

PREMIER'S STATEMENT

Consideration

Resumed from 14 February on the following question —

That the Premier's Statement be noted.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [9.25 am]: I rise to speak to the Premier's Statement for the beginning of the 2024 parliamentary year. When I spoke on the Premier's Statement last year in this place, I talked about the multitude of issues facing Western Australians, from cost-of-living pressures to a broken health system and major shortfalls in law and order, with a record number of police officers leaving the force, to name a few. I spoke of a Premier and a Labor government that had little understanding of the daily realities facing Western Australians, especially families. I spoke of a Labor government that was intent on banking multibillion-dollar surpluses on the back of a record iron ore boom, while leaving hundreds of thousands of families struggling to make ends meet and put food on the table. I spoke of a government that was out of touch. Twelve months on, with a new Premier at the helm, thanks to his union mates, it is incredibly disappointing to note that nothing much has changed. This government remains oblivious to the absolute mess it has made of the health system, has allowed violent crime to escalate out of control and simply does not care about the hardships facing everyday Western Australians.

We are now seven years into this WA Labor government and 12 months out from an election. It is clear that the Premier was digging around in the bottom drawer for something—anything—to crow about when it came to his statement this year. It is hard to remember a less inspiring Premier's Statement. I pity the spin doctors who had to come up with the content, because there was not much to work with. The Premier claimed that he is hungrier than ever to continue to work and excited for 2024, when the government will deliver on housing and cost-of-living measures. I will believe it when I see it. After seven years in government, it is extraordinary that the Premier could not talk about what the government has delivered but could talk only about how hungry he is to deliver something. After seven years in government and with billions of dollars of surpluses at its disposal, what an embarrassment that the Premier could talk only about the government's desire to deliver and not what it has delivered. It is clear that beyond the spin, announcements and fancy acronyms, this government has been so busy talking that it has been gripped by inertia when it comes to actually delivering something. It is not through a lack of resources or wealth. At a time when we are enjoying record surpluses, how is it that this government fails at the basics?

The Premier stated that he is focused on delivering a world-class health system and that things are heading in the right direction, but that just shows how oblivious the government is to the reality on the ground. The latest figures from the Productivity Commission paint a very different picture from the spin peddled by the failed former health minister. The reality is that Western Australian patients continue to experience some of the longest wait times in emergency departments in the country. Only 48 per cent of patients are seen in the clinically recommended time, which is the worst record of all jurisdictions in the country and well below the national average of 65 per cent. Of those, only one in three patients deemed urgent, and half of those deemed semi-urgent, were seen in the clinically recommended time frames. The data also reveals that WA has the equal lowest number of available beds, at 2.3 per thousand people, and the lowest number of nurses per thousand people in the country. Despite all the rhetoric and the media announcements, the reality is that this government has not prioritised jobs and beds in the health system. It has been asleep at the wheel. Although the health minister likes to point to global shortages, the reality is that other states are forging ahead. It is WA that has been stuck on pause.

Since 2016, our full-time nursing and midwifery workforce has increased by only 2 800. That should be compared with Queensland, which has employed an extra 5 900 workers in the same period. We are also spending a lot more a head than any other state for the same service delivery. WA's average cost for each presentation to emergency departments is \$822, which is well above the national average of \$692. This represents a 22 per cent increase since 2017–18. We also have the highest recurrent expenditure per capita of all states, spending an extra \$500 above the national average. Yet, we have seven of the eight worst performing emergency departments in the country.

The government will no doubt point to this as part of its so-called record investment in health. It is not enough to boast that we are spending more than every other state if that is not leading to better health outcomes, better bed capacity and more frontline health workers. It means that, despite the best efforts of our health workers, the system is inefficient.

The Premier used his statement to claim there are positive signs that things are heading in the right direction and that there was a reduction in ambulance ramping in December 2023 compared with 2022. That is a desperate attempt to grasp at straws. The reality remains that last year's annual total of 52 000 hours was more than double the 24 400 hours recorded in 2019, before the pandemic, and five times more than this government inherited in 2017 when it came to power. I am not sure that one good month after 80-odd months of rampant ramping is anything

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to crow about. We now also have a system in which our health staff are so disillusioned that they are going to extraordinary lengths to raise the alarm, pleading with the government to take urgent action and warning of the risk of another tragic death if resources are not improved. Their latest action was a letter signed by more than 50 clinicians at St John of God Midland Hospital in January, which spoke of a hospital that had been at capacity for almost a month, with patients left in corridors and ramped due to a lack of beds. The letter also reportedly stated —

We as the clinicians are desperate and are exhausted ... we are working in a ticking time bomb, another Aishwarya incident will happen,

Staff were considering bunking two beds for each ED bay to try to address the demand. The state government has announced funding to buy an additional 60 private beds at the facility, but they are not expected to come online until July 2026 at the earliest. This is a major metropolitan hospital and certainly not the only one that is operating at peak capacity. Buying beds to be delivered in two and a half years' time cannot be the only solution. This is a standard practice for the Labor government—a plan for a plan sometime down the track. Our frontline health workers are doing their best, but they can only deal with what they have. They cannot continue to operate with one arm tied behind their backs.

When it comes to the appalling state and lack of delivery by this government, we need look no further than housing. The spin doctors must have been in overdrive trying to come up with something for the Premier's Statement. Apparently, the government is pulling out all the stops and every lever to increase supply, throwing \$2.6 billion at steaming towards 2 000 homes being delivered.

These phrases all point to one thing. This government is all talk and no action, all spin and no substance. The reality is that the government's complete mismanagement of housing in WA has led us to this point now, with 1 142 fewer social housing dwellings than in 2017 and 34 000 people on the waitlist. The latest Productivity Commission figures highlight how and why we have got here. The government sat on its hands in its first term. This government, despite its gift of wealth as a result of an iron ore boom, spent significantly less than every other state on public housing infrastructure in its first four years of government. Despite our size and growth, with the strongest set of books out of all the states, it is unfathomable that even Tasmania and South Australia spent more on housing from 2017 to 2021. The impact has led to current housing shortages, which has contributed to a spike in rental price hikes, adding to the cost-of-living pain for Western Australians. Even more worrying, this government has no idea how to fix it, and last year announced a special crack team of Treasury bureaucrats to come up with an idea. Last month, it extended a call to builders to pitch "some solution". The government's one big plan to address the pressure points in the rental market was the \$24 million WA rent relief program, which was supposed to help 4 500 households. However, in its first month, it helped just 13 households. That was \$50 000 spent out of a \$24 million program. It is clear that the Cook Labor government's commitments in this place are not worth the paper they are written on.

The Premier spoke about helping families through cost-of-living pressures but stopped short of saying what extra measures this government would implement. Beyond the sugar hit of an electricity credit last year, this government is yet to outline how it will help the ever-increasing number of households struggling to make ends meet, going hungry or sleeping in cars. The last budget saw the government give with one hand through the power rebate only to take with the other hand by increasing fees and charges by \$154, with an additional \$513 in fees forecast over the next three years. The *Foodbank hunger report 2023* reported that almost 400 000 households are now struggling to put food on the table. This is up by 26 per cent, or an extra 80 000 households, in the last year. The report stated that the cost-of-living was to blame for food insecurity in 85 per cent of affected households. In a state that has been gifted such wealth, it is absolutely unconscionable that this government is sitting by while an increasing number of working poor are seeking help. This issue is now impacting a range of new areas in suburbs such as Warwick, Carine, Greenwood and Marangaroo, where an increasing number of children are going to school hungry, and charities are digging deeper to support them through expanded breakfast programs. An easy solution that could be implemented quickly would be to provide extra funding to those charities that are increasingly filling the gaps by providing food and shelter.

Last year the opposition called on the government to provide a \$300 million top-up to those charities that are shouldering the load of the current cost-of-living crisis, but it was ignored. This Premier promised a different style of leadership from that of his arrogant predecessor but is yet to show any compassion when delivering meaningful, targeted support for those who are doing it tough.

We are a prosperous and productive state, driving the nation's economy, yet we are being let down by the government that continues to take WA's competitiveness for granted. Western Australia has some of the best mineral resources in the world, with global demand soaring for commodities that are essential for the energy transition. We are in a prime position to support continued economic growth and prosperity, but we cannot do this without getting rid of Labor's unnecessary red tape. We must streamline approvals and work to remove the duplication between state and federal environmental law. This can be done while supporting optimal environmental outcomes. We have a government that has pocketed billions in royalties but has failed to recognise the challenges and opportunities for

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the resources sector that we face in a globally competitive market. We have a government that, on one hand, boasts about the opportunity of critical minerals for the development of lithium hydroxide, nickel sulphate and battery manufacturing but, on the other hand, has not delivered on these ambitions. We have seen a rapid closure of mines, as well as the mothballing of potential facilities, which should serve as a warning of how vulnerable this sector can be in competitive markets. This comes on a day when BHP has announced to the ASX an impairment to Nickel West of about \$2.5 billion, representing potential losses of over 3 300 jobs for BHP alone and about 10 000 jobs for the industry, 99 per cent of which are represented in Western Australia.

We have also seen the failures of our approvals process writ large with the announcement of the closure of Alcoa's refinery, which has been hamstrung by big delays to mining approvals to facilitate access to higher grade ore, among other issues. I have also heard from those who are frustrated by protracted approvals processes for green energy projects. Again, this should be a strength for Western Australia. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia tells us that over \$318 billion worth of projects in WA have been delayed waiting for approvals, 40 per cent of which are considering abandoning their operations for good. This is lost jobs, lost income for the state and lost opportunity. We are seeing a sector increasingly getting frustrated with a Premier who is unable to effectively stand up for WA against a Canberra-centric federal government, with policy settings and repeated interventions that are stifling investment and creating uncertainty for the resources sector, whether that relates to industrial relations, the changes to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act or the dramatic 70 per cent reduction in our skilled migration intake.

We have talked in this place about the challenges with reliable energy supply and the impact it has had on communities across the state as a result of extended and damaging outages. This is a result of the government's failure to heed the warnings over several budgets of the importance of investing in the grid and providing an effective backup supply. We must also ensure that we can get projects on board in a timely manner, recognising the role of gas as the transition fuel of the future, particularly in the face of the predicted Australian Energy Market Operator report that predicts growing demand for more gas and an increasing shortfall of supply. In short, for all of WA Labor's promotion of reviving domestic manufacturing and supporting industry, as commentators have stated, there seems to be little recognition by Labor at a state and federal level of how crucial but vulnerable mineral processing can actually be. We have also raised concern that the state government is weak in standing up for WA and addressing critical issues for this industry and for jobs in this state.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: We have already made a commitment to stop funding the activist Environmental Defenders Office to ensure that taxpayer funds are not going towards litigating against our own government-approved projects, and it would be good to see this Labor government do the same. Land access for industrial development and downstream processing is also a major roadblock that has seen many projects look offshore.

