sheep, some of which I had to kill.

I turn to tourism. The member for Alfred Cove has a friend named Graeme Watson. He has the forest edge up behind Waroona. Members might have seen a bit in the paper outlining that he was looking at a new enterprise to attract tourists—a downhill ski slope, with beautiful dormitories. They are gone. Mr Craig Elliott and his wife Linda took over Lake Navarino on Christmas Eve. Two weeks later it was wiped out; sorry, not quite wiped out—four cabins, the shop and bits and pieces were destroyed. They are looking to reopen in March. Again, if members want to do something to help someone else, they can do the Lake Navarino clean-up. I think it is on the twenty-ninth of this month. That would help. Maybe it will get the people back waterskiing and spending a bit of money in those businesses. That is very important. Tourism is going to take a hit.

I now refer to our forests. I went for a drive through the area on Scarp Road at the back of Hoffman. Members probably saw it in recent days—the forest is actually dead. In many parts of it, it is so hot that it has died. Nothing is in it; nothing is alive—no bugs, no birds, no creepy-crawlies. Nothing. It is just dead. The heat is extraordinary. On the peripherals, we can see the forest regenerating, which is good, and nature will take its course. However, vast sections of our forest are gone. Much of the pine plantations out at Harvey—the largest in the state, as I understand—are gone. That is going to be a cost to the government. I strongly recommend, and I have already written to the Minister for Forestry in this regard, that we do not replant those pine trees for a number of reasons. Firstly, they sit on top of a great resource of sand that we will need for our buildings in the future; secondly, they are a fire hazard; and thirdly, they suck more water out of the ground than anything else we have down in that part of the world. Lake Yalgorup National Park, which is a very significant environmental area, is in competition with the vast majority of our vegetable growers. The vegetable growers need the water as well to be able to provide the food that we eat.

Some real decisions need to be made. I say do not replant those pine plantations; if the government wants to replant the area with something, it should replant it with native vegetation. That is what was there originally. People say that that cannot be done because of the Carnaby's cockatoos. Let me tell members that when I went through the forest, nothing was alive—nothing. So much for the Carnaby's cockatoos! The lessons of the 1961 Dwellingup fire royal commission have not been learnt. I hope—I will ensure on behalf of my people—that this inquiry by Mr Ferguson will enable us to have a warts and all, really good, hard look at ourselves, not only at the state government but at the people of Western Australia and how we relate to each other. It is how we treat people that is important now.

[Applause.]

**MR P.C. TINLEY (Willagee)** [4.50 pm]: I rise to make my response to the Premier's Statement for 2016. This is the final full year prior to the collective decision of the people of Western Australia about whether, as the Leader of the Opposition, Mark McGowan, said, they want to choose between the past and the future. We cannot have a conversation about the past, or particularly the future, without using the already over-used word "innovation". I note with some interest in the Premier's Statement that he ventured to use the word innovation twice. In the history of Premier's Statements, since 2009, we have not seen the word innovation used as part of the government's agenda. It is particularly timely, given the impetus from the federal government and the requirement to attend to the issues in relation to the counter-cyclical nature of the commodities cycle in Western Australia, that we talk about this concept of innovation and what it means. In my opinion, it is not something that we simply grab as an easy catch-all to distract people's attention from the fact that we have had the biggest single revenue boon and the biggest single expenditure to create the worst fiscal circumstances in the state's history and a horrible situation with the state's finances. It is not some glib throwaway line; it is because innovation and more broadly a diversified economy is something that takes years and years to build. It is important at the outset of my remarks that we talk about a comprehensive definition of innovation. The Premier

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seems to have grabbed a couple of key initiatives such as the Square Kilometre Array and Labor-initiated projects and attempted to attach to them the label “innovation” to somehow get the ticks he wants for attending to a diversified economy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The contemporary definition of innovation is given probably best by the Office of the Chief Economist in the “Australian Innovation System Report 2015”, where he states —

*An innovation system is an open network of organisations that interact with each other and operate within framework conditions that regulate their activities and interactions. The three components of the innovation system networks, innovation activities and framework conditions collectively function to produce and diffuse innovations that have, in aggregate, economic, social and/or environmental value.*

It is very clear in the definition given by the commonwealth Chief Economist that it is very much a system or systems often described as the ecosystem of innovation, the interlocking system or systems that create, in simple terms, a sense of critical mass that delivers real beneficial, economic, environmental and social outcomes.

Unfortunately, when we confront the Premier’s Statement we note that it is one built more on hope than effort. I can find no amount of evidence, particularly in the Premier’s Statement, despite the government’s initiatives over the past few years since it came to government in 2008, that gives me any hope that it is genuinely committed to the idea of a diversified economy. As we say, at the next election there will be a choice to make. The Leader of the Labor Party here in Western Australia, Mark McGowan, said today, in response to the Premier’s Statement, we are very much on track to at least attend to what has been shamefully disregarded economically during the best 10 years of this state’s history. One thing is really clear to me as a result of the government’s attention in this area—we are very good at planning in a boom but not for a boom. By that I mean that we end up getting a massive sugar hit of revenue but tend to spend it only on infrastructure projects. This government has spent it on only vanity projects that do not deliver the hard work that is required to create this ecosystem of innovation. Why do we want to do that? A really important point to make is that the opportunities for innovation are not something that is a choice, in my view; they are a necessity. If we do not understand what is happening to us globally as an economy or jurisdiction, we will do a massive disservice to the quality and standard of living of our children and their children’s generation. It will decline. It is very, very simple.

I refer to remarks made to a Senate committee by the new commonwealth Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel. He identified, from various reports, the particular nub of the issue and why we want to attend to the idea of a diversified economy or an innovative ecosystem in our economy. He said —

If you look at the predictions that people make about jobs over the next 15 or 20 years, one of the common ones that has come out of a number of studies from Oxford University, from PwC, from CEDA, from NICTA in Australia tend to all come to the same conclusion:

This is not a single report; it is a series of reports from a number of credible organisations. The report states also —

that over the next 15 to 20 years 40% of the jobs we have today will disappear.

These are not just one-liners; they come from the Committee for Economic Development of Australia, Oxford University and PricewaterhouseCoopers. They have all come to the same conclusion—that in a modern economy such as Australia 40 per cent of today’s jobs will disappear. They are referring to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development economies. The Chief Scientist goes on to say —

But none say we will have a 40% increase in unemployment.

That is not axiomatic to the findings. He continues —

What they say is that there will be many new jobs created, and 75% of those new jobs that are created as it happens, they predict, will require science and technology and mathematics skills.

The key issue here is that although 40 per cent of the current jobs will not exist, that does not necessarily mean there will be that much unemployment. It means that we need to attend to the requirement to work up the skill spectrum to ensure we are delivering the required skill sets to participate in a more technological world and faster changing economic environment. Of course, many here will naturally say that we are a resource state and I completely understand that, but in many ways the resource sector in Western Australia is a trade and globally exposed commodity market, which makes it even tougher. Even those traditional industries we have grown the state on need more attention to innovation. The example we are all familiar with is autonomous trucks, underground drillers, excavators and so on that do not require an operator in the cab. That will be an increasingly common arrangement, dare I use the term, at the coalface activity in the resource sector. That does not mean that there will be less employment; it just means that the employment will shift. It is emblematic of what is happening in the wider economy as we go to a high income, highly technologically advanced jurisdiction or

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economy. In terms of actual qualifications, the semiskilled have been moved out of the cab and up the technology chain so that they are at the operations centre at Belmont or at the airport. In the case of Rio Tinto, it has its autonomous vehicles. Although the operator has been taken out of the cab, console operators, information and communications technology experts, software managers and so on have been added to the operations centre. Now there has been the introduction of things like drone technology for a whole range of services in the resource sector, not the least of which is geological survey and safety management and site management. Those two are really good examples of what is happening in our traditional industries.

Despite all those innovations and despite the application of disruptive technologies to our traditional sectors of the resource sector, we are still in a very tough competitive environment. I have said before in this place that we are now in direct competition particularly with people producing iron ore who would previously have been excluded from our markets through distance. The Vale iron ore company, which has various mines in southern America, has developed a 270 000-tonne bulk carrier, and it has 37 of them. It has taken the differential cost of moving a tonne of iron ore from what was a massive hurdle of \$21 down to less than \$5. It can now ship ore from Brazil to southern Chinese ports for only \$4 more than it costs us, and it is getting better at it. It has even integrated with the Chinese state-owned businesses to ensure that it gets absolute port access. It has sold a number—I will not quote the number because I am not exactly sure, but it is a single-digit number—of the 37 super bulk carriers, or Valemax as they are called, to a Chinese state-owned company and leased them back from the Chinese state-owned company. Such is the level of integration between the supply chain of iron ore into China that this sort of thing is going on. We need to be aware; we need to absolutely have our eyes on the horizon to ensure that we are doing exactly what we ought to do to provide a future for subsequent generations. Putting money into the mythical future fund—borrowing money and paying an interest rate on that just to put it into a mythical bank account—is of no use to those future generations and the 40 per cent of jobs that will disappear. We need to put it into science, technology, engineering and maths within our schools, and not just as a choice for principals to apply as and when they see fit. We need to be far more robust in mandating requirements throughout the K-12 system of public education to ensure that we get the best we can out of probably the most powerful natural endowment the state has—its own people.

How do we rate in relation to the rest of the world? I again go back to the Chief Economist's "Australian Innovation System Report 2015", and the report card is not good. I am talking in national terms, but I will make the bold assumption that what happens nationally will be reflected at least in trend terms in the jurisdiction of Western Australia. Australia's gross expenditure on research and development as a percentage of gross domestic product grew from 1.48 per cent in 2000 to 2.12 per cent in 2013. That might sound like a good story; there is a growth aspect there. However, it is not about the actual spend; it is about the relative spend. How do we compare with other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries? Our ranking only increased from sixteenth to fourteenth. Other countries increased R&D intensities, even through the global financial crisis. They have continued, almost as a default setting, to spend more on R&D, because they know that when the economy gets into trouble they need to invest in their people and ensure that they bring together this so-called innovation ecosystem.

Importantly, when we break down that gross expenditure on R&D, the percentage of gross expenditure performed by the government sector in Australia fell from 32 per cent in 1990 to 11.2 per cent in 2013. As a result, the Australian government sector's prominence in performing R&D—that is, government-owned institutions doing research and development—also fell compared with that of other OECD countries. We have gone from tenth to sixteenth. We are losing ground relative to our competitors. Despite this, the government obviously still plays a critical role in financing that innovation system, particularly through institutions such as CSIRO, which has been topical lately, particularly in relation to climate science, but I will not go into that. An amazing number of opportunities come out of science and technology in its sister organisation of Defence. The total Australian government support for science, research and innovation has grown in nominal value from \$4.2 billion in 2000–01 to \$10 billion in 2013–14. They are the latest figures. That sounds like good news; an increase of 140 per cent is fantastic. However, the share of government funding to government research agencies has fallen from 35 per cent in 1990–91 to 19 per cent in 2013–14. So where is the money going? What is happening with our innovation system? There has been a shift from government funding government organisations to government funding enterprise organisations. The business enterprise sector has obviously been the major beneficiary of this redirection, and it is one that I wholeheartedly support, because the private capital will be the biggest accelerator for the opportunities.