Law and order, justice and keeping our community safe are fair and reasonable expectations in a state as prosperous as ours—a state that has the means to provide these basic measures, yet one run by a government that clearly has no idea and no will to address these current issues. For all the tough talk and photo opportunities with guns, this government has let its critical frontline workers down. In 2022, 473 officers left the force—the highest number in the 189-year history of the WA Police Force. Many of them were career officers with decades of experience. Up to November last year, more than 300 officers had left the ranks. Prior to 2020, the average was 150 a year. The Minister for Police continues to stick his head in the sand, implying that they are leaving for other economic opportunities. The reality is that they are burnt out and morale is low, and instead of addressing these cultural issues, the Minister for Police continues to run the “nothing to see here” line.

The WA Public Sector Census results for the Western Australia Police Force shine a spotlight on the extent of discontent. Only 47 per cent of officers surveyed would recommend the force as a place to work, compared with almost 70 per cent across the wider public sector workforce. It was one of the lowest approval ratings of any agency in the WA public sector. This is a workforce that is clearly at a crisis point, yet instead of taking a look behind the curtains, the minister jumps on a plane to the United Kingdom to try to poach officers from there. Is it any wonder crime and antisocial behaviour continue to surge throughout our state?

The latest crime statistics show non-family threatening behaviour is up by 32 per cent from last year, while family-related threatening behaviour is up by 38 per cent. Assaults are also escalating. Family-related incidents are up by 15 per cent in the last 12 months alone. The regions in particular are at their wits' end. A recent visit to Kalgoorlie highlighted the confronting antisocial and violent behaviour that the community faces on a daily basis, with crime statistics showing that in a single twelve-month period from 2021–22 to 2022–23, threatening behaviour in the region was up by 44 per cent, family assaults increased by 52 per cent, and stealing and motor vehicle theft was up by 33 and 30 per cent respectively.

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Locals say it is the worst they have seen it. At present, they face reports of cars being rammed through store fronts and a newsagency owner being dragged onto the street where her head was smashed into the ground. Local businesses are hiding staff and tourists in back rooms while their stores are looted. Other retail workers have been threatened with rape, and some say they have no choice but to shut shop as the financial cost of fixing shattered windows week after week or paying for extra security is just not viable.

It is a town in crisis, but it is by no means the only one. The situation is replicated at other regional centres and metropolitan areas across the state. The concerns and fears are only compounded by a justice system that continually resorts to a light-touch approach—letting offenders off without consequence, only for them to reoffend while on bail. The government’s response this week has been to announce tougher penalties for assaulting retail workers. Although any measure to keep workers safe is supported, why does it apply only to retail workers? What about other innocent victims who are assaulted outside of the workplace through no fault of their own, such as Danny Hodgson? What guarantee can the government provide that the harsher measures will be handed down by the courts? Anecdotal evidence points to a justice system that rarely imposes maximum sentences.

Without any assurance they will be implemented, it appears to be just another public relations ploy to divert and deflect attention from a government that likes to talk tough but has absolutely dropped the ball when it comes to delivering the basics. Our communities, victims and their families have had enough. The people of Western Australia deserve better.

Amendment to Question

Ms L. METTAM: I therefore move to amend the question before the house. I move —

That the following words be added after “noted” —

and that this house condemns the Cook Labor government for failing to address the surge in violent crime throughout the state, for ignoring falling police morale and failing to halt the biggest exodus of officers in the police force’s history

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [9.49 am]: I was waiting for the member for Vasse to sit down. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I would like to contribute to the excellent amendment to the Premier’s Statement that the member for Vasse, the Leader of the Liberal Party, proposed. As she pointed out, we see police morale in Western Australia at an all-time low. If we look at police numbers, we will see that 200 police officers resigned in 2023, compared with an annual average resignation rate of 150 officers. That was on top of a record 473 police officers who resigned in 2022.

With the shadow Minister for Police, I attended the Western Australian Police Union’s general meeting and other matters in Perth late last year. It was very disconcerting to learn that many senior police officers are resigning. These are not people who might normally be considered at the end of their careers but people just at the end of their tethers; they are moving to other options in life to find employment. Although it is good that younger people are coming in, being recruited, going through the academy and entering the police force, it is worrying that senior members—people with experience who would mentor and guide—are leaving in such numbers. That imbalance in the police force will cause further morale problems in the future, and it needs to be addressed. It is not good enough just to bring in fresh recruits from other countries; they may have police experience, even great experience as police officers, but it will take them time to embed themselves in the community.

In saying that, one community I represent is the town of Mullewa, which had quite some issues with crime some time ago, and a policeman was recruited from Scotland. Chris Martin is now working at a very high level in Geraldton in the midwest region. He greatly took to the task and brought about a great improvement in the relationship between the police and the community in Mullewa, and he is now doing so right throughout the midwest. Sometimes amongst those recruits, we get people with ability who come in and help.

Generally, from my interactions with police at their events and with police representatives from all over the state, I get the feeling that there is a real morale issue and it is affecting the ability of the police to provide the necessary training, support and networks to make it a supportive workplace where people want to go. As the member for Vasse pointed out, in a recent survey, only 47 per cent of police thought that they would recommend the police force as a place to work, compared with 70 per cent of workers in the normal public service. When we think about it, that is quite a staggering statistic.

Ensuring that we have police on the ground in some of the areas where we have seen an increase in crime is becoming more and more of an issue. Although Operation Regional Shield, for instance, will target areas, finding the standing police force in many regional districts has proven challenging and is part of the reason that that measure has been undertaken. Why would that be? One reason is that, as the member pointed out, sometimes crime is not taken

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seriously in the courts. That is the feeling in the community. People are often released without being put in detention while they are on bail; they then commit other crimes. People are feeling hopelessness, especially in regional communities. As I travel around the state, I repeatedly hear the same cry coming from communities: there is an increasing level of violent crime. It might also be property crime. Sometimes it is a mix of both. It is a real issue if someone steals a car and uses it as a weapon, if you like, to ram a shop or a police car, or they set the car on fire in a place where it could cause further problems.

In many of the regional communities, we hear that social media platforms are playing a very negative part. Youth in various communities right across Australia are competing on TikTok as they burn cars or attack people. The federal government needs to look at what can be done to moderate the ability of social media platforms to encourage criminal behaviour by allowing the transmission of crimes on their platforms. I do not think it is something that the Minister for Police or the Western Australian government can regulate alone. It is certainly something I expect the police and Attorneys General should be discussing when they gather with their federal colleagues. I see that as a current issue in regional Western Australia. I have been to Kalgoorlie, as I mentioned in my reply to the Premier's Statement, and I have spoken to people who have been affected by crime; shop owners and people in the street come up to me and say that it is a real problem. They see street drinking and gangs on the streets. I witnessed a large group of people fighting on the main street of Kalgoorlie at 8.00 am. That is a real problem.

I am glad that, although belatedly, the Minister for Police sent some response into the town, but it is a systemic problem. It is not something that can be addressed by a sudden ramp-up of police numbers. That may help to break the cycle, but a lot of other things need to be undertaken to ensure that when people come into the community, they can get back to country when they are ready and are not left stranded. The issues around street drinking and people having safe places to go at night need to be addressed.

This government has been promising on-country solutions for a long time in areas such as the Kimberley to prevent the revolving-door situation in which youths who commit crimes in the Kimberley and other places are sent to Banksia Hill Detention Centre. We know what a disaster that has been under this government. That has become an academy for crime. People go in there and are not rehabilitated. They come out worse than they were when they went in. It is a damning indictment of this government. In the seven years of this government, we have seen nothing but woe coming from Banksia Hill and its management and organisation of unit 18 at Casuarina. These are places that are not helping to stem the flow of violent crime in Western Australia. The mismanagement of those institutions is one of the most damning indictments of the McGowan era of government. Despite the promises we have heard from this government, we are not seeing improvement in that area. I understand the frustration of the community when it sees judges refusing to put people in detention because they do not believe that there is an appropriate place for them to go. That urgent matter needs to be addressed. The on-country solution that was promised for the Kimberley has yet to eventuate. I talk to people in the midwest, the Gascoyne and other areas and they believe that similar solutions would help to address what is often a youth crime problem in regional communities. Yet we see reluctance from this government to bring about real change and real opportunity for those communities to handle the crime that they see.

At the Broome Hospital, there is a big bag full of weapons that people have tried to bring into the hospital. It is staggering to see the amount of material that has been collected over time from people who have tried to enter the hospital with dangerous weapons. The Minister for Police brought homemade weapons from unit 18 at Casuarina—I thought quite inappropriately—into the chamber; people try to bring much worse into the hospital system in Broome pretty much every day. That is the level that we have got to in some of our regional communities. These towns should be tourism communities where tourists and the local community feel safe. People who go to regional areas do not think they will have the same problems as a big city, but when they go there, they find that crime is a lot worse than it is in the city.

It is interesting looking at the figures on violent crime during the term of this government because they show that there has been a staggering increase over the past five years. Family and domestic violence incidents have risen by nearly 40 per cent, non-family assaults have seen a 17.9 per cent increase and the number of homicides in the metropolitan area in the last year increased by 23 per cent. That is not a sign that the government, the Minister for Police or the justice system has the situation under control. It is not just about police; it is about a whole lot of other issues, such as the youth crime problem. We need to address a range of matters that are being left unattended to by this government. We need to ensure that the police respond adequately when people are threatened. Another thing I have heard is that the response times to some quite threatening situations, especially in regional areas, have been very, very long. It takes a long time to get the police on the scene, so much so that people have given up even waiting for police and some have even given up on reporting incidents to the police. When an incident happens, people flee the scene, lock the shop or run away because they know that the police will not be there on time. These issues are debilitating for communities. They increase the likelihood of a shop not being able to continue to trade and the retail service being withdrawn from the community. Unless people spend time in the communities and do more than shoot out there to get a photo-op and head straight back, they would not understand. I urge the Minister for Police

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in particular to get out there and see what is happening on the ground not just in the regional areas. We know there are issues in the metropolitan area and that violent crimes are occurring there at an increasing rate. We also know that the police force has been debilitated by the sapping of morale and the churn of numbers. We know that a commitment was given to increase the police force by, I think, 950 or thereabouts. My understanding is that it is still 700 short of that figure. The Minister for Police can enlighten us if he wants to when he responds, as I am sure he will. He is scribbling away furiously over there. He will respond and we will hear about some papering over the cracks, because that is what we get from this government. It papers over the cracks by making a budgetary announcement, but the government has to do the work, get involved and understand what the problem is. It is not just a matter of making an announcement. The government must understand where it is all going wrong.

In the main, the police force has a great bunch of people. Most of them are reporting that they do not believe they could recommend that people seek employment in their workplace. If most of the workers are saying that it is not a great place to work, it is a problem. There will always be a problem recruiting staff in that circumstance. Instead of making announcements about recruiting more and more people and throwing them in—it is a bit like the trench warfare mentality of just getting more people and throwing them in there—the government should be worrying about what is going on at the coalface and how it can fix things and make a more effective police force. What is making it unattractive for police to go into some areas? What are the failings in the justice system that need to be addressed, especially the youth justice system? They need to be addressed so that we do not continue to have a revolving-door mentality whereby people go into the justice system through the courts and come back out and commit a crime again only to go back into the system.