Over that same period, national government funding increased from 18.6 per cent to 32.1 per cent, so we have shifted across in larger quantities. The majority of this increase came through a fivefold growth in the value of the tax incentive for business R&D. It is not that successive federal governments of different persuasions have

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not attended to this; they have. They have just been very good at renaming things in order to capitalise politically on commitments to it, but the song remains the same; they are still committed to a pathway of R&D.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** What about the private sector? I am just talking about the government spend, or the GERD—gross expenditure on research and development. The alternative to that is BERD—business expenditure on research and development. Australian business expenditure was 0.71 per cent of GDP in 2000. It was ranked seventeenth in the OECD and was 218 per cent below the average of the top five OECD countries. We have a long way to go; it is a massive mountain. BERD grew strongly in Australia from the mid-1990s and the ratio has been increasing. We are still ranked fifteenth in the OECD, so we are just middling at best. The gap from the top five countries has narrowed but remains considerable. The increase in business expenditure on R&D has made for a more important role for business in the innovation system and compared with the historical trend. It is very important.

These are the situations. We are well below the OECD average by at least 68.1 per cent. We must improve our relativities to the OECD, particularly in the area of R&D and not just straight cash spend. Although everything I have talked about has been about gross expenditures, we really need to attend to a wide range of things and not just who writes the cheques. Where they go in the flow of that sort of capital is particularly important of course, and there is a lot to be said about the type of research that is funded, whether it is, as they say, industry facing, applied research or blue-sky research. But that is a matter for a subsequent discussion.

Looking at Australia's scorecard, we expect the same trend to apply to Western Australia. We are looking for evidence that this government is serious about a commitment, in spite of what the Premier left out of his speech, in relation to where Western Australia is going in an innovative, diverse economy. Rightly so, the first place one should look, in my view, and where the Premier's Statement went, is the traditional sectors—resources and agriculture. The technological disruptors applying in the resource sector equally apply to the agricultural sector. We get more out of a millimetre of rain in our wheatbelt—the member for Geraldton might be able to help me—something like 10 times the yield we got from a millimetre of rain 10 years ago.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** That is a bit optimistic.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We accept the significant application of science and study has created a better yield out of our wheat crop than we ever enjoyed in the past.

**Mr I.C. Blayney:** Yes.

**Mr P.C. TINLEY:** We got there!

I looked for the agricultural figures to show what the government has spent. We are happy with the definition relating to "Australian Government budget allocations to agriculture, fisheries and forestry". Since 2012–13, it has been flatlining at best, with just over \$3 billion. We are looking for evidence in Western Australia that the Premier's statement is serious around investment in things like agriculture. In my opinion, across the last four to eight years of this government the agricultural sector has been in a dismal state. Looking at the budget figures, the Department of Agriculture and Food Western Australia has had its budget cut by a further \$6.5 million from the 2015–16 year. It is all there to be seen. We all know that DAFWA had a further reduction of 100 full-time equivalent employees. They are taking 100 people out of one of the most important sectors outside the resource sector at a time when we can least afford it, and with no credible excuse or explanation about where the shift in science is going. They ask why government should fund private enterprise. Why should government support research or innovation arrangements for the industry sector? They do anyway. There is already a requirement in federal legislation to provide 0.5 per cent of the gross value of farm output to research and development. It is already there nationally. It is a complete myth to say that Western Australia should not strongly support the idea that our agricultural sector can continue to grow by employment, yield and gross output, and return.

Like iron ore, our agricultural sector is a globally exposed trade commodity. It is as simple as that. We are subject to the competitive behaviours of our Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development counterparts—the same countries that we are falling behind on averages on just about every count. Like iron ore to China, we no longer enjoy geographic advantage to our markets. The majority of the Indonesian grain intake comes from Western Australia, but it is severely challenged. It is challenged by places such as the Ukraine, Canada and the United States. We are in a critical dogfight with our agricultural sector to ensure that in our corner of the world we are seen as the supplier of choice to a growing part of the economy. I believe that for the first time in Premier's Statements—I am more than happy to be corrected in the future, and hope I can be—the Premier has acknowledged Asia. He has identified the important opportunity that exists in Asia and the growing middle class when he says that for us the growing force is Asia, with its extraordinary population growth, rising

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income and urbanisation. It has been said by mostly members from this side, and I know some members from the government side, that if we do not take Asia or South-East Asia—whichever definition—seriously as a growing opportunity for the demand pool to drive jobs in Western Australia, we are absolutely asleep at the wheel and everybody should be hanging their heads in shame. That is why an opposition should, at every turn, get up and press the case that greater engagement with our near neighbours will have the biggest payoff in revenue, jobs and opportunities than any other impetus we might seek to take on a global stage.

I am looking for evidence that the government takes it seriously. There needs to be a cogent strategy; a comprehensive plan. This government has no trade plan. There are 11 trade offices globally. Five are held by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and six are managed by the Department of State Development. Right out of the gate I ask why. Why is State Development running a number of trade offices globally and why is DPC? Luckily, they report to the one minister—the Premier. I do not know what would happen if there were a separate Minister for State Development from the Premier. I do not know how the functionality of that would work. There is an opportunity for a disaster right there.

I now refer to the science spend in Western Australia. I presage these comments on the basis that it is not just about money. I also note that money is one indicator—it shows how serious the government is. If the government is cutting scientists and cutting FTEs at DAFWA, and if it is not serious about supporting innovation, it also would be clear to us in relation to how big the dollars are. Looking at the budget numbers, the trend has gone from a peak of about \$80 million a year in 2008 to about \$20 million a year now. I want to make it clear that does not include the spend that goes in through Health, in separate measures, and through DAFWA in other separate measures. A science statement cannot be made that identifies only what has happened; which is what the Premier released last year. The science statement was a lovely, glossy pamphlet that identified lots of nice things that go ping. There were lots of white boxes, lots of people in lab coats and lots of very smart people. But it is always only ever a statement about the past and not a statement about future plans. There is no plan for trade, there is no plan for innovation, and there is no cogent plan for science over the next 10 to 20 years. Bring a science white paper in—a green bill, anything, a discussion paper. Bring it to the Parliament. Let us have a debate about the future of technology, science, innovation, disruptive economies and diverse economies in this place; the one place where we should all be participating in the future of Western Australia.

When we look at the government's attention to innovation, how many people does the division of industry and innovation within the Department of Commerce have dedicated to innovation?—1.5 FTE! One and a half people are dedicated under the label "innovation". I will not be so glib as to say that is all the government applies to innovation. I would not do that. When I look for evidence, I see the decline in people focused on innovation in the one place that has the label "innovation"—1.5. The government will say it has an additional four or five FTE on top of that, but it is including administrative staff at the Innovation Centre WA and Technology Park. Those people will not get small to medium-sized enterprises that are focused, or need to be focused, on where Western Australia needs to go to create a diversified economy. That is particularly concerning. The report card is there. Our relativity is to the OECD countries, our globally exposed competitors. Western Australia is at least 200 per cent below average in many metrics. There are many ways to look at those numbers but they are there for all to see. We need to genuinely look inside and outside the public sector at where the actors are and the points of connection between where government can assist. I am not just talking about writing people big cheques for research grants, I am talking about making the small to medium enterprise sector globally competitive, because those most likely to employ people are those who are currently employing people. We know nothing about the small to medium enterprise business sector in this state that can tell us those businesses that are ready to innovate, those industries that are keen to participate in the "Asian" century—the cliché that it is—and the tangible requirements they have to build the capacity and the opportunities to deliver future growth.

**MR I.C. BLAYNEY (Geraldton)** [5.21 pm]: I have always thought it a privilege to represent the extraordinary electorate of Geraldton. The 2015 year was busy and productive, but the main thing I learnt was that no longer can a single member of Parliament and one staffer run a busy electorate office. I had to run my office mostly with two people last year and it was as bad as running a farm during a drought.

As the Premier mentioned in his statement, the second state aquaculture zone will be located in the Abrolhos Islands and there has been quite a bit of interest in it. So far I have met with two interstate investors and have studied the report. I congratulate Erica Starling and the Mid West Development Commission for their work in this area up until now. When the Premier was in Geraldton in October we went out to Champion Bay to look at the yellowtail kingfish trial and we were both quite impressed. Of course, as the local member, I am ready to support the necessary infrastructure that the government will probably be called upon to provide to support an infant industry, which will probably be in the areas of fish health and breeding. Given the size of the

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Western Australian coastline and that the majority of fish eaten in the world are farmed, I can see the potential for aquaculture in Western Australia.

While I am talking about fisheries, I would like to congratulate the Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative, the largest processor of rock lobsters in the world, which is bigger than South Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand combined. It is in its sixty-fifth year and the turnover at the Geraldton Fisherman's Co-op is \$400 million. I think that proves that co-ops can still be a useful and viable business structure and its success is amazing.

When you look at the crayfishing industry, it is clear that the government's decision, when it first came into power, to switch the industry to a quota system has been very successful. It proves that governments do not have to always spend money to change things and do good things. They have to have the courage to innovate and to change laws or regulations. GFC is currently developing a \$20 million facility at Perth airport that will hold 80 tonnes of live lobsters. It has a sister facility being built at Guangzhou, China. GFC will be the first Australian seafood company to hold its stock on Chinese soil and integrate into the Chinese market. Well over 90 per cent of its live cray catch goes directly to China.

Cabinet met in Geraldton in October and some useful and significant announcements were made during that time. We opened the new family and child centre at Rangeway Primary School. I congratulate the now former principal of Rangeway, Jacqui Quartermaine, who has finished seven years at the school. Jacqui led the school to a lot of achievements and received a few awards in her time. It is my old school. It has 500 students; 63 per cent of whom are Aboriginal. The turnover of students is 50 per cent per year and the average student who starts at the school is about 18 months behind the average state student. I serve on its board and the school recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. It is a very worthwhile place for a family and child centre, and it is in a place where it will make a huge difference.

Ministers Harvey and Redman opened a new resources industry training centre at Moonyoonooka. That magnificent facility cost \$9 million. It is very useful.

The Leaning Tree Community School, an alternative school in Geraldton, celebrated its tenth anniversary recently. It is moving to its own site at the north end of town. I wish them well with that move.

John Willcock College is another school that I attended. I am one of its foundation members. The major announcement of the government, when it was in Geraldton for its cabinet meeting, was the separation of the two high schools in Geraldton so that once again they will offer years 7 to 12 from 2019. The government committed \$20 million to John Willcock College, which will also run a science, technology, engineering and mathematics program. It is interesting to note the comments of the member for Willagee. The government is addressing these sorts of things and people are already looking forward to the special STEM program at John Willcock. This is an issue that the community brought to me. I think other people have not been prepared to touch it in the past because it has been seen as something quite difficult, but I have listened to the community. It was very clear that the community wanted to split the high schools. Once again, it is not about spending money; it is about making decisions. The government has bitten the bullet and made the decision and I have had only positive feedback from the community about it. I would very much like to thank the Minister for Education for his support in this matter.

Geraldton Grammar School is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. I would like to recognise the people who founded the school. I suppose I am recognising myself as I am one of the founders! I would like to recognise John Royce and Joyce Hamersley, both of whom have recently retired and were there for 20 years.

I would like to recognise former local principals Tony Brooker, OAM, and Jim Trevaskis, OAM, both of whom were awarded Order of Australia medals in the recent Australia Day honours. It is good to represent a city that acknowledges its educators in that way.

Another anniversary that was celebrated recently was the tenth anniversary of the Irra Wangga language centre at Bundiyarra. Godfrey Simpson and Edie Mayer from Bundiyarra and Irra Wangga helped translate into Wajarri my speech on the Farrer bill—the Recognition of Aboriginal People Bill 2015. The centre is working on reserving all of the seven languages of the midwest, and I congratulate them for their work and thank them for helping keep these languages alive.

I also note with pride the continued increase in student numbers at the Geraldton University Centre, which now exceeds 260. I congratulate the students, management and board for their hard work, and the continuing increase in student numbers shows that its model really works. Last year the number of students went above 200 for the first time, so that gives members a good indication of its success. It had its tenth anniversary last year and in its first year it had 20 places granted by the federal government.



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We in the midwest are currently awaiting the outcome of the negotiations between the state government, major suppliers and the majority owner of the Karara mine, Ansteel. We are hoping that the losses in the project can either be reduced or eliminated, which will be even better, and that the project can continue. I have had a long association with this project. Quite a few times I have had to take approvals issues for Karara to the Premier during its development period, and I have visited the partners in Ansteel in north east China, where its product goes. The impact of the decision—if it is made—to mothball the Karara project will be severe in the midwest, so I hope that it does not happen. For example, half the Geraldton port business is now linked to Karara.

On a more positive note, I recently visited Ramelius Resources at Mt Magnet, which wanted to make it known to me how much they appreciate the government's decision to not increase gold royalties. I would also like to congratulate Doray Minerals for the start of open cut mining at its Deflector goldmine, 160 kilometres east of Geraldton at Yalgoo.

I also noted with interest a story in the newspaper the other day about the possible buyout of the Windimurra Vanadium mine east of Mount Magnet by an Indonesian group. Windimurra has an interesting history and I wish Mr Salim the best if he decides to tackle it. I visited the mine a couple of years ago on the day it caught fire and it has been mothballed ever since.

We have had a few exciting and useful developments in Geraldton over the last 12 months. The construction of 500 lux lights at Wonthella Park has nearly finished. People have been waiting for 40 years for that project to be completed. The lights are just about up, so that is exciting. We are just starting the work for the extensions to the sea rescue building at Point Moore. I give credit to the sea rescue volunteers. They do a fantastic job. Something they want for the facility is lift access so that it is possible for disabled people in wheelchairs to be brought up to the second level where the radios are. Disabled people are constantly offering to work there, but they cannot because they cannot get up to the radios. When the renovations, under my good friend the Minister for Emergency Services, are in place, it will be possible for those volunteers in wheelchairs to work the radios, which is something everyone is looking forward to.

Since my other good friend the opposition spokesperson for this area is in the house, I would like to inform her that the new professional fire station in Geraldton is nearly finished. She has asked me a number of times about that.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** Hallelujah!

**Mr I.C. BLAYNEY:** We are just about there.

We have opened an amazing new play area on the Geraldton foreshore that complements our water park. Anyone visiting Geraldton with small children has to visit that—it is just fantastic. We have finally started clearing land for the new Foodbank building. The Monsignor John Hawes interpretive centre at St Francis Xavier Cathedral is about two-thirds of the way through being built. We have completed building the Sun City Christian Centre at South Rangeway. We have given the go ahead for stage 2 of the Wandina Primary School in Geraldton's southern suburbs. Hon Bill Marmion did the ground breaking for another residential development at Glenfield Beach in the northern suburbs when he was in Geraldton for cabinet. The Woolworths supermarket at Wandina has just gone to tender. We have seen a gradual expansion of the horticulture industry in the region and we are starting to do some work to develop a tourism industry on the Abrolhos Islands.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Jody Riley and Julian Kanny for bringing Fringe World to Geraldton. Last weekend we had a function called Funtavia, with some acts from the Fringe in Perth, which was really appreciated. I think about 1 800 people visited the function. It was very successful.

We have a good positive story to tell in Geraldton. I think our government has made a huge difference to the region. We have a heap more jobs to do. As we cross them off the bottom of the list, we just add more on at the top. The City of Greater Geraldton has an interesting proposal to shift its headquarters to one of the newer development areas near the foreshore and put a bulk Kmart-type building on its existing site. That will result in a couple of years of construction work at basically no cost to the government and no cost to the local council. Effectively, it will all be paid for by the supermarket group. I hope that the council will soon bring a proposal for that to us, and I can get the government to support it. We have some interesting developments around Point Moore. Coastal erosion is quite a serious issue along the city's coastline. It is something the government is going to have to address in the next few years. It is all a very positive story; it is a positive community. I would like to thank the Premier and ministers for their support.

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle)** [5.33 pm]: I have a few issues that want to go through, and I hope that I have the opportunity to cover all of them and do justice to various important issues facing my electorate and the state. The government seems to have been going through a rough patch for a while, but it is a rough patch largely of its own making. I was reflecting on the weeks that have passed since we rose for the Christmas break in the last

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week of November. I think it has been about 12 or 13 weeks since then, and there has not been a week that has gone by when there has not been a bad news story for the government. I might just work through those weeks because a lot of my electorate's concerns and those from people more broadly are reflected in the stories that have come out week by week. I remind Mr Acting Speaker (Mr P. Abetz) that in November, on the last day that we sat in this chamber, we had the mess when no-one from the government side could be bothered to come into the chamber. I was sitting here when the opposition Whip called for an adjournment and there was no-one to oppose it. I also remember the Minister for Health making some interesting hand gestures towards one of his colleagues.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I was talking about him, not to him.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That's all right then. Anyway, minister, you get lots of opportunities to stand and talk in this place. I remember that day—it got a lot of publicity—because I had a 16-year-old, year 11 student from All Saints College on work experience with me. He is a family member of one of my constituents, a very capable young man, who was astounded that this sort of theatre goes on in state Parliament.

In the same week, we had the announcement about the Hilton tunnel. I was a bit surprised that *The West Australian* picked up the announcement on the problematic stage 2 of Perth Freight Link—the whole project has been problematic—and what will happen after Roe 8 in that section of the freight link that goes from Stock Road to the water. Of course, we have not heard how the road will get across the water and through North Fremantle. As we know, there are huge problems with Roe 8. For the time being, we have had a number of proposals for what is called the second stage of the Perth Freight Link. There are the poor people in Palmyra who have fought a very effective campaign to get out the message that they value their community and do not want to lose their homes and there is a range of businesses that will be impacted by the initial route down Stock Road and Leach Highway. Another proposed alternative was to tunnel through the old Fremantle Eastern Bypass route. I think the Minister for Transport was keen on that proposal, because it might have given him some symmetry with the old eastern bypass route and the road might have been able to go under it, if it could not traverse over the top, but that was evidently problematic as well. Notwithstanding, the community had no idea what the government was doing or whether it was going to have a tunnel under it, or a road, or what it would look like. There has been no communication at all and the residents of Hamilton Hill have still not met with the Minister for Transport to discuss their concerns.

Lo and behold, in the last week in November, we got yet another iteration of the route, as a diagonal tunnel. The tunnel begins at an aged-care facility in Hilton, it goes under Hilton and comes up near the golf course. To my astonishment, *The West Australian* decided that it was worth spruiking Matusik Property Insights' analysis of the impact of this tunnel on Fremantle, Palmyra, Melville, Willagee and Hilton. The article states that the tunnel would likely push up land and house values at around 50 per cent for 10 years. Interestingly, if you look at the house values in those areas for the preceding 10 years, they have gone up somewhere between 70 and 120 per cent. So it is not surprising that land values will go up over a 10-year period. Despite the government's enthusiasm about the tunnel option and, disappointingly, some of the media's support of that proposal, the people in Hilton are not as short-sighted as the government and some property developers. *The West Australian* on the 26 November reported —

The prospect of less road noise and higher house prices was not enough to convince Bromley Road residents, who said the plan was a waste of time and money.

Bromley Road backs on to Stock Road and receives plenty of road noise from heavy haulage traffic.

Resident John Partlon said the tunnel plan was a farce because Fremantle port did not have the capacity to support it. He said houses would have to be demolished and others would be at risk of damage during the construction of a tunnel.

Neighbour Kate Iwanowski, who unsuccessfully petitioned Main Roads for a noise barrier, agreed with Mr Partlon.

“Don't spend billions of dollars on infrastructure to a port that can't support future growth,” Ms Iwanowski said.

Those people are pretty clear about what this all means; in fact, I am attending a meeting of the residents of Hilton this evening at which they will be talking about what this all means. I was very impressed by those comments, showing insight into the farce of a tunnel option for stage 2.

That was the last week we met in Parliament. The next week we had news that more wards were going to be shut down at Fremantle Hospital at the same time, in the same report, that we heard that waiting times at Fiona Stanley Hospital were longer than ever. Waiting times are longer than ever, but wards at Fremantle Hospital are being shut down. There were 1 900 jobs initially gone from Fremantle Hospital—we do

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not know exactly how many—but we know there are at least 150 more, so well over 2 000 jobs have been taken from Fremantle Hospital, an incredibly underutilised facility.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Peter Abetz):** Members! Can you just keep your voices down? Thank you.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There seems no hope of that coming under better management under this government, and Liam Bartlett, through an article in *The Sunday Times*, shone some light on those issues last week and the week preceding when he wrote about the management of Fremantle Hospital now being done via Fiona Stanley Hospital. Presumably that is because up until then there was no incentive for staff at Fiona Stanley to refer patients to Fremantle to convalesce, for instance, because then they would have to work across two hospitals. I assume that was one of the reasons. The Liam Bartlett article states that five senior positions have been abolished from Fremantle Hospital—the director of nursing, the director of clinical services, the director of safety and quality, the director of operations and finances, as well as the chief executive. They have all gone from Fremantle Hospital. We only have to walk around that site to see how neglected it is. It is a joke that that amount of health infrastructure is so underutilised.

In that same week, we had grandcarers across the state robbed of a \$50 Coles–Myer voucher, which was previously given to them to help out at Christmas. This government said that that was not needed by them, and as a result there was a crowdfunding campaign, which managed to get some money across to Wanslea to help people at Christmas. Also in that week, the South Beach aquatic users review was launched. As a result of that and the activism of the users of South Beach, this morning I tabled a petition with over 10 500 signatures, which calls for a full exclusion zone of all boats along the South Beach area. I will hopefully have an opportunity to speak more about that issue. Those people did some amazing work collecting those signatures, including being down at the beach on Christmas Day to collect signatures.

In the next week, from 7 December, we learned that this government has the unenviable record of the highest number of unemployed in WA's history. There are over 95 500 people unemployed in Western Australia; at 6.6 per cent unemployment that is, as we have heard in this Parliament, well over Tasmania's unemployment rate. All of us would be feeling that in our electorate.

The next week, the week beginning 14 December, we had, again, an astounding episode in the soap opera that is Perth Freight Link and Roe 8; that is, the crowdfunded appeal to the Supreme Court against the Environmental Protection Authority's recommendation that Roe 8 go ahead was successful. The Supreme Court found that the EPA had not taken account of its own policies, as it is required to do, and had essentially messed up the approval process. That is an incredible achievement by that local community that cares so passionately about the environment. It is a pity that the government did not care half as much about the environment in protecting the EPA's reputation.