Meanwhile, the communities are suffering. They have had enough. I can tell members that the community of Kalgoorlie has had enough. I have never felt such a measure of antipathy to a government and its representatives as I have there; they have had enough. If the government does not listen, that is to its peril, because opposition members are listening and speaking to people to seek solutions to these issues. I believe a change of government at the next election will occur, because right across regional Western Australia at the very least, but also in many metropolitan areas, crime has become such an issue that people are willing to seek change in the system that they see has failed. The government has had nearly eight years now to find those solutions. At the time of the election, it will definitely be eight years, and people will not see any change from this government, because so far it has shown itself to be incapable. Our new Premier comes in and promises change, but what do we see? It is just business as it was. We do not see any appreciable change. It will soon be a year since the Premier took office. By the time of the next election, he will be seen to have had plenty of time to bring about change. I believe that we will see a failure to make that change, and we will not see change in towns like Kalgoorlie and other regional centres up and down the state, from the south coast to the Kimberley.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [10.06 am]: I rise today to contribute to the debate on this amendment, which I have a strong view about. As everybody knows—this is not news to anyone in this house—I live and breathe this daily. The minister is very aware of that. I make it very clear from the outset that I acknowledge the incredible job our police force do. I see police daily. I am friends with police on the ground. They share information with me and I see and understand exactly what they do. In our communities, theirs is often a thankless task. In many instances, they are acting as a police officer, counsellor and health worker and are caring for children, which is not in their remit. They are pushed into a situation in which they are all things to all people. My view is that there are two levels of crime: there is crime committed by people 18 years and over—really serious crime—and then there is youth crime. I think the police are spending time on youth crime when there are many more things that we can do.

On Tuesday during question time, Premier Cook used carefully selected data to paint what I believe is a false picture of crime decreasing under his government. I found that a difficult comment to understand, because crime and police fatigue are spiralling out of control at the moment. I think youth crime is at its highest rate since the Labor government took office nearly seven years ago. It seems that the Labor government is determined to ignore the lived reality of regional people anyway and the distressing situation faced by these children who are on the ground. This really upsets me. I see it daily. For example—it happens in the Kimberley and everywhere—I see packs of youths running into a supermarket and throwing cans of baked beans and so forth. Police hands are tied because the youths are all under 18 years of age. I understand there are two issues here, but I continue to hear from constituents about the lack of accountability and consequences. There is frustration by the majority of the community who are doing the right thing about the lack of accountability and consequences, and, as a result, this frustration continues to escalate. This will continue to evolve unless we find solutions.

The police I spoke to are seemingly at the point of desperation. They are continually pulling their hair out over what they can do. They have more to do with fewer resources. More police are coming into town, but they are picking up the slack from other areas that could be helping them. I believe that the child protection division could step up and help these kids who are running around the streets at all hours. I talked to those kids in the middle of the night and the early hours of the morning, and they told me that they had not been home for two or three days.

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This is what the police are faced with. I find it disappointing for the police that this has not been addressed. The Cook government has been batting this around for a long time. The Western Australian Police Union has vehemently criticised Premier Cook's remarks on youth crime, asserting that the Premier's emphasis on police presence as a solution overlooks the systemic challenges faced by the officers on the ground. Despite active patrolling efforts and the underscoring of statistics on juvenile offences and assault rates, the police force on the ground are enduring daily struggles. We have foot patrols in our regions, which is fantastic, and they work really well with our police force. They interface all the time; I have seen them do that and I speak with them. But Paul Gale, the president of the WA Police Union, has also expressed disappointment and frustration with Premier Cook's recent comments, denouncing them as ignorant and out of touch with the reality faced by law enforcement professionals. The words "out of touch" resonated with me because I think it is sometimes hard to articulate what someone is living and understanding on the ground, and I recognise that. These locations are a long way from where the decisions are being made.

We emphasise the urgent need for a more comprehensive measure to deter youth crime and prevent these youth offences happening. One cause of this issue is bored youths. I received calls last night that kids had smashed up cars around the region; the Kununurra bank was smashed three times within a week and boarded up. Boredom is generating a lot of this. I give a shout-out to the police and community youth centre, which does a great job, but the service ends in the afternoon or early evening, so it is not giving these young people what they need.

My point is that the police do not have the extended resources they need outside of their remit. The Leader of the Opposition touched on this. I live in the town of Carnarvon, and a constant complaint I get is that no-one can get through to the police station after hours; the call diverts to Geraldton and then to Perth and then the caller is put on hold. One lady gave me an example that she had made a 000 call and had to wait two hours for someone to arrive. I do not know whether that would be acceptable in many cases. Fortunately, nothing dramatic happened on that occasion.

I think that one thing that would help the police would be an extension of the wraparound services and a more comprehensive and holistic approach to better facilitate collaboration between law enforcement, social services, education and health care. People particularly need these critical wraparound services. We have kids not going to school to get an education. They are walking the streets at all hours, which is when they get into trouble, and the police are then dragged into that and taken away from their other more serious duties. We need to open up new ways to educate kids who may not have been to school for five, six or seven years. We need to look at getting them back into a normal education system.

Housing is also contributing to the issues in this region. It is a complex piece of the puzzle. The police are just one part of the puzzle. I think that we need to ask the government to step up for all these aspects and step into this space more vigorously. We are seeing overcrowding. I see a stream of people in my office who are desperate to find housing. People are couch surfing. I see kids on the street. A little boy told me last week that his parents have gone back to Karratha. I asked him where he was staying and he said, "Wherever." This is happening. Although there was a drop in the number of women staying at the women's refuge after the banned drinkers register restrictions were put in place, it is now back to full capacity most of the time. I think it is a really big issue that we do not have any transitional housing out of the women's refuge, and we do not have a men's refuge or rehabilitation centre to help people who have addictions. There is a really big shortfall in these wraparound services that would ultimately help our police, and they tell me this all the time.

I welcome the Labor government's announcement of \$4 million for the immediate response Night Space program for young people in Broome. It is a welcome initiative, but it took years to act on it. Many of these towns have been asking for these services to be put in place over the last few years so that the frontline emergency workers, educators and community leaders who have called for these services can actually implement some of these processes and help these kids who are in desperate need of help.

I raised the issue of safe spaces in WA in a grievance in November 2022, but I received no firm commitment from the Labor government. I raised the issue again last year; I asked for a 24/7 safe space. The previous minister directed me to Geraldton. This is also one of the issues. We are isolated; we are 500 kilometres away. A safe house in Geraldton is no use to someone 500 kilometres away. These are the issues of the disconnect between the regions and the metro area, I think. In November 2023, in response to a question, the Minister for Child Protection questioned the authenticity of my advocacy on this issue. Seriously, I fail to see how that could be.

I also want to remind everyone in the house that we are a signatory to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, so I feel we have a responsibility to make sure that children's rights are met. In the case of many of the children whom we read about in the paper and whom I see, I do not believe that is happening. I just think we need to pull out all the stops and take a bipartisan approach to making change. We need to be frank and fearless about our conversations and I think we have to help the kids who are screaming for help. This—I come back to it—will

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help police. Please, let us find a way to make a change. We have not seen that over the last seven years. We all understand that it is a bureaucratic process and that there has been a royal commission, but I fail to understand how very small children who are not at home but are running in the streets at all hours of the early morning can be safer there than in a hostel or a safe space. I really do. I would question that and I would argue it.

Andrea Musulin is well known. She is a former police officer who does an amazing job. She recently put out a booklet on keeping kids in Carnarvon safe. The police are great advocates for the book. Andrea Musulin heads up the Carnarvon Family Support Service and has been pushing for a safe space for at least the last 12 months. Her group is well versed in the needs of the children and, being an ex-police officer, she is well versed in the needs of the police. She has the skills in her group to be able to facilitate a program that is going to help those kids. It will also support the Target 120 program and pick up the slack when that falls through the cracks.

I cannot understand why the government will not engage in a discussion around these issues. If we keep doing what we are doing, nothing is going to change. Although the police do the best they can, these are some of the resources and some of the things that we need to put in place. Suicide services are just not there in regional towns; nor are mental health services. It is a scary thing for people to face up to some of these situations. The pressing issues for communities, particularly in the regions, are safety, youth crime and its repercussions, and the disruption to regions and communities.

Victims of crime also continue to call for greater levels of accountability and consequences. That is the other group that is suffering here, and they are suffering badly. One thing that people raise with me all the time is that they will help out. People are prepared to help with this. We cannot continue to go down the path of neglect and indifference. Every member of our community deserves to feel safe and protected, regardless of where they reside. It is incumbent upon us as leaders and representatives to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to both support our police, who are copping the brunt of it at the moment, and provide essential services for those who need them, including children who need safe spaces.

The shortage of police officers could not come at a worse time. On Tuesday, the member for Burns Beach suggested that the Cook Labor government had provided an additional 1 100 police officers. In 2022, the acting President of the WA Police Union, Paul Gale, said that 465 officers had resigned and 97 had retired. Seemingly, there is a difference here, but some of the police officers I have spoken to feel as though they have nowhere to go. The support from external agencies and people who could pull a greater weight are not doing so. Do not get me wrong; I am under no illusion that those agency workers are absolutely working to their maximum capacity. They, too, need help. This is a massive piece of work. I hope we can see some changes quickly because it is not helping anyone. The number of police who are leaving are not just statistics; they represent dedicated men and women who serve our community tirelessly. Their decision to leave reflects a deep-seated issue within the force, potentially. An officer in charge in my region left the police force, which was really upsetting. I knew he was leaving and I went to wish him well. He proceeded to talk at me, nicely, for an hour because he was so despondent that he had not had anybody else other than me congratulate him on 36 years of service—34 of those in the regions. He was an extremely competent, well liked and dedicated public servant. It disappointed me immensely that he was not recognised. There was no morning tea or lunch and no phone call. He was very despondent and said to me, "I won't recommend that anyone in my family joins the police force; there is no recognition." That is just one instance I have experienced personally that I am sharing with members. It is a small thing that we can change without too much effort. The other issues I have spoken about are clearly massive issues that we need to work on over a long period; however, we need to recognise those police as being deserving and we have a commitment to protect them. It was devastating for me to hear that story from the OIC.

In closing, I urge the Labor government to please look at this matter from a holistic point of view and have frank and fearless conversations to bust this open and look at all the different groups that work together, and that can work together. The government should do an audit—whatever it wants to call it. We need to look at how we are doing things because that has not happened. The government has just been spinning the wheels, in my view, for the past few years. It is not through the want of people asking questions and putting suggestions forward. I know that if we keep doing what we are doing, nothing will change, but we need to keep working together and we need to be open about providing solutions that are outside the box and that may not fit. We need to find a way—how can we do it, not how can't we do it. This might mean bolstering resources and support in other areas such as child protection or mental health, or providing the facility for an after-hours safe house in a lot of these towns, which everyone is screaming for. Indigenous and non-Indigenous people I have spoken with have said they would sign an agreement with a group if they were to take their children and care for them; they are actually happy with it. I believe that there is scope to make major change. I call on the government to please step up into this space and work together to try to find solutions, particularly for the youth crime space and the police who have to cope with that, day in and day out. In many cases it goes beyond their remit.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Minister for Police?

Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Ms Merome Beard; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Kevin Michel; Ms Mia Davies;
Mrs Lisa O'Malley; Mrs Lisa Munday; Ms Emily Hamilton

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [10.23 am]: Is anyone else speaking? I am going to wait until all members opposite have spoken.

Dr D.J. Honey: That was it.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Okay; thank you. I was not sure because I thought originally there might have been an agreement on a 20-minute contribution from each side, but I understand that it is just however long anyone spoke.

I thank members for their contributions. I am disappointed the Leader of the Opposition left the chamber after denigrating and criticising the Western Australia Police Force in such a disgraceful manner. To do that in the Parliament and then leave before I could hold him to account is disappointing, but probably fairly indicative of the shallow nature of his character when it comes to these sorts of claims and the lack of interest in police.

At the outset, I advise members of both the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA that they cannot say, “Before I start criticising and denigrating the Western Australia Police Force, I would just like to put on the record that I support the Western Australia Police Force” and then go on to make all manner of claims about police morale and performance. I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition has returned to the chamber. It is disgraceful that the Leader of the Opposition claimed that the Western Australia Police Force does not respond to calls and criticised them for not showing up to urgent situations. In doing so, he has put on the record that the National Party of Western Australia does not support the Western Australia Police Force and is critical of its performance.

I am happy to consider a couple of other points made by the Leader of the Opposition, particularly about Kalgoorlie. Members are probably aware that Kalgoorlie recently suffered a significant event that it had never encountered before when all the high-voltage powerlines to Kalgoorlie were torn down, with the potential that it could have taken a week or more to replace them. Fortunately, the Liberal and National Parties did not win the 2017 election and did not get their way in their desire to sell Western Power, which could have meant a far less rapid response and intense focus on resuming supplies because the power supply to not only Kalgoorlie, but also everywhere in Western Australia would have been privatised and entirely at the whim of shareholders. Had the Liberal Party and the Nationals formed government, power in Western Australia would have been vulnerable to priorities other than supplying and supporting the Western Australian population.

Whilst I am on the subject, I want to echo yesterday’s response from the Minister for Energy. It is disgraceful that the Liberal and National Parties have failed to acknowledge just what an extraordinary job the dedicated Western Power personnel—its workers and engineers—performed in resuming power so rapidly. Indeed, by the time the Leader of the Liberal Party got to Kalgoorlie, she was able to enjoy a cold beer in an air-conditioned pub. She made that ambulance-chasing trip to complain about the power blackout, but by the time she got there, she was able to post on social media a photo of herself in an air-conditioned pub with a cold beer in front of her. That was one of the benefits of the hardworking Western Power crews who reinstated power to Kalgoorlie.

The blackout was a disruptive and terrible event that had a massive impact on the people of Kalgoorlie, but it was further exacerbated by the antisocial behaviour that was subsequently experienced. Every summer, people from the lands go to Kalgoorlie, to the extent that we have a summer response strategy that runs in coordination with the local council, community groups and the police, and is partly funded by different tiers of government. It tackles the challenge of people coming in from lands not having somewhere to sleep and often engaging in the harmful use of alcohol and generating antisocial behaviour. That happens every year, but this year it was particularly acute during and immediately post the blackout and, understandably, it created an enormous amount of anxiety in Kalgoorlie. I was contacted by the member for Kalgoorlie, who, unlike members of the Liberal and National Parties, lives in Kalgoorlie. She cares about the conditions of and the services provided to the people of Kalgoorlie, and actively takes any concerns she experiences to the government. She contacted me about this matter, well before any ambulance chasers from the Liberal or National Parties arrived in town for their very infrequent visits. If there is a disaster, they will be there as soon as they can. If there is anxiety, they will be there to pump it up and cause more anxiety. If there is concern about any issue, they will echo it and magnify it; do not worry about that. They are all about ambulance chasing.

The member for Kalgoorlie explained to me that she had been at a meeting of small business owners called by the chamber of commerce. She said that representatives from 71 small to medium-sized enterprises had expressed concerns about antisocial behaviour, and she provided me with a list of significant concerns that were articulated at the meeting. One of them was whether the minister could come to Kalgoorlie to brief them on the situation and hear from them. Two days later, I was in Kalgoorlie. It took us a day to be able to go there. I did not go there just on my own; I took with me Assistant Commissioner Darryl Gaunt, who is the senior police officer in Western Australia for the regions, and he brought with him Commander Brad Sorrell, who is the next most senior person for the northern region, which incorporates the goldfields–Esperance police district. Both of them came with me and, at the request of the member for Kalgoorlie, we attended a meeting that was chaired by Glenn Wilson, the excellent Mayor of Kalgoorlie–Boulder. He was not ambulance chasing and talking down his town; he spent

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his entire time focused on trying to improve conditions for his people, which is very commendable. Representatives from the chamber of commerce were at the meeting.

There were a lot of people from interest groups, peak bodies and service providers at one of the meetings that the two senior police officers and I attended. We heard their concerns, and Assistant Commissioner Gaunt explained to people that the way the Western Australia Police Force responds to acute issues in the regions is via Operation Regional Shield, which has already been enacted. It is already in force right across regional Western Australia. The government does not tell the police how to police; the government provides the resources to enable policing. One of the things we have done—this began more than two years ago in response to acute juvenile crime in the regions—is provide resources so that the police can provide whatever policing effect is required in any regional location in response to an acute challenge. That is what is going on in Kalgoorlie right now. We came and we heard about what they were confronted with.

The Leader of the Opposition misled the house. He suggested that the police had not responded to an incident. I can tell members what happened, because I actually talked to people when I went there. Firstly, Tania, a newsagency owner, was attacked. It was an appalling incident. Within 48 hours, the police had arrested and charged the person who committed the assault. I spoke to Tania. I also spoke to some of the young staff who work in Jay Jays, which is adjacent to the newsagency, and witnessed some of the antisocial behaviour and the prevalence of street-present people from the lands that the Leader of the Opposition referred to. I am aware of another incident in which a shop owner witnessed an assault by a grandson on his grandmother and then gave shelter to the grandmother in the shop while the juvenile tried to break his way in and caused damage. I am aware that the person who reported the incident claimed that the police did not respond at all. I assume that that is where the false claim from the Leader of the Opposition originated. I can tell members that the reason the police did not go to that shop is that they were chasing the juvenile, who by that time, immediately after the event, had shot through and tried to get away. The police chased him and arrested him within 15 minutes of the incident. The reason that they did not go to the shop was that they were busy catching the culprit. To suggest that the police did not act efficiently or did not respond is shameful. For the Leader of the Opposition to put that claim on the record is disgraceful. It should be embarrassing for the opposition. I wonder how long this coalition—or whatever you guys call it—will last. The degree of embarrassment on one half of the coalition must be getting incredibly intense; it must be getting difficult to bear. That was a very poor performance by the Leader of the Opposition with respect to Kalgoorlie.

As I said, two days after the public meeting when the member for Kalgoorlie brought the issue to my attention and requested my response, my response was to go there. That was on Wednesday, and I returned on the following Monday, again, with Assistant Commissioner Gaunt and Commander Sorrell. By that time Operation Regional Shield deployments had ramped up because Assistant Commissioner Gaunt had heard from people in the community. He responded by adjusting resources and providing a dedicated response to ensure that there was capacity to lift the effort through the ground foot patrols, particularly in Hannan and Bourke Streets in Boulder. They had already started doing that before we went back; police had been working incredibly hard.

As we saw, dozens of additional police had been operational in Kalgoorlie only the week before, breaking an organised crime effort to steal and amateurishly refine gold in the suburbs of Kalgoorlie. It was fortunate that the police did that because otherwise we would not have known that the town site had been contaminated. Clearly, they had enormous police resources. Most people would not have seen them because they were off doing that operation. Unless they were coming through someone's door, they would not have seen it. By the time we got there on the Monday following the Wednesday of my first visit, there were regional operation group officers, regional investigation unit officers and additional liquor enforcement division personnel coming to assist the liquor enforcement unit in Kalgoorlie to tackle exactly the sorts of issues that the Leader of the Opposition referred to such as sly grogging and efforts to avoid the banned drinkers register.

Reverting to that subject, the WA Labor Party is the only reason that the banned drinkers register exists in Kalgoorlie, and thanks to my colleague Hon Reece Whitby's actions last year, police can issue a banned drinker order and put people on the banned drinkers register to ensure that those people do not have access to takeaway alcohol. When I was a minister in our first term of office, the WA Labor Party initiated and ran a trial of the banned drinkers register. There was all manner of criticism from those on the other side and people in the community, and there were concerns about the potential negative consequences. Now it is one of the key means of tackling this challenge. A lot of the crime to which the opposition refers is driven by the harmful use of alcohol. That is what invariably links to children being neglected and abused. Juveniles then leave the home because it is not a safe environment and go onto the streets at night-time thanks to people who sell alcohol irresponsibly. Children end up on the streets at night-time and then become vulnerable to engaging in criminal activity, which over time escalates to them offending, hurting other people and coming into contact with the justice system. The banned drinkers register is one response. The member for North West Central referred to the immediate response called Night Space, which is not necessarily what she thinks. A pilot program is running in Broome. It is a challenging environment because,

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sadly, we cannot do what a lot of the people in Kalgoorlie community had expected we might be able to do, which is to take people away from their families and essentially house them overnight. That is not what this program is about. This is an opportunity for police, through Operation Regional Shield, to pick up kids off the street who have not necessarily committed crimes; they come across them and are concerned about them, and the Night Space enables them to take the children and find a responsible adult. If they cannot find a responsible adult, there is a location where they can be kept overnight for part of that time and then be referred to other services to ensure a wraparound response. That pilot in Broome is being delivered by an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation and I hope it is successful and that we will be able to replicate it elsewhere.

I refer to the claim that alcohol is driving crime. Once those juveniles get to the point of encountering the justice system, they go into detention. The Leader of the Opposition incorrectly, inaccurately and totally wrongly again claimed that somehow a service is not being provided at Banksia Hill. The average out-of-cell hours at Banksia Hill is eight and a half to nine hours a day. The juveniles in Banksia Hill are going to school, which is something many of them do not do when they are out of detention. They are getting exercise. Most importantly, they are getting a range of services to address and try to change their behaviour. They are also getting direct mentoring from an Aboriginal service inside Banksia Hill now, but also all the youth custodial officers, who do an extraordinary job.

Opposition members have said that they want to shut down detention. That is the Liberal and National Parties' position on detention. I do not think that can happen. There needs to be a consequence when a juvenile, or anybody, commits an offence, and particularly when they hurt other Western Australians. When they harm someone and damage our community, there needs to be a consequence. Detention is an opportunity to change their behaviour. Detention needs to be an option and the Liberal Party and the Nationals WA saying that we should shut down detention is disgraceful. We have no alternative. The suggestion has been the —

Several members interjected.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The opposition spokesperson for police and corrective services has stated publicly that unit 18 should be shut. The alternative that he supports is a safe house or a bail hostel out in the community. They are hardened serious offenders in unit 18 and often in Banksia Hill too, because that is how they get there. They do not get there by being an innocent party. It is time the Liberal Party and the National Party considered what they say. Do not criticise the Western Australia Police Force. It is doing an incredible job. Do not criticise our youth custodial officers and prison officers inside detention who do a really tough job. How about they stand up for them and recognise the extent of the challenges they confront and how hard they work to try to get better outcomes? All we hear from members opposite is criticism.