A whole lot of things have happened as a result of that successful appeal, and again, that is probably a matter worthy of half an hour in itself. It is worth noting now that we have just had a series of continuing bumbling and tripping by the government about how it will handle Perth Freight Link and Roe 8. In the Premier's Statement, we heard that he committed that his government wanted to proceed with Roe 8; not one word was mentioned about the Perth Freight Link by the Premier. Notwithstanding that, we have the federal Liberal Minister for Finance Mathias Cormann say that he wants the contracts for Perth Freight Link signed this year, for not just Roe 8 but also Perth Freight Link. We now have the possibility that the contractors who had been successful for the Roe 8 construction, Leighton Contractors, have been told that they may have to consider retendering if final environmental approvals are received from the minister via the EPA. We are not sure whether any compensation will have to be awarded to those contractors. There is still an amazing amount of uncertainty around that project, and so there should be because it was ill conceived and badly planned from the beginning. The reason it has come unstuck at every turn is that it is a bad plan, and anyone can see that there are good alternatives—that is, to get on and plan and build the outer harbour. But no, it is up to our local governments to do the sort of planning that we should expect from the state government. We have seen that the City of Kwinana has done some good work. I do not agree with everything that it proposes, but it is at least putting a solid proposal on the table; that is, if we look at the sort of opportunities that are available for the outer harbour and Kwinana and the road and rail links that could be put in place to the outer harbour, the considerable sums that are allocated to Perth Freight Link could be redirected to that project. It makes a lot of sense. Obviously, there is a lot of capital invested in Fremantle port and that capital should be fully utilised. I do not think Fremantle port should be wound up, but the investment into that port, into the road and rail links into that port, needs to be in proportion to the capacity of that port to expand in the future. At the moment, it is completely out of whack that this government has a huge investment into a port with limited capacity—anyone can see it—and no firm plan or proposal for the outer harbour. The Roe 8 appeal has been successful. We have problems with the EPA in that I understand nearly everyone except the new chairman has some sort of conflict when it comes to considering the Roe 8 appeal.

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Therefore, the minister is scrambling around, trying to deal with how he will get the EPA to credibly examine the Roe 8 proposal.

In the next week, the week before Christmas, the front page of *The West Australian* was a bloodbath, with state debt forecast to \$39 billion and the government's fire sale that has ensued. We had the midyear economic review. The government always tries to bury that in the pre-season holidays and 2015 was no exception. It was yet another front page of *The West Australian* that exposed the incredible mismanagement by this government of our state's finances, as it should expose them. That has been discussed quite a bit in the last couple of days.

Usually the period between Christmas and New Year is quiet but, yes, we had another bad news story; that is, Leighton pulled out of the City Link site. The government had planned for all sorts of investments for the city, but has spread its resources far too thin.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We see this in the Perth City Link project, and the government is stretching its resources down to Elizabeth Quay. We are going to see a lot of empty blocks there before we have the investment capacity needed by the private sector to invest in those empty sites.

I will jump to 11 January, when those people who care about the Roe 8 reserve and the environment down there were astounded to see a healthy old tree destroyed. We are not sure exactly how old the tree was. Professor Hans Lambers from the School of Biology at the University of Western Australia said that he could not tell exactly how old the tree was, but it was at least 300 years old, and could be older than 500 years. It was cut down by contractors on behalf of Main Roads Western Australia, because Main Roads said that it had had complaints about bees in the tree. Usually, after complaints about beehives in trees, the local council is notified. Workers come along and gas the bees, take them away and relocate them. In this case, Main Roads contracted someone without adequate qualifications. There is no report; this person did not have the qualifications usually required. The person who cut the tree down did nothing to remove the bees. The 300-year-old tree has been cut down, but the bees are still there, and Main Roads has nothing to say about it, and nor does the Minister for Environment, who is now in the chamber. I would be interested to know how the minister can possibly justify this treatment of a king jarrah tree of this magnitude in the reserve. Professor Hans Lambers wrote to the Minister for Environment on 18 January about his concern about the felling of the tree. The minister will be aware of this. In his reply he stated that an exemption from the provisions of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 is not necessary if clearing is for the purposes of preventing imminent danger to human life and health. The tree was in the middle of a bush area. When we went down there to do media, residents there were saying that the tree had been there for years and that they had loved it. They had the occasional bee, but that had caused no problem. Incredibly, after the tree was cut down, the bees were still there. That says it all, does it not? It says it all about Main Roads, this government's attitude to the environment, and the hapless and hopeless way in which it manages its affairs.

**Ms M.M. Quirk:** They are a pack of drones.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** They are a pack of drones; that is right.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Don't you agree that there should be an exemption for trees that pose an imminent danger?

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** There was no imminent threat. The tree was in the middle of the bush. There were residents nearby, but if they were complaining about the bees, and I cannot verify that they were, the action did not get rid of the bees. The tree was felled, and the bees were still there.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** The exemption was not applied because of the bees; the exemption applies —

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The tree was not dead, so, I am sorry minister, but I would take the word of Professor Lambers, that the tree was in good health, not that of the minister.

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Abetz):** Members, the member for Fremantle has the call.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** The tree was significant because it had —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members, I am on my feet. The member for Fremantle has the call, thank you.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I have a lot of ground to cover, so I might just move on. The minister can have his chance to speak out.

I will just move to federal Labor, that same week, calling on the federal Auditor General to investigate the Perth Freight Link fiasco.

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Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Cockburn and minister, you can take your conversation outside if you want to pursue it, but not at the moment, thank you.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Quite rightly, I think a similar request came from the Senate afterwards, but the federal shadow Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, Anthony Albanese, said that it was clear that there had been a systemic failure in the coalition's infrastructure program, and called for the Australian National Audit Office to do an investigation of the government's handling of its infrastructure funding.

As we went into the third week of January, the coroner's report on suicides in the Alma Street Centre was released. In a 12-month period in 2011 and 2012, there had been a high number of suicides of people who had been discharged from the Alma Street Centre, and there was a series of investigations, including an examination by the former director general of the Department of Health, Professor Bryant Stokes. I urge anyone interested in health or mental health to read that report; it is quite worrying. Essentially, that report found that staff were rushed and compromised in some of their decisions, and that there were systemic failures in the way that they were communicating with carers. It is worrying that there are now fewer staff at Alma Street than there were when these deaths occurred. Remember that these deaths go back to 2011 and 2012, but as at two years ago, there were 50 fewer staff at Alma Street. We also know that compared with the rest of the country, our mental health system has fewer psychiatrists. It is struggling, and it has poor systems. I hope that it will be assisted by the new Mental Health Act, but I am not convinced, with the sort of resource pressures that this government places on the mental health system, that that will be the case.

We saw threats to the very successful Street Doctor program in Fremantle. The South Metropolitan Health Service wrote to the old Medicare Local group that was managing the Street Doctor and said that it would not be funding the service after July. Of course, once that became public, they backtracked at a rate of knots, because the Street Doctor, for less than half a million dollars a year, is an incredibly effective and proactive service, and should be supported. Those people are not afraid about going out to tender, but they deserve some funding certainty.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** They backtracked because I told them they had to.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** Yes, that is good; I am glad that that is the case. It is a very visible good service that makes a lot of sense.

I am conscious of the time, but there are some other things. In the week of Australia Day, we saw the "State Secrets" headline with *The West Australian* doing a bit of work showing how this government has a penchant for wanting to hide behind cabinet confidentiality and commercial-in-confidence to avoid disclosing the full price or details of a range of different projects. This was demonstrated over a large number of very important projects, not the least of which is the sale of our port, and the extraordinary direction by the Minister for Transport to the Fremantle Port Authority that it should not give evidence to an upper house committee. It is quite unprecedented, even though the upper house committee can hear evidence in camera—but again this government is not interested in any sort of transparency.

In the weeks that proceeded that through February, there was the transport debacle and another front-page train crash in *The West Australian* with Dean Nalder stating all over the place that an underground rail tunnel was his preferred option. Even I could not believe that front page. The next week, Moody's Investors Service downgraded the Western Australian economy's rating.

I could speak about a number of other issues. I am concerned about what is happening to the people who are presenting at the reproductive health clinic, which is now run by the Marie Stopes clinic as a result of this state government contracting out Midland Health Campus's management to St John of God. I am worried about the anti-abortion protesters who have positioned themselves outside the Marie Stopes clinic. Other states have put an exclusion zone around those clinics. I think that has a lot of merit and the government should consider it to look after the people going into that clinic. The government created the debacle whereby people have to go to a separate clinic, so it should support those people who go in for a range of reproductive health —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** I will if it persists.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is good; I am glad to hear that.

There is so much ground to cover. I have not had an opportunity to talk about the Department of Housing's relocation, which is still urgently and desperately needed by Fremantle if Perth's second city is to be given the investment that it deserves—not to have its assets just sold off, but for the state government to invest in that city. Time and again tourists like and want to go to Fremantle, but it needs investment. Over 2 000 jobs have been

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stripped from Fremantle Hospital. The government needs to invest in relocating a government department there. The promise was made in 2012, but still no firm action has been taken.

On that note, I will mention the privatisation of Fremantle port. Again, the government is all over the place. This is very clearly a government fire sale. It is a monopoly asset, which has huge implications for the flow-on effects of price increases and how that is managed. There are huge implications and that the government is careful about how it manages that is so important, not only for the Town of Fremantle—it will have huge implications for how the port interacts with Fremantle residents—but it is a monopoly asset. Again, I could dedicate a whole speech to the sort of considerations that need to be taken into account in how the government manages Fremantle port.

**MS W.M. DUNCAN (Kalgoorlie — Deputy Speaker)** [6.04 pm]: Thank you very much, Mr Acting Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the Premier's Statement. In the first instance, I would like to congratulate the member for Scarborough on her success in being elected as Deputy Premier. It is certainly a great achievement in this side of government, and it is nice to see a female make some progress. Congratulations to her. Congratulations also to the Premier, the Minister for Planning, and all those involved with Elizabeth Quay. I think that it has been shown in the last few weeks to be an incredible asset for Western Australia and Perth. It just goes to show that it is always difficult to argue for the priority of these sorts of projects when there are a lot of very pressing needs in our state. It was interesting hearing the member for Fremantle speak about unemployment. I note in the Premier's Statement that the government's infrastructure plan has created more than 87 000 jobs since 2008. As I said last year in my response to the budget, and it has been quite courageous of this government to continue with those infrastructure projects that others might see as, perhaps, frivolous or not core government activities in tight economic times. However, they are creating jobs and keeping economic activity in our state. Thinking about the comment that since 2008, an additional 400 000 people have made their homes in Western Australia, more than 90 per cent of the state's debt has gone to build the roads, rails, poles, wires, waters, infrastructure, hospitals, schools, and sporting facilities to accommodate that growth. That indicates that, yes, the state has debt. However, if members analyse it, the state's debt-to-equity ratio is one that many of us, in our own personal lives, would probably envy. I would also like to take the opportunity —

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

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** I think that we absolutely can. While we have that equity, it gives the state the ability to continue operating and to work through that until times become better.

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

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** I have a lot to say so I will not engage with the member for Cockburn; I thank the member.

I would like to acknowledge the tragic bushfires that we have had in this summer period. My condolences to those who lost loved ones, precious memories, infrastructure and homes in those bushfires. I particularly give our thanks to our firefighters, particularly our volunteers, who take the time out of their work and away from their families. Having come from the land and been involved in firefighting on my parents' pastoral property, it is no fun. It is very dangerous work. I commend the volunteers and one of our biggest challenges is that it is no fun and so we perhaps do not have enough people who are willing to take it on because it is hard, hot and dangerous.