Division

Amendment put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Ms R.S. Stephens) casting her vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Ms M. Beard	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle
Dr D.J. Honey	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.J. Davies (<i>Teller</i>)

Noes (39)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Ms M.J. Hammat	Mr S.A. Millman	Ms J.J. Shaw
Ms L.L. Baker	Mr M. Hughes	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Ms R.S. Stephens
Ms H.M. Beazley	Mr W.J. Johnston	Ms L.A. Munday	Ms J.M.C. Stojkovski
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr H.T. Jones	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Dr K. Stratton
Ms C.M. Collins	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mr P. Papalia	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr S.J. Price	Mr D.A. Templeman
Ms L. Dalton	Mrs M.R. Marshall	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms D.G. D'Anna	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr J.R. Quigley	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms R. Saffioti	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Ms A. Sanderson	

Amendment thus negated.

Consideration Resumed

MR K.J.J. MICHEL (Pilbara) [10.48 am]: I rise today to give my contribution to the Premier's Statement. As the 2024 parliamentary year begins, I start by saying that I am proud to represent the people of the Pilbara as part of the Cook Labor government. I will take this opportunity to update the house on some of the exciting developments for the Pilbara region since my reply to the budget speech last year.

Extract from Hansard

[ASSEMBLY — Thursday, 15 February 2024]

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Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Ms Merome Beard; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Kevin Michel; Ms Mia Davies;
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One of the major developments has been the \$187.5 million Spoilbank Marina project in Port Hedland. The Spoilbank Marina boat ramp section of the construction has now been completed, with the final stages of construction for the landside component and landscaping now underway. This project will significantly benefit Port Hedland's growing population. Its state-of-the-art facilities will be enjoyed for decades to come and include a four-lane boat ramp and trailer parking for 200 vehicles. I had the opportunity to open this on 20 January. Site works are still ongoing on the public recreation and events spaces, as well as public amenities, the public fishing jetty, shade structures at the swimming beach and a 21-boat pen marina with capacity to expand to 80 pens in the future. The Spoilbank Marina project is in its final stages, with the boat pens and fishing jetty expected to be completed and opened in mid-2024. Civil and landscaping construction is well in progress and will continue until late 2024, when the marina is expected to be fully opened. The Spoilbank Marina project is a key election commitment of mine and the Cook Labor government in collaboration with the Town of Port Hedland and BHP. I would like to thank Pilbara Ports, the Pilbara Development Commission and all the contractors that have been involved in delivering this important commitment for the Port Hedland community.

This project was promised by the Liberal-National government many times. I have been told that this was promised since 2002, but nothing was done. I would like to thank all ministers, past and present, for their hard work in getting this project underway and the Cook Labor government for its strong support for this project. Only a Cook Labor government will listen to the people of the Pilbara and deliver. Testament to this is the Lumsden Point project in Port Hedland, about which people and businesspeople have spoken to me on many occasions. Once again, I am proud of the wonderful work that ministers, past and present, have done in this space. The Cook Labor government has invested \$129.1 million on this project. The Lumsden Point development will facilitate the export of battery metals such as lithium and copper concentrates and the import of renewable energy infrastructure, including wind turbine and blades, as well as support the growth of direct shipping services to the Pilbara. Once again, this shows the commitment of the Cook Labor government to doing what is right for Western Australia.

Sport is a vital part of any community, especially in regional areas like the Pilbara. This is why I welcome the Emu Oval sports lighting upgrades in Newman. I had the privilege last year of turning on the lights at this oval, representing Minister Templeman and shire president Anthony Middleton. This was made possible through a fantastic partnership between the Shire of East Pilbara and the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries through the community sporting and recreation facilities fund's club night lights program. Thanks to this funding, they have successfully upgraded the sports lighting at Emu Oval in Newman. The upgraded lighting system now caters for small-ball sports, allowing summer sports like cricket, baseball and tee-ball to be played in the evenings away from the extreme heat that we experience in the Pilbara. This means more opportunities for the Newman community to safely participate in and enjoy their favourite sports. In Karratha, we provided the Karratha BMX Club with an active regional communities grant of \$5 000 for accredited coaching of BMX riders and BMX coaches. This grant will help with their personal development. These sessions will enhance the skill set of the club's coaches and individual riders, increase their confidence and ensure all riders and coaches understand the importance of correct technique when BMX racing.

The Cook Labor government knows the importance of community sport, and that is why it is committed to creating opportunities for people living in regional Western Australia. Stage 7 of the Dampier Road shared footpath and bicycle path in Karratha is currently underway thanks to funding from the WA bicycle network grants program. Construction has started on the new footpath along Rosemary Road and Dampier Road. This path will provide links to community destinations, including St Luke's College. The Cook government has facilitated this project with a WA bicycle network grant of \$175 000 to the City of Karratha. This project is due to be completed by mid-2024. Walking and riding have huge benefits for everyone, which is why the Cook Labor government continues to add to its record funding of bike and pedestrian infrastructure through the WA bicycle network grants program, doing what is right for WA.

Karratha is very fortunate to be hosting a new feature film, *Red Rock Run*, later this year. The project has received \$2 million in funding through the Western Australian regional screen fund and Footloose Production funding via Screenwest, demonstrating the Cook government's continued support to grow, develop and build the screen industry throughout Western Australia. *Red Rock Run* will create 220 jobs for Western Australian cast, crew and extras, and is estimated to result in \$5.9 million expenditure in the state, including \$3.85 million in regional expenditure. *Red Rock Run* follows previous movies filmed in the Pilbara, including *Red Dog*. This production is great news for the community, bringing a bit of Hollywood to our beautiful region. Last year I had the privilege to open the Kevin Richards Memorial Oval and clubrooms on behalf of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon David Templeman. I must say he is a great sports minister and a very sporty minister.

Mr D.A. Templeman: Oh, yes. It's in my genes.

Mr K.J.J. MICHEL: The Kevin Richards Memorial Oval has been the home of the Karratha Kats Football and Sporting Club since 1989, and has expanded to become one of Karratha's favourite sports clubs. Kevin Richards

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was a great stalwart of Karratha and an active member of the Karratha and Districts RSL. He was on the executive of the Karratha and Districts Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a life member of the Kats football club. He was also the president of the Roebourne Shire Council as well the serving president of the Karratha branch of the Australian Labor Party. The Kevin Richards Memorial Oval development has delivered an important opportunity for Karratha and the surrounding communities and clubs to engage in physical activity and enjoy the benefits of participating in sport.

Another favourite project of mine is the Manuwarra Red Dog Highway. With stage 4 of the Manuwarra Red Dog Highway underway, Karratha and Tom Price are nearly connected. Residents of Karratha and Tom Price have been waiting for years for this road to be completed. Only a Cook Labor government will deliver this project. I would like to thank my colleague, the former Labor member for North West Coastal, Hon Fred Riebeling, OAM, who advocated for this road to be built. I have now taken up the baton from where he left off and will work hard with the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, to make sure we deliver this project. The Yindjibarndi and Wintawari Guruma people hold non-exclusive native title rights over the majority of the land required for stage 4. Main Roads Western Australia has agreed to enter into Indigenous land use agreements to allow for the construction of stage 4. The benefits of this highway will be improved access to Millstream Chichester National Park and Karijini National Park to help boost tourist traffic in the heart of the Pilbara; a travel time saving of over two and a half hours compared with the alternative sealed route; improved connectivity between Karratha, Roebourne, Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Newman; improved safety; better access to hospitals and medical services, local businesses, shopping and service centres; improved regional tourism opportunities; and more reliable journeys by reducing road closures, particularly during the wet season. I look forward to Tom Price and the surrounding communities being connected.

The Cook government knows the importance of tourism in our state. Thanks to a \$16 million investment by the Cook government, major roadworks and lookout upgrades at Karijini National Park are now underway. The new outlook at Knox Gorge will be built during 2024. This new facility will build upon previous work and plans to progressively improve gorge access and viewing, making it safer for park visitors. Karijini National Park will remain open during the overall infrastructure works. Upgrades to the lookout for Knox Gorge will include 41 kilometres of sealed roads to boost access between Weano Gorge, Karijini Eco Retreat and Dales Gorge. Karijini is the jewel in the crown of the Pilbara. The wonderful gorges, cool flowing water, amazing wildlife, breathtaking views and natural beauty make Karijini National Park one of the most attractive places in the world, and that is why only a Cook government will seal the roads within it to provide a smoother journey for park visitors, enabling cars and coaches to travel safely to and from the most popular gorge sites. I also thank Minister Whitby for his input into getting this funding for Karijini.

Since I last updated the house, the Cook government has invested in health care in the Pilbara. I had the pleasure to attend the official opening of six new staff houses for healthcare workers, which was part of in my election commitment of \$3.5 million, with the Minister for Health, Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson. The development is essential to the East Pilbara community and Puntukurnu Aboriginal Medical Service. PAMS is an Aboriginal community-controlled health service that provides culturally appropriate and comprehensive primary health care in Jigalong, Parnngurr, Punmu, Kunawarrtji and Newman. The housing provided can accommodate visiting allied health and specialist services to regional Aboriginal communities. I have been working with the CEO of PAMS, Robby Chibawe, and his team since 2017. They all do a fantastic job supporting communities throughout the East Pilbara. I am pleased to support them with new housing. I am proud to be part of a Cook government that knows how important healthcare workers are in communities like the Pilbara and is working on initiatives to assist with recruitment and retention, even at primary care clinics.

In all my travels driving around my electorate and meeting with constituents and businesses, it is very clear that only a Cook Labor government will look after the best interest of Aboriginal people in my electorate. They had been neglected for years and years by past Liberal state and federal governments. I am proud that the Cook Labor government is providing better outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal people in my electorate.

The Cook government has invested \$72.4 million in the redevelopment of Roebourne District High School, which is underway. This major development will provide new facilities for staff and local students attending the school and will include a particular focus on the delivery of programs to engage Aboriginal children and a design that will provide greater opportunities for all staff and students to understand and respect Aboriginal history, culture and language. This development will help make high-quality education more accessible for families who do not live close to Karratha. Graduates and year 10 to 12 students can enjoy the newly refurbished \$8 million Minurmarghali Mia campus in Roebourne, complete with four new classrooms, a revamped light automotive workshop and a brand new workshop for construction and training. I was proud to attend the opening, alongside Hon Simone McGurk, MLA, the Minister for Youth at that time. The Minurmarghali Mia campus upgrades were an election commitment. This would not be possible without the Cook government investing a record \$243.4 million to upgrade TAFE

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infrastructure across the state, including the Pilbara. We also invested \$10.5 million in the Ganalili accommodation and training facility, which is being designed and delivered by the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation in Roebourne. This facility will enable Aboriginal apprentices and low-income workers to access suitable, stable and affordable long-term accommodation supported by wraparound services.

In my travels, I also went down to Karratha Senior High School. I looked at all the works underway for the \$31.7 million refurbishment of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics block, which should be completed in another few days. Another great investment of \$7.2 million was made to Baynton West Primary School for new kindergarten and pre-primary tech blocks, with two pre-primary classrooms, toilets, a kitchen, general learning classrooms, one STEM room and an activity storeroom, which are almost completed.

One thing I can really be proud of is capped airfares throughout the Pilbara. Once again, it is only a Cook Labor government that will think about, support and solve great issues like this for regional areas, especially at the present time when the cost of living is felt strongly in the regions. The Cook Labor government is easing cost-of-living pressures across the state. Throughout the Pilbara, locals have benefited from discounted flights through the regional airfare zone cap scheme. In December 2023, 50 317 capped airfares were sold on the Karratha–Perth route. Since the scheme started, 200 000 airfares have been sold. The scheme makes a real difference by providing affordable and accessible air travel for Pilbara residents, and the latest figures show just how important it is to locals. Will the Liberal and National Parties think of such great outcomes for regional people? I do not think so. Only a Cook Labor government can deliver on keeping the best interests of regional people at heart. As mentioned by my parliamentary colleague Lara Dalton, the member for Geraldton, Nexus Airlines is another company using the regional airfares scheme. I thank the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, for her great support on regional issues. The electricity credits, business rebates and seniors' discounts on fuel and taxis have been well received by the people of the Pilbara.

In November 2023, I joined Hon John Carey, Minister for Housing, in Roebourne to announce the Cook government's further investment in housing in the Pilbara and Kimberley regions through our north-west Aboriginal housing fund. This innovative program aims to be wholly Aboriginal-owned through the construction of new homes on Aboriginal-owned land and the engagement of Aboriginal builders and service providers to work collaboratively as program owners.

The Cook government is also expanding the Hedland Aboriginal home ownership program to provide a further four refurbished homes and affordable rental properties and support services in the Pilbara. In November, a further six modular social homes were completed in the Pilbara across Roebourne and South Hedland. Those homes will be made available for applicants on the public waiting list.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr K.J.J. MICHEL: All these great initiatives will improve the lives of Aboriginal and local people seeking accommodation and provide secure and stable housing.

The Cook government has strengthened the banned drinkers register in the Pilbara by giving police officers, health practitioners and social workers the ability to place people on the register. It will also now be illegal for others to buy alcohol for people on the register, with the risk of receiving fines of up to \$10 000. Enforcing the banned drinkers register is keeping the Pilbara safe from alcohol-related violence, harm and crime. I thank the Minister for Police and Minister Reece Whitby for introducing the banned drinkers register in full force.

Last week, I joined Hon Stephen Dawson, MLC, Minister for Emergency Services, and my parliamentary colleague Hon Peter Foster, MLC, to officially open the upgrades to the Karratha Fire and Rescue Service station. In the past year, Karratha Fire and Rescue Service's 25 volunteers have responded to more than 200 incidents, including a HAZMAT truck fire near Karijini National Park and a series of complex bushfires in west Pilbara in late 2023. The refurbishments include a new training room, a kitchen, an office space, a tunic room, enhanced change rooms, additional storage, female and male toilets, and showers. In December, the station received the keys to a new urban pump, which can be used to respond to bushfires, structure fires, hazardous material incidents and road crash rescues. The same fire engine was also delivered to the Port Hedland branch.

The Cook government is investing more than \$140 million to provide new equipment, resources, personal protective clothing and facilities to support our frontline fire and rescue emergency services. I would like to thank Minister Dawson for supporting all the emergency services in Karratha, Port Hedland, South Hedland and Newman with new trucks and equipment to do their work safely. Also, we should not forget a new search and rescue boat for Marine Rescue Dampier. I would like to give a special shout-out to all the volunteers who put their lives on the line to protect us and our property. They do a wonderful job, and this is another way the Cook government is keeping the Pilbara safe and doing what is right for WA.

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As I start a new parliamentary year, I look forward to the journey ahead in 2024. This parliamentary year, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the issues facing Pilbara residents. I thank the Premier for his strong leadership and support for the Pilbara in 2023 and 2024. With the Pilbara economy flourishing and growing, now is a perfect time to advocate for Pilbara residents, help ease the cost-of-living pressures, reduce youth-related crime and fight for local jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships, which is something I will always fight for. Thank you.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [11.12 am]: I rise to provide a reply to the Premier's Statement, which was made on Tuesday. I start by doing the same as many other members in this place have done. We have just come out of a pretty challenging summer and emergency season, and it is still underway; I make that point. I start by acknowledging the volunteers and emergency services workers who have been protecting us and responding to the challenges we have experienced.

It has been a very hot summer. I just looked at the forecast for my electorate, my home town of Northam and Merredin for the next four days, and we will have more than 40 degrees for the next four days at least. In fact, one forecast was saying 49 degrees, which cannot possibly be true because that has to be restricted to Marble Bar; it cannot possibly be Northam. It gets hot. We understand that that is summer and the risks that come with the heat are challenging. We have some amazing volunteers, emergency services workers and government workers—I will talk about that a little bit—who turn out when we have infrastructure and system failures. We have had bushfires, and we heard members already talk about bushfires over the summer. No doubt, as we have had a very dry summer, we will see the fires continuing.

The biggest concern in our electorate was caused by a storm. We had a supercell storm, which many members have talked about. I think I heard the Minister for Emergency Services at the time say that its impact might have been more devastating to public infrastructure than cyclone Seroja's. I do not like comparing and contrasting. Cyclone Seroja was utterly devastating and unfortunately those communities are still suffering from the impact.

I was working from home on the day the storm came through the electorate. I sat in my 100-plus-year-old home in Northam and thought I was going to lose the roof of my house. I thought, "Right, I am going to have to call those wonderful people and make sure it is tied back on." There was a deluge, and then a crack of thunder—it is pretty scary in the wheatbelt when we can hear thunder without the rain, but it arrived quickly on the tail of the storm. It was wild and woolly and there was a spectacular light show.

I was one of the lucky ones. I am not sure why. If members have been to Northam, there used to be a multistorey brown brick —

Mr D.A. Templeman: Hospital. My mother worked there.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: Hospital! The member for Mandurah would know it well. It was built to withstand nuclear bombs and was a monolith of a building in the middle of town. I live on the same block as the old hospital block. I think the hospital, the police station and the courthouse—I will not give anything further away—are on a fairly secure power grid. Others in Northam were not so lucky: many went without power, which had a domino effect across the electorate. We had days, and in some cases weeks, with no power. There were challenges with water as a consequence because we rely on power for the pump stations. We have the longest pipeline on the way to Kalgoorlie and then the stringy farmland supply that runs right out to the Beacons and the Mukinbudins of the world. We were on water shortages and restrictions; however, the Water Corporation—bless its heart—could not tell anyone because it could not call anyone. When we have no power, we have no mobile communications. There is a failure at a state, federal and industry level. We have asked questions of ministers and I have heard a continual, "That is not our issue; it is a federal issue. It has to go to the federal minister." I have regularly raised it with Telstra and other telecommunications companies. When it impacts the safety of our communities, as it did in the wake of this enormous storm, it is the responsibility and bailiwick of the Minister for Emergency Services and therefore our state cabinet.

I wrote a letter about one of my towns' Telstra towers prior to Christmas; I knew it was unreliable, and we were about to enter a period when there would either be a bushfire or a summer storm, which comes with challenges. If there is no backup or reliable power source, what happens to the communities that are left without mobile telecommunications? The reality is we are very lucky that no-one was seriously hurt during those storms. The aftermath, as we have seen, particularly with cyclone Seroja and others, is people turning out and living in unusual circumstances with no power and under heat distress. We have people going about their business in the electorate. They are driving about, if they can get fuel. I had a moment when The Lakes BP petrol station had to let me go because I had filled my car up but the station had no way of taking a card payment from my phone because there were no mobile telecommunications. We had to explain to the hardworking staff behind the desk that they would have to trust that we would come back to pay—which I hope most people did. I popped back the next day when mobile phones were working again and EFTPOS was back up and running. That experience was multiplied across multiple days in my electorate, when there was no phone availability and no ability to call 000. I had communities

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in a cone of silence for multiple days. That meant that if someone had a heart attack or a car crash or somebody had injured themselves while they were attending to something, they had no capacity to call 000. By extension, we had no capacity to call any of the emergency services workers, who are all on mobile phones, to take the calls. If they are called to attend a fire or by St John Ambulance, they take the calls on their mobile phones. There was a cone of silence; we were back to the 1980s and literally jumping in cars and checking on neighbours, which of course everyone did. There were challenges with fuel shortages because most fuel stations require power and not all have a generator. That panic started to affect people's health and mental health.

I am not over-egging it. I called all of my 27 local governments, which extended to about 30-odd communities, some of which I could not get through to. I was not going to add pressure to the system by driving to Narembeen, which stayed within the cone of silence for some time. At that point, I wanted to think about how I could use the pigeons that roost regularly on my back verandah and send them to Narembeen and other communities to check on people! I am joking about it, but it was pretty nerve-racking. People contacted my office about their experience of the aftermath.

Mrs L.A. Munday: And we don't use landlines anymore. That's the thing, isn't it?

Ms M.J. DAVIES: That is a very good point, member for Dawesville. A condition of the sale of Telstra was a requirement under the universal service obligation for Telstra to maintain the landline. The taxpayers of Australia pay around \$35 million a year in advance to make sure that Telstra actually maintains that line. I can tell the member that that does not happen. Landlines are just as unreliable as mobile phones. That is the only type of line for which Telstra or any other telecommunications company is forced to meet a minimum standard, and it is the only thing that our communities can rely on in some cases. I can tell the member that most of the calls on this that came into my office were about the landline being neither maintained nor working, in addition to the mobile phone black spots and the other issues with unreliability that we have. People think that the landline will be a lifeline. Telstra works hard for those vulnerable customers but unfortunately in an event like this its customers were unable to contact anyone. Of course, the USO does not extend to mobiles, which is one of my criticisms of it. I heard the Premier talk about Alannah MacTiernan's appointment to the three-yearly review of our telecommunications network across Australia. I feel that every three years we get a report that is very similar to the previous report, but there is no political will to impose regulatory requirements, particularly for the provision of mobile telecommunications. There is no doubt that it is an essential service. It has gone from being something that is nice to have to being absolutely essential. Businesses, community safety and the ability for us to thrive economically and socially is reliant on having connectivity, yet the kinds of services offered and the reputation the companies want to have is left up to the private sector.

Everyone pitched in to help. I had neighbours checking in on each other. Right across the electorate, people called in on the elderly. Our shire councils are very good at providing a public space when it is disgustingly hot, which it was. The rec centre or the shire building provides a place where people can bring a generator and people can come in and at least charge their mobile phones, if they happen to have a signal. However, it was not an ideal circumstance. We accept that mother nature can be fickle. For the most part, we always take care of ourselves in the bush. During that heat and without power or connectivity, a lot of people who had been on holiday would have returned home to chest freezers of ruined meat and produce. Although the government's \$240 extended blackout payment was a nice gesture, it is highly unlikely that it would have touched the sides, particularly as country people do not shop on a daily basis and have a lot of food in their freezers. The more remote and rural residents absolutely do that.