A couple of weeks ago I was driving back from Esperance. I had been down there for the opening of the new woodchip facility, which is a pretty exciting development. I called in to Grass Patch where there is a BlazeAid camp. Since the Esperance bushfires, 25 to 40 volunteers have camped at Grass Patch. They are working with farmers to restore their properties and put up fencing. At the time, they said that they had cleared 690 kilometres of fence-lines to be ready for repair. These people have come from all over Australia. There are mainly grey nomads in their Winnebagos and with their caravans. They have pulled up in Grass Patch they will stay there until they are not needed there anymore. They are very special people.

**Ms L.L. Baker:** My mother was born in Grass Patch.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Wonderful! I want to place on record here, in Parliament, the gratitude of the people of Grass Patch and Esperance, and of the state, to these volunteers who have come in to try to help, repair, and restore the damage from those bushfires.

Probably most importantly today, I would like to draw the house's attention to some very difficult circumstances that have occurred in Leonora over summer. I will read from an email from an Aboriginal elder in Leonora who wrote a few days ago. He states —

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On Friday we had our fourth Suicide connected to my community in the last four months. A young mother, my daughter tribal way, in an environment of alcohol abuse, drug abuse and actual & lateral violence woke up on Friday morning ... and decided to take her own life.

She was discovered by her seven-year-old daughter.

Within minutes of these events occurring the mother was visited and counselled by three members of our Aboriginal community, 1. an unemployed woman who is a trained counsellor, 2. an unemployed elder who is a trained counsellor and practices a Christian ministry and 3. my wife who is also technically unemployed but is working as a director of our community organisation.

Mr Muir goes on to say that his criticism of what is happening in Leonora is that the town has lost its Breaking the Cycle alcohol and drug counsellor because the federal government chose not to continue that service. A host of services are being delivered to Leonora, which is 230 kilometres from Kalgoorlie, on a drive in, drive out basis. Since last November when there were several suicides before Christmas and now those last week there still has not been a critical response of grief and trauma counselling located in Leonora, using the capacity of the people there. Kado says —

The real heartbreak in all of this for me is that we recognised this problem some time ago and submitted an IAS application to bring Aboriginal grief and trauma counsellors to our communities of Leonora and Laverton. We were not successful.

He says further on —

This whole sorry episode does two things, one it shows how we the Aboriginal people have the skills, the capacity, the resolve and local knowledge to help and support our own when tragedies occur. Two, it shows that Government does not trust us to look after our own people and would prefer to fund external agencies and departments to “deliver” services UNTO us and the lament how we continue to be sentenced into an ever expanding Gap.

In response to this event last week, the chief executive officer of the Shire of Leonora wrote to me as follows —

Over the past three years essential Health and Social Service provided for the residents of Leonora and other Northern Goldfields communities have been steadily degraded, or in some cases withdrawn altogether,

The services that have been lost in the last three years include, the regional midwife, the two regional Aboriginal maternal health workers, the Best Start Parenting program, the Licensed Fines and ID program, the Strong Spirit, Strong Future program promoting healthy women and pregnancies, and the Hope Community Services Drug and Alcohol counsellor. This is placing increasing pressure on local government, which is expected to fill the gap by providing substantial amounts of ratepayer funds to retain medical practitioners, buy equipment for the hospital, provide funds for the youth service and try to maintain a healthy environment in the town.

The CEO continues —

Violence has become a way of life for many people, particularly domestic violence—yet our Police ... are under resourced, and we have no Safe House nor Shelter for abused women.

It just goes on; it is heartbreaking. The CEO of the Shire of Leonora said that we are witnessing a serious breakdown in the health and wellbeing of the residents, not only in Leonora, but in our communities across the region. He says levels of violence and antisocial behaviour have escalated to the point at which residents are now expressing fears for their wellbeing. I mentioned to the Minister for Police yesterday and said that I absolutely applaud the work her people are doing in Leonora, Laverton and places like that but the police have become the only face of government in some of our regional community. As the CEO of Leonora, a highly regarded, long-standing resident, not the sort of person to overdramatise situations, said —

Our Police Service has been reduced to nothing but another impotent government service merely present to clean up the mess after the damage is done. There is no opportunity for Prevention Policing or for Police to practice community policing or youth engagement ...

Basically they are just in a cycle of crisis. A meeting was held there today. All the government agencies drove into town. I would have loved to be there myself but my electorate officer attended on my behalf. She said there were a lot of tears and anguish and a very strong message that we desperately need some people on the ground living in these communities. The trouble with driving 230 kilometres, spending a couple of hours trying to stick a few band-aids around the place and then driving out and registering that as a day's work means that the problems in places like Leonora and Laverton will never be fixed.

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I am pleased to say that in response to similar challenges in Kalgoorlie–Boulder prior to Christmas, we are now putting together a group of community leaders, including Aboriginal leaders, which is absolutely essential, along with the police, the mayor, me and human service agencies in an endeavour to have a coordinated and collaborated approach to what is becoming a very serious issue in some of our regional towns, particularly those with large resident Aboriginal populations. As I have said in this house before, ignoring these towns does not mean they will go away. These are the homes of those people. It is the cultural country of those people. They will stay and they need to be given the same service as any other Australian deserves.

I move on now to another matter that is of great concern to me and my colleagues in the Nationals and that is the scourge of the fly in, fly out workforce in our regional areas. We had a drama in my home in the goldfields a few weeks ago, where the Kambalda Football Club had come to the point at which it felt it could not field a team in the goldfields footy league even though it had a team and won a few premierships since the 1960s when nickel was first discovered in Kambalda. Having made a few inquiries, I made a statement that part of the problem is that right on the edge of the town of Kambalda is a fly in, fly out camp, which is in the process of filling up. It opened on 1 February and there are now 83 workers there and they expect it to be full with 232 workers by the end of the month. They fly in the manager of the fly in, fly out work camp from Queensland—as if our community of over 30 000 people does not have someone capable of managing a fly in, fly out work camp, as much as we hate the camps. My issue is the federal government taxation policy, in particular the fringe benefits tax that penalises companies when they encourage a residential workforce while the entire cost of flying someone in, accommodating them, feeding them, providing a gym and the wet mess is a tax-deductible production expense for mining companies. It means that, quite understandably, particularly in these tight economic times, mining companies favour a fly in, fly out workforce. My little spray about fly in, fly out encouraged the CEO of the Chamber of Minerals and Energy to put pen to paper and write an opinion piece in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* last Saturday where he called my remarks “speculative and unproductive” and proceeded to say that the people flying into Kambalda have specialist skills and services not available locally. We are talking about the goldfields, which is the birthplace of the mining industry in Western Australia, where our people have generations of experience in the mining industry. Not only that, the world renowned WA School of Mines is in Kalgoorlie–Boulder, so do not tell us we do not have the specialist skills and services. To say that my comments are speculative is an absolute insult because I do not write a media statement without first doing a bit of homework. My staff and I made a few phone calls around the goldfields region. We found that at least two busloads a day go from the Kalgoorlie airport to Kambalda with FIFO workers on it. I mentioned the camp being established. The FIFO camp on the outskirts of Kambalda has a shop; a bar and a restaurant, which are obviously in competition with the local businesses in town; a manager from Queensland, as I mentioned; and a free gym, which none of the residential workforce has access to. One company terminated a large group of employees and then invited them to reapply for their jobs and reappointed only the fly in, fly out workers. One group of local workers raised this issue with their line managers and were told that if they did not like the way it was happening, they could move to Perth and keep their job. I have even had a residential worker tell me about being bullied by their FIFO line manager, with the clear intention of making life so unpleasant for them that they would leave and be replaced by a FIFO worker.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** I received an email from one of the workers, who said that they see a lot of CVs come across their desk and there are a lot of good candidates out there who are willing to be residential. I am incredibly concerned that we have reached a point now at which we have spent billions of taxpayers’ money on royalties for regions to make our regional towns and cities great places to live—people comment that regional WA looks great now, with the upgraded hospitals and schools and the sporting and arts facilities—but we cannot attract people to live in the regions without government assistance and support. I cannot get my head around why we talk about the urban sprawl in Perth, the shortage of water and power, the traffic jams and the need to build high-rise apartments to try to deal with this population of ours, yet nobody looks past the Darling escarpment to our beautiful towns and cities in regional Western Australia, where housing is very affordable now thanks to royalties for regions and where people can drive home for lunch. It is great. There are good places for people to bring up their kids; there are fabulous schools. This is a very serious issue and I think both the state and federal governments need to take it more seriously.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** Will you take an interjection?

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Secession?

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** No, interjection.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Secession, I think. Sorry; I need a hearing aid!



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**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** It's a great point. You're right; you've spent all this money on the facilities. If you were to pin it on one thing, what would be the one thing that you could do to change the movement of people?

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** For a start, we should not approve the expansion of FIFO camps on the outskirts of town when accommodation is available. Secondly, we should not allow tax deductions for people to be flown in, while companies are penalised for building residential developments.

**Mr B.S. Wyatt:** I think you'll find that that's probably the biggest issue.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Absolutely it is, and it is a federal issue, but we all need to take this up if we want to see our regions populated, which surely we do. In the first iteration of my letter to Reg Howard-Smith, which I changed because my husband said it was a bit over the top, I said that I was worried about the day when somebody decided to invade Western Australia and the first point of resistance would be Reg Howard-Smith's ivory tower on St Georges Terrace and no-one lived anywhere else in Western Australia.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** He lives in my electorate; leave him alone!

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Sorry!

I will move to a matter that I have raised regularly with members and will continue to do so—that is, vaccination and vaccination insurance. I see in today's *The West Australian* that fewer people are objecting to vaccinations, and that is because of the no jab, no play childcare strategy, and I absolutely applaud that. However, a young man in Kalgoorlie had an adverse effect from a whooping cough vaccination and, through no fault of his own and no apparent fault of the vaccination itself or the administration of it, has found himself paralysed from the neck down and in dire circumstances. Thanks to a GoFundMe campaign only a couple of weeks ago, we managed to save him from losing his house. Nineteen countries of the world have a no-blame compensation system for people injured by immunisation. I think it is high time we had the same system in Australia. I believe the Minister for Health has written to the federal minister in support of that, so I will continue to put that point of view.

I am jumping all over the place a bit, but I want to pick up another matter from the comments of the member for Willagee about innovation and trying to get a broader base to our economy. I draw the attention of Parliament to the fact that lithium is now becoming a metal that is highly sought after in the world. It is used more particularly in batteries. Batteries that help store solar energy are now coming to Australia. But, of course, lithium is also used in electric cars, mobile phones and so on. We have some very exciting lithium projects in Western Australia. One that comes to mind is the Mt Marion lithium project. This company is endeavouring to get this mine up and running but wants to process the lithium in Western Australia. It is ridiculous that a shipload of ore from this mine that goes all the way to China contains 96 per cent waste, so only four per cent of that shipload, which burns diesel all the way to China and fills our air with greenhouse gases, is not waste. The lithium is then extracted in China and the batteries are made there. Would it not make sense to extract the lithium in Western Australia and create 160 jobs over 20 years in the goldfields? This company is endeavouring to break through with this government to try to get a little assistance through a state agreement or something to get this process off the ground. I absolutely support that. I think that there is huge potential for mining, engineering and technical services in our state of Western Australia. We have been very fixated on the Pilbara and its iron ore and have overlooked the opportunities for diversification of our economy into things such as solar energy and data storage and, of course, processing lithium here rather than sending it offshore. The lithium batteries would probably be made in China and we might not get them back. One of the things about producing it here is the opportunity for further processing—that is, to use the lithium for batteries, cars, paint or parts.

**Mr M.P. Murray:** There's a very good mine in Greenbushes we can get it from.

**Ms W.M. DUNCAN:** Absolutely. Let us get a lithium processing plant and we can use the Greenbushes lithium as well.

Finally, I want to draw the attention of the house to an issue that I have been talking to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum about. It relates to Mr Mark Wicksteed, who has been endeavouring to get approval for some transfers of a couple of mining leases and has found himself in an incredible catch-22 situation. He purchased these mining leases as part of an agreement with a company that assured him, as did the Registrar of Titles, that they were unencumbered. Once the process had taken place, he discovered that royalties were owing on these mining leases, even though the royalties did not relate to those particular mining leases. This has been going backwards and forwards for about three years. Even the Department of Mines and Petroleum has admitted that a data transfer error led to the failure to identify the outstanding debt in 2013 when the tenement transfer took place. Mr Wicksteed, who in good faith is endeavouring to take control of these two mining leases, has found himself still paying all the rates and so on on the lease but is unable to commence work on them because of this issue of outstanding royalties from the previous company that owned them. The Department of Mines and Petroleum has been saying that he should have done his due diligence but it is very difficult to do so. He asked

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the mining registrar whether anything was owing. He was told that it was all under control and the outstanding royalties applied to other tenements. We all know that if we buy a motor vehicle, we can go online to the Register of Encumbered Vehicles to see if something is owing on a vehicle or if we want to buy a house, we can check to see if there are any caveats or anything on the title of the house. With these particular mining leases, it was almost impossible for Mr Wicksteed to establish that these royalties were outstanding. Now he is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He cannot pay the royalties and he cannot get the previous company to pay them and he cannot get the department of mines to admit that it made an error. I ask that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum look at this issue and try to solve this problem for Mr Wicksteed, who is bleeding while the whole matter is going backwards and forwards in an unending loop of letters, blaming someone else for what has happened.

I am sorry that I have been the bearer of a fair bit of bad news, but I want to get a few things off my chest before the end of the year. I am also very concerned about the reduction in funding for our tenancy advisory services. In particular, the tenancy advice service in Kalgoorlie spends most of its time helping Homeswest tenants and Aboriginal tenants. It does a brilliant job. Its funding was reduced by \$250 000 this year. As a result, its ability to service Aboriginal clients will be dramatically reduced. I understand the problem is that the reduction in the bond money comes through the Department of Commerce. Apparently, there is less money available to fund these tenancy advisory services. I just hope that the government can find other ways to deal with this problem. They are essential services to help people who are often unable to look after themselves as well as we can. That is the other matter that I would like to draw attention to.

**MR F.M. LOGAN (Cockburn)** [6.33 pm]: As part of my contribution to the debate on the Premier's Statement, I would like to look in a little more detail at the claims that have been made so far in this part of the 2016 parliamentary cycle about government investment in cityscape infrastructure and the investment made over the last seven or eight years as part of the bigger picture leading to the transformation of the city and the reinvention of the City of Perth. Much has been made of that investment in this house on our return this week. Of course much is being said by way of TV advertising, as we notice when we turn on any channel, but specifically when we turn on Channel Seven. There is a barrage of adverts about how the state government's investment in cityscape infrastructure is transforming the city. The reason I want to talk about it is that I would like to dig down and examine what this government has done to transform the city. I want to compare the current Liberal-National government's investment with that of Labor governments' investments to see whether that claim stacks up, whether the claim of transforming the city and reinventing the City of Perth stacks up and what we are doing to transform and reinvent the city. What is the government trying to achieve with that claim? When digging down to those claims, I specifically want to look at the aesthetic benefit of the architectural infrastructure that is the whole part of the claim of transforming the cityscape.

As you would be aware, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr N.W. Morton), the aesthetic of the cityscape architecture tells an awful lot about not just the city itself, but also the people who live in that city. Why do people travel as tourists overseas to major cities such as to Rome, New York, London and Shanghai, and other cities around the world? They go to those cities to primarily look at the cityscape—the buildings, the history and the culture, all of which are defined by the aesthetics of the structure of the city, the layout of the city, the infrastructure of the city and the buildings of the city. They tell a story about the development of the particular place they are visiting. They tell a story about the people who live there—their hopes and aspirations. That is what buildings do. We have to look at the investments that have been made in the City of Perth in the same light. The Minister for Tourism wants to attract people to Western Australia and to Perth. The aesthetics of the cityscape are absolutely critical to that. Why would people want to come to Perth other than for the beaches, the sunshine, the City of Perth, the environments of the City of Perth and of course the state of Western Australia, but particularly to Perth? I am not talking about the whole state; I am talking about the claims that have been made by the current government about the transformation of the city and the cityscape. I would like to test those claims and, in particular, the investments that have been made over the years in the cityscape architecture, their aesthetic benefit and their appeal and whether what we are developing in Perth has any architectural or aesthetic benefit to what we are trying to project as a people and as a state.

Let us go back to Richard Court's government and look at the two major pieces of cityscape architecture and infrastructure that were put in place and examine their aesthetic appeal. The first piece of architecture I wish to refer to is the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. As you may or may not be aware, Mr Acting Speaker, my understanding was that—I am sure I will have an interjection from the Minister for Tourism, who was in the house at the time—there were proposals under the Court government at the time that the convention centre should be built at Burswood and be part of the Burswood complex because it related to the entertainment complex that it was trying to establish at the time and the government is still establishing at Burswood. Instead, the Court government chose to establish the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre as a straight government

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investment as opposed to a private sector investment at Burswood, and locate it on the foreshore of the City of Perth. Whether that was a financially appropriate or wise decision is for another debate. I am looking at the aesthetic and architectural appeal and what that adds to the city. There is no doubt that we needed a convention centre in order to draw a large number of conferences and business activities to Western Australia, as other cities had done. I do not know that it was appropriate to put what some of my own constituents call an onion-packing shed on the foreshore of Perth and in front of the City of Perth. In many cases it blocks office views and in other cases the view from offices is of a great big roof. I would put to the house that it was not the most appropriate place to put it. What did we end up with? We ended up with what will be seen in the future as an eyesore. It is laid out in front of the business district of Perth as a barrier between the city and the river. In terms of its architectural merit, try driving into the car park. The car park emerges out of the ground towards the roof because of the piling, into what was a former riverbed, not actually working properly, and the car park is now basically rising towards its roof.

There is not only a question about its aesthetic benefit, but also a question about its construction benefit. That is a classic example of an investment that was needed but the aesthetic benefit and location of the investment was absolutely appalling. I am not too sure whether this is true—the Minister for Tourism can tell me—but I was advised that one of the losing tenderers to the convention centre competition had as one of its architects Sir Norman Foster.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Yes. I do not recall the proposal to go to Burswood. That certainly did not come to cabinet. What came to cabinet were two final groups—the one that got it and the name that you just mentioned. I had forgotten his name until you said it.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Sir Norman Foster.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** The problem was an enormous difference in cost. We were in the middle of the South-East Asian crisis at the time, so finances for the state were very poor. It was decided that we badly needed a convention centre for tourism. The cheaper design was chosen at the time.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Thank you very much.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** You look back and share views about the appearance of the current one. It looks pretty ordinary.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I appreciate the minister's honesty and his advice to the house.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** There was a huge difference in price.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I acknowledge the situation the government faced at the time. As the minister would be aware, knocking back one of the world's most prestigious architects, who could have designed one of the most amazing convention centres on the planet, for what we have tells a lot not just about funding, but also about aesthetic taste and what we have in Perth and what it tells about Perth.

The other piece of infrastructure that was most prominent at the time under the Court Liberal–National government was the belltower. The belltower was not popular. As the minister would know, it was very unpopular at the time.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** We should have ignored that and built it bigger.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The minister indicates it should have been built bigger. I agree with the minister.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** We chickened out.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** I was an organiser at the time for a big fabrication company in the Kwinana strip, United Construction, which was doing the copper and steel work for the belltower. Getting the shape of the sails of the belltower was very complex. I always remember saying at the time it was a pity that the whole thing was not a piece of art around the sails only. The bells could have been put in a church or somewhere like that. It would have looked beautiful on the edge of the river just as a piece of art. But alas we got the conical tower in the middle with blue glass, of all things, which makes it look more like a public convenience than it does a belltower! Nobody can look at it and say that is a belltower. God knows what it looks like! We are left with that architectural monstrosity. These things say a lot about us. It is all right the government pouring the money in and building them, but over the years they reflect what we are about. If tourists come here and make strange comments about our architecture, that is because we did it—we made these horrendous decisions.

I will move on to Labor government investment. I will pick two Labor government investments to try to draw a comparison. The first is the State Theatre Centre in Northbridge. It is a beautiful piece of architecture. That state theatre can hold its own compared to any other of its size in the world. It has significant aesthetic and architectural merit. It works. It functions properly as a multi-theatre facility. It not only works well, but also it is

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a beautiful, understated piece of architecture that would reflect, and does reflect, well on the culture and the people of the city of Perth and the people of Western Australia. That is what is called government investment that adds to the cityscape aesthetics. That is a good piece of investment.

The second piece of Labor government investment that I point to is a fun piece of architecture. Architecture does not always have to be serious. It does not always have to be grandiose; it can be fun. It should be functional but it also can be fun. Perth Arena is just that. It is a fun piece of architecture.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** Did we not build that?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** We designed it, and I was the minister responsible for choosing the architect and the directions to the architect, and you guys built it. We kicked it off and you built it. The architecture was already signed off at that stage.

It is a fun piece of architecture. Behind the architecture was a committee that worked for a long period, made up of senior representatives from a whole series of different groups in the arts world who advised on the layout of Perth Arena, including down to the detail of the height of the loading dock, how the lighting gantry should work, where the stage sets should be kept and how they should emerge onto the set. All that detail was worked out by a committee made up of a whole series of senior people from the arts world in Perth to ensure that their ideas and suggestions were included in the architectural drawings for the building to make sure it functioned properly. Many artists who have used Perth Arena say it is one of the easiest buildings they have ever worked in for the purposes of presenting a show. Everything works well. It works well because the people from the arts world who understood those issues advised the government about how to get it right. We made sure that their advice was turned into designs and architectural drawings.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The outside of Perth Arena looks quirky. It has a little bit of a relationship to the quirkiness of Australia Square in Melbourne, which absolutely works as a gathering place and a place for art as well as a beautiful aesthetic environment. Perth Arena works well: people can be moved in and out very quickly, the artists are happy and it looks quirky and adds a bit of fun and colour to the cityscape architecture of Perth. It is a good piece of government investment that has aesthetic merit as well as being functional. Mr Acting Speaker, you might say that this is an unfair comparison but these were two major pieces of investment by two separate governments: the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre with the State Theatre Centre of Western Australia, and the belltower, whilst it is much smaller from an architectural point of view, with Perth Arena. There is no comparison in terms of what it adds to the cityscape and the aesthetics of Perth.