Doctors were checking their cupboards for vaccines and in all of our St John Ambulances to make sure that they had not been impacted. I know for a fact that a number of surgical centres were unable to guarantee that they had not been affected, so they had to throw out a whole bunch of their vaccines and medications. Again, that put the community at risk until the vaccines and medications could be restocked. Businesses were counting the number of lost days of trade. The first thing that came back when I spoke to all my shires was a heartfelt thankyou to the Western Power crews, the Water Corporation workers on the ground and our emergency workers. The criticism was not for the guys and girls working on the ground who were working in incredibly difficult circumstances; they do a wonderful job.

The second thing that immediately rolled off their tongue was that telecommunications and connectivity during and after these events remains an absolute disgrace. I find it baffling that we are still having this conversation in 2024. I really do not want these telecommunication failures to result in serious injury or death because someone is unable to contact an emergency service worker. There is a link between the reliability of our power and the risk to our communities, which is why this is an issue for the state, as well as an emergency services responsibility. I have no doubt that it is something that the Department of Fire and Emergency Services looks at. That risk of connectivity and power failures would appear at the very top of its list because everything that needs to be done in an emergency is impeded when people cannot communicate.

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I will by no means let the state government off the hook for its woeful track record in dealing with power infrastructure in the bush. I will have a few things to say about that later. It is a scandal that billions of dollars sit in state coffers while basic infrastructure such as telecommunications, power and water fail us in regions like the Central Wheatbelt. We need to make sure there is resilience in these systems so that our communities are not just surviving but coping and thriving. The conversation got a bit heated yesterday when we talked about the investment that this government says has been made. I point out that when the federal Labor government came to power, a mobile network hardening program had been announced by the previous federal Liberal–National coalition to create battery backup and generator hubs for rapid deployment to telco sites. The previous Liberal–National government recognised that this needed to be addressed and was working with industry to achieve that. It was delayed when the Albanese government came in. When someone looks at the website now, two years later, it is only 60 per cent complete. How difficult is it to put some generators in one place and deploy them in the event of an emergency? It cannot be that difficult. The website states that only 60 per cent of the project has been done, and I can tell members that a majority of the sites throughout the wheatbelt certainly do not have a reliable generator or backup system that makes our system resilient in the event of an emergency.

Before I move on to talk about Western Power infrastructure—I am fast running out of time, and I want to talk about other things—I will quickly go through some of the feedback I got from community members. When we talk about not having power in 40 to 45-degree heat, we think of particularly those who are vulnerable, such as our elderly, who quite often live in smaller homes without the possibility of relief, may not have connection to family or be isolated, or have medical issues. Or we think about people with young children or those who are unable to travel. A number of people cannot simply jump in their car and pop down to the supermarket. We were lucky in Northam. If we could, we would head down to the Northam Boulevard Shopping Centre or Coles for some respite—although I think Coles suffered for a little while as well! People in the metropolitan area can go to the movies and those sorts of things, but it is not a possibility for some people in our part of the world. I received an email from the Wyalkatchem Senior Citizens Homes Trust. There are a number of units for senior citizens in their community, and this would be replicated across my electorate.

They took the time to write to me to tell me what happened when the power went out. According to my notes, the email states —

During that ... outage ... I was extremely concerned for two of our neighbours who are both 86 and had no generator until day three of the outage. The gentleman is extremely disabled physically and they both rely heavily on support and assistance from their daughter who lives in Perth. Their daughter was awfully distressed when she couldn't raise her parents by phone and in desperation found out my daughter's number and rang ... to see if she was able to contact us ... (my daughter) was able to let her know the power and phone outage situation which consoled her immensely, although she was still ... worried about her parents being in this situation. Early on day three I picked up the lady ... took her in my car out on the road out of town until we found one bar of coverage on a hill (obviously from a tower somewhere else). I called her daughter and let my neighbour speak to her quickly in the event we lost further coverage to reassure her she was managing okay and not to worry ...

Each day I called on these neighbours taking ice and cold water to help them manage the intense heat. The ... gentleman really struggled with the heat and no cooling of any kind ... My husband has a 'falls alarm' which of course did not work during the power and phone outage. He wouldn't be the only one in in this situation ... either, and not being able to contact an ambulance ... was of grave concern to everyone!

[Member's time extended.]

Ms M.J. DAVIES: The statement continues —

I spoke to another elderly lady after the outage, who lives alone in Wyalkatchem, who suffered terribly during the first few days of the outage until her generator was repaired. She only had tap water to drink and that was extremely hot, and to cool down she ran a bath but that ... was too hot to step into. A lot of other people would have been in this exact situation.

Another resident said, according to my notes —

When the power went off for 5 days I was absolutely isolated from my family in Perth and even the hospital if I'd needed it. It's extremely scary and hard, especially for older people like myself ... Even the Landline couldn't work. Hopefully something can be done ... so I don't have to go through something like that again.

Another resident said, according to my notes —

The power outage in Wyalkatchem and surrounding areas caused a lot of problems for everyone as there were no mobile phones. We couldn't contact family and they couldn't contact us ... This meant no calls

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to ambulances, police or any other medical services. There was no refrigeration for medication and food. There was no air-conditioning for elderly people in the severe heat. We had no fuel to run generators or leave town. People were having to travel 100kms to get fuel and phone reception to contact loved ones.

The chair of the Wyalkatchem Senior Citizens Homes Trust has collected those experiences and forwarded them to me. I undertook that I would share those as just a small insight into what happened during those prolonged outage periods. I can assure members that many of those circumstances were replicated across the electorate. I am so grateful that no-one required emergency services during that period.

Although we understand that this was a supercell storm event, and we have heard the ministers talk about the transmission lines crumpling, there needs to be more resilience and less reliance on infrastructure that has the capacity to be impacted by these increasingly frequent events, as we see climate change pushing these events to the extreme. There have been long discussions in our community about how we can build that resilience.

It is quite funny: I talk to my communities about going back to distributed and isolated grids. Everybody of a certain generation will remember that, back in the day, they used to power up the old generator at the power station. The day that the south west interconnected system came to communities and people could just switch on the light was a day for celebration. We are now very much talking about going back to those distributed grids with standalone power and hopefully renewable with backup, so that when we have failure in one part of the system, we do not have that tripping across the entire network. That is what happens in places like the wheatbelt, because we have long stringing lines that end up in places like Beacon, Bencubbin, Mukinbudin and Westonia. We have big transmission lines running right through the electorate, which makes us a great place for big renewable projects. I am very proud of the fact that for a long time we have had significant renewable energy projects in the wheatbelt. The Collgar wind farm was one of the very first, and we have had a number of solar farms set up because we have access to that transmission line that essentially runs right along the Great Eastern Highway, along with the water infrastructure. But that does not give any comfort to the equally important communities that are away from those big transmission lines along the stringing lines, and we are talking about tiny communities. I regularly speak about the fact that most of my communities comprise fewer than 250 people and are spread across big distances. Outside of Northam, York and Merredin, we are talking about smaller communities, but that does not mean they do not deserve basic infrastructure.

I have spoken about the North Eastern Wheatbelt Regional Organisation of Councils, or NEWROC, the voluntary group of councils in the north eastern part of my electorate, which did some really good work on the impact of the live export ban and the economic and social issues that will create. It is a pretty progressive voluntary organisation of councils. It has been working diligently to try to work with government, to no avail, to determine how we could improve reliability of power in that north eastern part of the central wheatbelt. I have raised a number of grievances with the previous Minister for Energy. We have tried to set up meetings with the minister to try to plot a pathway forward so that we can progress or push those wheatbelt communities up to the top of the list, so that we talk and hear about distributed power sources and grids for communities, not just for farmers. A number of farmers have gone onto batteries and standalone power systems—great, fabulous. For individual farming businesses, that is outstanding. I am talking about whole-of-community solutions so that we are not reliant on one stringy line coming in that goes out on a regular basis.

We have been unsuccessful; I will say that. The other day in question time I asked the Premier: when are we going to get more of the standalone power systems, distributed grid systems and solutions for our communities? That requires investment from the state government, and we want to know what we have to do to bump our communities up the list. Quite frankly, we are sick of being left at the bottom of the list and being told that if there were a solution, it would have been delivered by now. That is what we heard from the minister previously: that it is a difficult situation. Well, there are engineers and there must be government will. There have to be some funds available in the massive budget surplus to direct towards the basic infrastructure that our communities deserve so that we can keep people safe and encourage and attract people to do business, and continue to do business, in this part of the world.

Quairading is another community that has advocated long and hard for a solution. It has been in a nexus of transmission lines and poor power for many years. I really look forward to the day—hopefully before I am no longer in this house—when we can put a tick next to that box and say, “For a number of years we have tried to make this a priority for this government, because we think basic infrastructure like reliable power should be something that is at the top of the list.” It should not be the squeaky wheel; it should be done through a strategic plan. It should be progressed and funding should be in the budget for it. It should not just be left to Western Power to fund it from its own funding packet, because we know that, as a statutory authority, it has a different set of criteria for how and where it spends money. It has to be a government priority to invest in our power infrastructure in the wheatbelt.

Before I move on from power, I would like to talk about the delays within Western Power for connection to the grid; we have already talked about this. It is simply unacceptable for it to take 18 months for a new power connection.

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People are building houses and setting up businesses; they are looking to try to add new homes so that we can deal with the housing situation. I have a letter from a constituent of the member for Moore, but because Toodyay comes into the central wheatbelt and as it is in very close proximity to Northam, there is quite often a bit of overlap between the Leader of the Opposition and me in the office. This constituent wrote to me and stated —

We moved to the Toodyay area and applied for a new power connection in October 2022. We still do not have power, and the estimated date for connection is 3 April 2024. We consider 18 months to wait for a new power connection to be unreasonable, —

I agree, wholeheartedly! That is unreasonable —

especially when there is an existing supply on the opposite side of the road to our property and our neighbours have power connected.

The completion date has been moved from February to March and now April, but we have little faith that it will be completed on the said date. The continual delays are impacting our health and wellbeing and have added considerably to our cost of living.

...

We have written to Western Power regarding our concerns and are awaiting a response. We have also written to the Minister for Energy to ask why Western Power is so under resourced that they cannot provide a timely service to rural residential customers.

I could take that letter and photocopy it 22 times every week. It is not acceptable that there are people waiting up to 18 months for connection to power. We live in a very wealthy state and that is a failure, on the most basic of levels, by a government that needs to do better.

I will talk very briefly about the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. I heard many members in their replies to the Premier's Statement speak about the public transport subsidies that have been provided and the cost-of-living initiatives that the Cook government has announced over the last two or three months. I feel like a broken record sometimes. The Country Age Pension Fuel Card is about levelling the playing field. For the most part, we do not have public transport in the area of the state I live in. Where we do, I am sure those subsidies were taken up, but very minimally. I would love the government in the upcoming budget to relink the Country Age Pension Fuel Card to the consumer price index, so that it is not going backwards in value, and increase it, because it has been stalled since members opposite came to government. People who live in regional Western Australia rely on their cars—we cannot get away from that. When people live in communities such as mine, that is what they use. Whether it is a taxi in Northam or whether they drive or use their neighbour, that Country Age Pension Fuel Card represents the ability to stay connected to their community as an older person, and it is important. I urge the Minister for Regional Development and the Premier to listen when we say that that is important and do not leave that out.