We now come to the current government. What have we received from the current government? We have Elizabeth Quay. I have been to Elizabeth Quay. I did not go to the opening or anything like that. As a road rider I went down there on my bicycle with my riding colleagues. We went down there the other Sunday to have a look around and ride over the bridge with hundreds of other bike riders who were there as well. We were told to get off the bike and push that bike over the bridge. I thought the bridge was capable of carrying the bike over, but, no, we were told to get off the bike and push it over the bridge. After other bike riders forcibly challenged the guards on the bridge, they admitted that it had nothing to do with them and they were told to tell people to get off their bikes, so we pushed our bikes over the bridge. As I walked around Elizabeth Quay I wondered: what is the reason for Elizabeth Quay? What is the function behind Elizabeth Quay? Remember that in architecture form and function is the key. Is the function of Elizabeth Quay to deliver a ferry jetty to the centre of Perth? We did have one not too far away. Is that the function of it? I cannot work out what the function of the quay is. It may be for the development of the tower blocks around it but we do not necessarily need to have —

**Dr K.D. Hames:** What was the function when you guys designed the same?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Exactly! Don't worry minister; there were a lot of questions around that as well. There were also plenty questions around Alannah's "Dubai on the Swan". What is the function of the quay? It might be fun like Perth Arena, but Perth Arena had a function. I am glad the Minister for Environment is in the chamber because being an architect he would understand all that. Perth Arena has a clear function: it is an entertainment complex. What is the function of Elizabeth Quay? I am not too sure.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** To link the city to the river, to provide an entertainment precinct and to provide a tourism precinct. It is multifunctional.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That is right; it is a multifunction thing. I am not too sure what it is that is reflected in the architecture. To be honest, and this is my personal view with which members might clearly disagree, I think it is pretty trashy. There does not seem to be a theme there apart from brick paving. There are boat pens and a ferry jetty, but this is a critical place right in the centre of Perth. When all the buildings are eventually around it in 10 years it might turn out to be a—I would not say it is a great place because of the size of it but it might be an

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amusing place, or it may not, but at the moment one can see that the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority's fingers have been all over it because it looks like East Perth. If members have ever been to a sterile environment in Perth it is East Perth, at any time. If they want to go to another sterile environment in Perth they should go to Subiaco and see what the Subiaco Redevelopment Authority did there. This is cityscape design by committee. The Subiaco redevelopment is like toy town. The minister knows what it is like: it is ugly and adds nothing to the city. A person can fire a shot through East Perth on Friday night and no-one would be hit. The Minister for Environment is an architect. He should look at the theme reflected in Subiaco, East Perth and Elizabeth Quay and he will see that it is all the same. The redevelopment authorities have got their fingers all over it. It lacks architectural merit and it lacks class. The worst part about it and the whole point to this contribution is that it says a lot about the people of Perth. What does it reflect? It reflects trashy boganism.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Careful.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, I will not be careful. That is my view. That is what it reflects. There is no architectural merit down there. It has no aesthetic appeal.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** Yes, there is.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** No, there is not. Just have a look at what is there.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** I spent Sunday afternoon there.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Well, mate, I can't help you with your taste. That is probably why you are in here and are not an architect. It looks trashy. I feel sad about it because it reflects badly on Western Australia. It could have been so much more.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** How could it?

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** By getting the MRA out of it and bringing in decent architects.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** It was designed by the best designers in this country.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Come off it!

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** They were the designers you had for your —

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The minister was not here earlier when I talked about the convention centre. The losing tenderer was Sir Norman Foster, and that is what I mean when comparing. When we want to make grand statements about transforming the city we have to ask: what are we transforming it into? Is it what we have at Elizabeth Quay? That is great! Fantastic! That will attract tourists, will it? Will tourists come to Elizabeth Quay and say, "Wow, this is fantastic. I'm glad I spent \$1 500 coming here. This is unbelievable. I don't know why I bothered going to Rome, Paris, New York, Sydney or Shanghai. I'd much rather come here." It reflects badly on the state, on Perth and on us, whether it is the current or future governments because people will ask who built it. The government built it and doesn't it look like it.

For the people who have wandered into the chamber recently I will repeat what I said earlier: when we talk about transforming and reinventing the city with all these big statements, let us look at the investment that has been made.

There is the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre versus the State Theatre Centre of WA—Liberal, Labor. There is the belltower versus Perth Arena—Liberal, Labor.

**Dr K.D. Hames:** The belltower was \$5 million.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** That shows that when we are talking about —

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr N.W. Morton):** Members, I am on my feet. Member for Cockburn, you have been engaging the minister, so it is very hard for me to protect you, but constant interjections make it hard for Hansard. I would like to hear the member for Cockburn, but please direct your comments to the Chair.

**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** Thank you very much for your protection, Mr Acting Speaker.

**Mr J.M. Francis:** Member for Cockburn, the old Treasury building: what's your opinion?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Members!

Several members interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Mandurah, I am on my feet. Member for Carine, that is enough. The member for Cockburn has three minutes left, and through the Chair.

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**Mr F.M. LOGAN:** The minister asked about the old Treasury building, and I will address that. We were going to do exactly the same thing. I was the minister responsible for heritage and works at the time and we were going to do exactly the same thing. When we proposed exactly the same thing that is there now, with an 11-storey building behind it, I got smashed as the minister for daring to suggest putting up an 11-storey building. I was told how outrageous that was, that it was terrible and that it would distract from the building and undermine the Perth Town Hall. What is there now? There is a 30-storey building and nobody says a word. At the end of the day, the only investment that the government has made there is in the building behind it—the 30-storey building. The rest has been done by the private sector, and it is a beautiful job. But do not compare that with what I am talking about and what the member for Mandurah was referring to—that is, the new investment in government architecture. I am just drawing the conclusion that when the government is talking about transforming the city, it should think about the aesthetic appeal and what it adds to the city. In the comparisons I have run through, the difference between Labor and Liberal is that we have class all over the Liberals when it comes to aesthetic appeal and what it means about investment in buildings that attract people to Perth.

**MR M.P. MURRAY (Collie–Preston)** [7.03 pm]: I did hear something about an adjournment so I was back on my heels a little bit.

**Mr F.M. Logan:** You were enjoying my speech so much.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Yes, and I was thinking how apt what the member for Cockburn was putting was. It reminds me of the 1960s song *Little Boxes* made of ticky-tacky.

**Mr A.P. Jacob:** What?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** The Minister for Environment is well out of his depth. I do not think he was even born then, but a few of us remember that song. I have heard that comment about Perth and its lack of architecture when comparing it with other cities. Our squares and coloured panes of glass just do not cut it, although some of the Wellington Street stuff attempted to change that; but enough of that.

I rise today to express my disgust at the way Minister Nahan has put down my town with what he said about how things are going to change in the future. He was utterly disrespectful to Collie and its people when he got up at a conference of young energy professionals and said that Collie might not be here in 10 years' time. He was so disrespectful that he did not come down and at least speak to the people of Collie first and put his views on what he sees is the future of Collie. It is my view that he has probably wiped \$50 000 dollars off the price of each house in Collie. It is disgraceful. It is my view also that the intention of people who were about to do business or who were thinking of selling their small businesses has now collapsed. He made a statement and then left the conference room, but he did not have the decency to come and explain himself to my community. I think that is the greatest disrespect I have seen in my 15 years in this place. It was absolutely disgraceful!

Dr Nahan has been to the town once in his time as Minister for Energy, and I do not believe that at that time he engaged with any part of the community. He came down, went out to the power station and left. If that is not disrespect, I do not know what is. The people of Collie know that we have to change, and have been changing for many years. In fact, Dr Gallop, as Premier, recognised that and created a \$10 million future fund for the town of Collie. What did the Liberal Party do? The moment it got into power it withdrew the funding left over—funding that had been guarded to make sure that every cent of it was working towards Collie's change. Yet it was taken away and not replaced with anything. That was a straight political change. It was only because Collie votes Labor, and nothing other than that, that they were punished by a government that does not care about that community. But I do, and I will stand up for it here or anywhere else.

We have seen the mining industry change from seven-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts to 24-hour coverage, all for the sake of saving the industry, including the 350 jobs that went in one hit when the underground mines closed. We are changing and have the ability to change. The word is that the coal industry must change, but remember one thing: we are probably the best state in Australia for alternatives for power. There is the gas from the north; we accept that. We have coal down at the bottom of the state and we have renewables. The mix is perfect. What happened when Varanus Island blew up? Who picked up the load? The south of the state picked up the load. As a result of that gas failure, we lost \$2 billion that could have been invested in the state. It cost the state \$2 billion. If it had not been for the coal industry, who knows what it would have cost? I know for sure, despite other people's assurances, that solar power and wind power would not have picked up the difference.

Now we have a Treasurer who does not have the guts to face my community and say, "You've got to change." He knows that the people will change and have the ability to change. As I have said before, money was taken away from the coal future fund and we looked at gasification, which nearly got another industry in the fertiliser industry. We looked at geosequestration. Out of that small fund we levered \$50 million from the federal government, which this government has now taken away while at the same time telling us that we must change. That is the real truth of the matter. But, as I say, when we have a gutless minister who does not front, we have a

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problem with this state. One thing I do know, not only in Collie, but also in other parts of the south west: the people are looking forward to getting past the next 12 months so that they can get rid of this government. We want a government that is willing to connect with the communities, talk with the communities and tell us where the government is going, and to not say things behind the hand or at some obscure conference, which I am sure the minister did not think a reporter would put in the paper. That is what we want, and in saying that, I am proud to say that over time I have organised with the Leader of the Opposition and other ministers to come down there, including one who is unfortunately retiring from the federal Parliament, Alannah MacTiernan. We have had those meetings with the community; we have held meetings with big business, small business and just the general community, including the shire council, which plays a major part in any small town. We are working on it, we are working forward, but to just come out and drop a bombshell and destroy the dreams of many who have built up and want to invest in Collie is just not good enough.

I think my rant has gone on long enough, but I challenge Minister Nahan to come down and stand in a public place and explain himself. He should not worry about the tomatoes or the boos and hisses that will come with them; he should come down and explain this government's view on where Collie is going to be in 10 years' time. I challenge him. No doubt he will be listening or someone will pass it on to him, because he is not in the house as we talk now. We will see what he has to say then and how he is going to repair the confidence of our small town.

We do not pretend that there are no challenges; we know that both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party want to reduce emissions from coal and coal-fired power stations. We know that, and as I say, we can work towards that. Many, many options have been put forward since that statement came out; in fact, I think five different companies have now contacted me about different ways to mitigate emissions from coal. I think that is something special, but they need leadership, and we certainly are not getting leadership from the Liberal government of today. We need that leadership and we need it now, not in a few years' time; we need it straightaway.

As much as we have had some differences of opinion about how we are going to do it, the Shire of Collie has also been on the front foot, and through a partnership with the South West Development Commission it is also looking at how we are going to change in the future. The Minister for Energy has not even taken the time to talk to that local government, which is in partnership with what you would call a state government department. It beggars belief that that has been happening.

We have to remember that the town of Collie has been there for about 120 years. I heard the member for Kalgoorlie say that Kalgoorlie was of course one of the oldest goldmining towns in Western Australia, but coal was a very close second, and there has been much interaction between the two towns over many, many years. I see some similarities in Collie with drive in, drive out, while the member for Kalgoorlie has fly in, fly out, and it concerns me that we have people driving to Collie from Rockingham, Mandurah and, at one stage, Northam, to work. The last two shifts are normally 12-hour night shifts, and they then drive back to their communities, and we wonder why we are seeing people running off the road in the backwoods of Western Australia. We say, "It was a straight road and they've just rolled over and been killed." I think if we did some further examination on that, we would find out some of the reasons why, and it generally is a combination of tiredness and stress after working. Anyone who has been in the industry knows about a 12-hour shift, with probably three-quarters of an hour either side on pre-shift, knock-off and start, and then they are talking about driving home along the country roads. It is very easy—the heater is turned up, the radio is on—to drop off to sleep and then crash on those country roads. I think it is something we should look a little deeper on.

In saying that, at the moment I think it is pleasing to say that there is 450 megawatts of solar power going into the grid; I think that is absolutely tremendous. When you realise that is the size of a very large coal-fired power station, that is also very good. We talk about emissions, but we can do it together. Once the connection comes out, we do not have to wipe one out to have another, and then when we have a few cloudy days, wonder what is going on or, if we remember the hottest days, no wind, there was absolutely no breeze around on those 43-degree days. With that weather, those power generators are not working, and backup is not needed.

The other thing that surprises me about this government is that coal is by far the cheapest source. The government wants to lift the price of electricity, which hurts the most, including investment in our state; it wants to lift up the prices when it could be buying cheaper power from the coal-fired generators. At times they are sitting idle and they could be working. The system got out of order, and over the years we were told it was base, mid-merit and then peaking. What has happened now is that the peaking units are being used far too often at the expense of the base units because of take-or-pay contracts that were signed by the Liberal Party. That is something that we need to sort out. We could lift the base load up quite some distance to be able to have a higher base load, which would mean winding back some of the gas stations that are paid to be on because they have to take or pay. There is room to move on that.

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**Mr J.M. Francis:** Does the member for Gosnells, your shadow environment minister, share your view?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** Look, I look after my patch and I look after it to the best of my ability. At times we will have our differences, but we will not be like you guys, fighting out in the street; I will give him a black eye behind the door and then punch him out, so there is quite a bit of difference in how we do things!

**Mr J.M. Francis:** You're on the wrong side of the house!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** While age is starting to catch up with me, I still think I will win!

Anyway, there are differences of opinion, and whether it be the government's environment minister or the shadow minister, we talk about it. I am not saying coal and coal only; I am saying that with the mix-and-match, we can have a state that is bombproof as far as that is concerned.

**Mr J.M. Francis:** We agree but your side doesn't!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** That is not true at all. We will come back and have a look at what the federal government is saying about the wind-back. We have seen this over time; it is a furphy that you put out there. Why would a minister of the state come down and say, "We'll be out of the game in 10 years"? That is what he said. He said, "It'll be an entirely different town in 10 years' time." To give him one small credit, he did say that there is a community that has to be looked after. We want to know how; that is what we want to know. He cannot just make a statement and leave. He left the meeting so no-one could question him and ask, "How are you going to look after those people down there?" What other industry do we have down there? Shotts Industrial Park has been empty for an age, and there has not been one attempt to put another industry in the south west.

**Mr J.M. Francis:** I have a serious question. Roughly how many years of coal, at the current rate of digging it out, is there left?

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** At least 50, if not more. There is a lot of coal there and different extraction methods. The coal goes nearly as far as Boyup Brook, so there is a lot of coal there. At a rough figure, about a billion tonnes, so there is a lot there, but I do not see it being the be-all and end-all of coal. What we want is a timely change factor, which is not happening.

I will move on to a couple of other things that concern me. Again, one of the issues that has been on everyone's lips around Collie is rehabilitation of the mining voids. We have been trying to develop a tourist industry on a lake system; there are large mine voids out there. One is two kilometres long, a kilometre wide and 75 metres deep, full of water and ready to be turned into a tourism body. What has happened with this government? Nothing. In fact, Brendon Grylls said, I cannot think how many years ago, he would go swimming with me in the lake at the end of that year. No, it did not happen. There was a blow-in from the river; the water came in from the river and made the water of a better quality. What happened? There had to be a two-year study to work out why the water was better quality. Again, that is government departments; the mind boggles. We have the Black Diamond water body, which is beautiful. It was recently featured as one of the hidden jewels of Western Australia. That is beautiful blue water, but we are waiting for a rehabilitation to be done. I would say that mine body would be somewhere around 60 or 70 years old and it has still not been rehabilitated. The state is remiss for not doing that. I am not just talking about one government—it cannot be over that period of time! The rehabilitation should have been done and Black Diamond turned into another spot from which we can then generate income for our town.

The other thing is the motor sports complex down there. Some more work needs to be done out there. It is filling hotels on a regular basis.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** It is contributing very much to our economy on weekends when many of the people from the mining industry who stay in hotels go home. The beds and restaurants get a spin-off from our fledgling, I suppose, motor sports industry. In a couple of weeks' time we will have the Gazzanats event, which will probably get about 5 000 people into the town over the weekend. It is a wonder the Minister for Emergency Services does not come down with that V8 ute. He can do burnouts and laps around the track. He will be able to stand up there with his flag. He had better not bring a Liberal Party sign, because he will probably get rocks through his window.

**Mr J.M. Francis:** My '68 Camaro will be ready in a couple of weeks!

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** That is a different story!

It is certainly a revhead's area. We are also working on celebrating 20 years of motorcycle races around the town, with a major carnival for that weekend out on the motor sports complex. We need a hand with these things. We cannot just sit still and say we are not going to change.



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Stockton Lake is another issue. I have seen the plans for Stockton Lake, which is another mine void. It was around when I was little boy, so it has been there for a long time. I saw plans for that maybe 20 years ago and the work still has not been done. It is always someone else's priority, yet the government says to us change, change and change. We will if we get a hand.

Just to go back, I think a very large sum of money was spent on the Stockton Park industrial area. It is quite a large area. There is infrastructure already there—water, power, roads—but there is not one bit of industry. There are power stations right next door, there is water next door, and there are main roads and a rail line into it, but not one job has been put on the platform by this government in eight years.

It is good to see some movement on Wellington Dam on what we do in the future. Of course, I have been watching very closely what people think will be done. There was talk about a desalination plant, but the easiest way to do that would be to run brackish water to the desalination plant at Binningup, rather than building another plant. But it is private enterprise and it might have some good ideas. If we could be put a food bowl at the bottom of it, it would certainly be welcome, and I would support that as well.

The other thing about the power industry at the moment, of course, that has been brought up again is privatisation. People do not know whether they will have a job. What has been missed in the whole debate about power stations and coal mines is that over one-third of those people employed live in the Bunbury region—around Eaton, Australind and Dalyellup. We have only to look at that road at, say, half past six on any morning to see that there is bumper-to-bumper city traffic. People who say it is just about Collie have got it totally wrong. There is an old saying in Collie that if we sneeze, Bunbury gets the flu. We only have one car yard in Collie, so where do people buy their cars? They have to buy them on the coastal strip if they do not want to buy a Holden. I certainly get into a lot of arguments about the parochialism of Collie, and many times I hear that we are to Bunbury what Armadale is to Perth. There is a short distance and there is the filling in of houses up on Roelands Hill and those sorts of places. Future subdivisions have been put up, so it is very similar to what we see in Perth. We have to recognise the synergies between the two towns; instead of fighting, we need to work together.

The other thing of concern to me is the public housing rent hikes and the way that they have been calculated. A person will pay extra if they get a medical supplement, and I think that is just wrong. Remember that Collie is an old-style town and has a lot of Homeswest houses. The people in those Homeswest houses are now being penalised if they are ill. There has not been an across-the-board lift in the price, but people's supplements from the federal government are being measured in the process of how much rent people pay. That is a penalty for people who most need that money. Many people have been into my office to say it is just out of order and to ask how we fix it. It is quite easy to tell them how we fix it: vote Labor at the next election; it is as simple as that. Remember that Homeswest does not have an office in Collie. My office is the de facto office in that area. We do keys and all the work that a normal government office would probably do. I do not have a problem with that because politically it is very good. People come in and they only know one office, which is mine. I do not have a problem with that, but I am sure at times the staff wish it just would not happen because of the extra work that comes from that and some of the antisocial behaviour we get from people coming to the office. It is not all good news, but certainly some of it is.

**Mrs G.J. Godfrey:** Same as Belmont.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** I am glad the member for Belmont spoke up there, because since the debate on the TAB has dropped off a little bit, we have not heard from her. I do not know whether the horse has died or not; is it still going? I am not quite sure.

One of the things that has happened over the last few weeks is that I again met with members of the racing industry. I think the minister got it totally wrong the other day when he said there was a group from the racing industry going around and doing studies to report back to government about the what-ifs and what-fors of the privatisation. It is unfortunate that the government has not contributed any money to that. Those people do not have enough money and have been going around with a hat out trying to get enough to study what may happen, what could happen and how it could happen. They are not being biased with the report they want. They do not want a Gunston report, but another report that goes right back into the heart of the racing industry. I am sure they would have met with the member for Belmont and asked her to give them a hand.

**Mrs G.J. Godfrey:** No, they did not.

**Mr M.P. MURRAY:** They have not met with her. I suggest that she talk to them very quickly because they need a hand to get that report up before major decisions are made. The Minister for Racing and Gaming has said that they are doing that, but they were telling me that they had had no help from the government. They were told to go and find help from their own lot, and the Premier has refused to meet with them. Here we go down a line that sounds very similar to that given about the coal industry. We have a government that does not want to be

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engaged with major stakeholders along the way. I believe this government has failed miserably because of its lack of understanding that other people have views that are contrary to its own—some might not be as good, but I am sure that some are. The sooner the government wakes up, the sooner people might listen to it. That is what is happening regarding the TAB. The member for Belmont should give the Premier another kick and maybe she should look at another swapping of sides, but this time she should bring her National Party fairies with her. They came over last time, and then they flew back, leaving the member high and dry. They broke two legs and one arm trying to get back to that side of the chamber, when the government Whip had to tell the National Party Whip that they were on the wrong side. I have never seen anything like it in my life, and I still laugh about it when we have a talk over a beer at the racecourse. It certainly gave us something to talk about.

In my last few minutes I want to talk about the uncertainty of this government. I brought an issue into the house over 12 months ago about the noise on the Forrest Highway, where the road surface had changed, and the very loud noise was going into Eaton. I brought a grievance, and the minister said no; the government would change the road surface in 10 years' time. The next time, I took the Leader of the Opposition down and we met with the people again. We were thinking there would be five or six people there at the meeting, but 30-odd people turned up. I brought another grievance in here and after three and three quarter minutes the minister sat down and said that we were not having it. Blow me down—I am not joking; you could have knocked me down with a feather—they started work on the surface a week later! Thank you very much to the minister, but who is really running the show? The minister says no in here and then a week later we are getting a much-needed surface on the Forrest Highway to cut out some of the noise because Main Roads would not put noise barriers up like it does in the city. Country people have to put up with the noise but city people do not have to. In the government, one hand says no and the other hand says yes. It was confusing to say the least, but I am happy to have the job done so I cannot be too critical about that.

In finishing, I must say, as others have said before me, that not all is negative. I have high praise for our police force in the south west. I have seen the police working very hard in my area, where a former secretary of the Police Union, Mike Dean, is sergeant. We work together; we work as a community and work very hard. He is doing a great job, along with all his disciples around him, working on crime in many different areas. I thank the police in the whole south west for their work. The other thing, with the Minister for Emergency Services in the chamber, is to say thank you to the fireys. I also thank the minister for the briefing he gave me. Having a place in Preston Beach that I had left an hour before we were evacuated, I did not know it was on, but I came back and saw the work that was being done by those people. Well done to them, and also, just two days ago in Collie, it was exactly the same. Thanks to them all.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Dr K.D. Hames (Minister for Health)**.

*House adjourned at 7.33 pm*

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