I quickly put on the record, as I wear my Aboriginal affairs and member for Central Wheatbelt hat, my congratulations to Mr Darryl Ryder on his 10 years' service to Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management. He was one of the first rangers to be employed under the wheatbelt NRM's program. He is an inspiration and a mentor to many who have come through and it was lovely to see him recognised by that organisation for his service. May there be many more who can take up those opportunities that are being offered on country.

Before I am completely out of time, I congratulate the three finalists in the upcoming Western Australian AgriFutures Rural Women's Award. They are all from the wheatbelt! I congratulate Jay Page, whom I met the other day; Mandy Walker, whom I have worked with for a number of years—an absolutely inspirational lady and very deserving of the nomination; and Nicola Kelliher, whom I also know incredibly well and have dealt with on various fronts, as would have the member for Roe. They are all champions of regional Western Australia. They are all from the wheatbelt. They have amazing projects and initiatives they are seeking support for through the rural women's leadership. Regardless of the outcome of the awards, they will become part of an alumni that will be supportive and open new doors for them. I congratulate them for putting themselves into that system. I look forward to going to the awards to see who takes it home. Whomever it is, the wheatbelt wins because obviously we had some amazing talent put forward this year and they are all very deserving, come the time when the gong is awarded.

I look forward to my final year in this chamber. I will be advocating for the people of Central Wheatbelt as well as dealing with the very important portfolio issues for which I have responsibility, under the guidance and support of the strong leadership team we have here as part of the alliance opposition. The Leader of the Nationals WA made a very good and solid contribution on the challenges we see going ahead for 2024.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [11.42 am]: Before I get into my substantive reply, off the back of the member's contribution before me and also a phone call I had with my dad, who lives in a little town called Korumburra in South Gippsland, Victoria, I want to acknowledge the resilience and capacity of country people and their self-reliance. He and many South Gippslanders in Victoria are currently experiencing power outages off the back of a horrible

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storm front. Obviously, Victoria is small. The land mass where I come from is very small in comparison to the regions of WA, but I want to highlight two things. One is my own personal reflections and commitments to ensuring that the regions of WA are not left behind as we move towards the transition to renewable energy. The second is the obvious fact that Victoria privatised its power many, many years ago so getting the power back on in little country towns such as Korumburra is even more complex because of the various levels of energy ownership.

As we begin the new sitting year—the government's eighth—I do so with a sense of gratitude and optimism, feeling energised and positive about what the WA Labor government has delivered, is delivering and will continue to deliver into the future. That is what this government has been doing for the people of the Bicton electorate and beyond since 2017. We have delivered on the commitments we made prior to 11 March 2017 and those we made prior to the historic 2021 state election win. Now, at the commencement of 2024, we are ready and raring to go. We are ready to work harder than ever to continue to deliver good government and important infrastructure, protect our environment and natural resources and provide cost-of-living relief. We do this because that is what good Labor governments do, and the Cook Labor government is, of course, the best, because it is committed to doing the right thing by WA.

As we commence the new parliamentary year, we on the government benches do so with optimism and a unified sense of purpose, which is in stark contrast to the dispirited demeanour of opposition members.

Since first coming to government in 2017, our state has seen significant economic and health challenges, particularly during the COVID years. The coronavirus continues to circulate within our community, with ongoing infections still causing disruption and, sadly, deaths, particularly in vulnerable cohorts such as those living in aged care. I take this opportunity to acknowledge our aged care workforce for the crucial and highly valued work they do. With both my mum and mother-in-law living in residential aged care, I know firsthand the powerful and positive difference their caregivers provide to their quality of life. I extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all those who work in the aged-care sector.

Likewise, the economic and social impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt locally and globally. The cost of living is a strain on family budgets, delays in our supply chains affect the delivery of goods and materials, and the overstimulated building and construction sector puts pressure on many small businesses. With the electorate of Bicton being home to more small business owners and their families, including mine, than anywhere else in WA, any pressure on small business is directly felt by many of my constituents. Small business represents 97 per cent of all businesses in Western Australia. The sector's contribution to the state's economy cannot be overstated. I know personally how stressful it is to rely solely on the profitability of a small business to put food on the table. That is why the support given by this government's many initiatives and grant programs over the past seven years has been crucial. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the Small Business Development Corporation and the ministers who have held the small business portfolio during our time in government.

We have greeted all the challenges that have come before us with diligence and vigour, firstly under the leadership of Mark McGowan and now as the Cook Labor government. Going forward, we are a united team that is well prepared for whatever comes our way. My contribution today will be part reflection and part looking forward. As we commence the 2024, it is important to spend some time looking at where we have been to prepare to navigate the road ahead. Firstly, I acknowledge and thank the Premier, cabinet and all my caucus colleagues for their incredible efforts and achievements thus far. I also congratulate the most recently appointed ministers and parliamentary secretaries and thank all those who have served in these positions during the time I have been in this place. I know that it is as important to them as it is to me to remain mindful of who we are here to serve and the enormous responsibility that comes with that service. I also acknowledge and commend the Premier and other colleagues who spoke before me. I thank them for their thoughtful and positive contributions to the Premier's Statement debate.

Looking back over the time since I first became the member for Bicton, I see that this government has delivered many great things in my electorate and across our vast state, things that are making both an immediate and long-term positive difference to the people of Bicton and beyond. We have delivered to our schools a schools maintenance blitz that has helped to improve the physical appearance, safety and amenity of, and access to, Bicton schools and those throughout our great state. The delivery of important things like school maintenance is made possible because of the work of this Labor government to deliver on budget repair. This type of funding, together with other fully funded and delivered commitments to improve our public schools throughout the past two terms of this government, shows what can be done when good financial management is practised over a long period. Now in 2024, we see further evidence of this, with the recent announcement of the landmark agreement between our federal and WA state Labor governments that will result in full and fair funding of all Western Australian public schools by 2026. This is a significant moment in the history of public education in Western Australia and represents an additional \$777.4 million investment by the Albanese government in Western Australian public schools from 2025 to 2029, with the Cook Labor government committing to invest at least an equivalent amount over this period, bringing the total additional investment in public schools to \$1.6 billion.

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Before going into more detail about this historic joint investment in public education in the state, I would briefly like to go back to 2012 and the time of the Gonski review, which laid the foundations for the current landmark deal for WA, which is characterised by a student-centred funding model. The Gonski 2.0 review, or Gonski report as it is more commonly known, was a comprehensive examination of how school funding in Australia could be used to enhance school performance and student outcomes. It focused on improving outcomes across all student cohorts, including disadvantaged and vulnerable students, as well as academically advanced, or gifted, students.

One of the key points about the Gonski reforms was inclusive schooling. The review emphasised evidence-based inclusive schooling that benefits all students. It recognised that the current age–grade system often left too many students behind. Some students fell behind due to content-heavy curricula and a lack of individualised support. Gonski 2.0 proposed mixed-ability classrooms and greater use of formative assessment to address this issue. Another key point was equity effects. The report acknowledged deep fault lines in the education system, leading to negative equity effects. It was a radical approach. Gonski 2.0 proposed a radical shift, including mixed-ability classrooms and formative assessments. The goal was to ensure that all students received the necessary support to succeed, regardless of their initial learning readiness. The reforms also addressed school funding. They provided rules for determining how much funding schools would receive from the commonwealth government. The aim was to have consistent treatment based on needs-based funding.

A key recommendation was the schooling resource standard, or SRS, which set a base rate of funding for each student, with additional loading for disadvantage factors, such as Indigenous heritage, to promote equity. In summary, the Gonski report aimed to create a more equitable and effective education system by focusing on inclusive practices, individualised support and fair funding allocation. The Gonski report made 41 recommendations for a fair, equitable and efficient school funding system.

Who remembers the Gonski bus—anyone? It was 2014. I remember the Gonski bus. It was an initiative of the Australian Education Union. They were big old green buses that rolled out of Canberra and Brisbane, I think. There were four buses that took off across Australia. One of them came to Perth. I remember it very well. This is from an article in the *Augusta–Margaret River Mail* at the time —

THE Australian Education Union’s Gonski Van tour made a stop in Margaret River on Wednesday to promote school funding reforms.

Led by Australian Education Union president Angelo Gavrielatos and WA State School Teachers Union president Pat Byrne the Gonski Van is one of four vans touring the country calling for greater public school funding.

At the time, I had two kids at Palmyra Primary School. I am a very proud public school parent. I was part of the Save Our Schools group to stop the cuts. We were fighting funding cuts by the Barnett government at the time. I recall being out at Midland. I dragged the kids out there. We were going to meet the bus as it rolled its way through WA, highlighting the impact of funding cuts and the lack of commitment by the Barnett government at the time. We got to Midland in time to wave off the bus, but it stands out in my mind for several reasons. One was the fact that it was a grassroots campaign approach to ensure funding equity to the state of WA. At that time Labor was in opposition and was well and truly committed to ensuring that funding would be re-established when it won government, which of course it went on to do in 2017.

There was a long list of recommendations in the Gonski report, but needless to say state and federal Labor governments were committed to that funding model and to funding, and the state and federal coalition governments that came after were basically committed to unpicking them. What does the situation look like now? Currently, the commonwealth provides 20 per cent of funding for public schools. With this historic landmark agreement between the Albanese government and our Cook state Labor government, funding will now increase in WA to 21.25 per cent in 2025 and 22.5 per cent in 2026. As the primary funder of WA public schools, the WA government will contribute 77.5 per cent of the funding. The statement of intent provides a basis for the negotiation of the next national school agreement and the associated bilateral agreement, which will tie funding to reforms that will help students catch up, keep up and finish school here in WA.

Full and fair funding of WA public schools by 2026 means that we will reach these levels two years faster than any other state. This is due to the Cook Labor government’s ability to commit a higher percentage of our required contribution up-front and early. Once again, this is evidence of the enormous benefit of the responsible management by this government over the past seven years. Currently, no public schools in Australia, except for schools in the ACT, are at full and fair funding levels. WA will be the first.

I am incredibly proud of the schools in my electorate of Bicton and I am proud of the things that this government and I have been able to deliver since my election as the local member in 2017. Melville Senior High School is the only public high school located in my electorate. We have been delivering important upgrades, with the allocation of \$100 000 to the school canteen, \$925 000 to science, technology, engineering and mathematics classrooms

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and \$7.5 million for a new gymnasium to sit alongside the old and no longer fit-for-purpose building, and that is together with the \$4.5 million delivered by this Labor government in 2020.

I am pleased and proud as both the member for Bicton and as a Melville Senior High School parent to know our government sees public education in the electorate of Bicton and right across our state as a top priority. The Cook government's careful, diligent and disciplined approach to state finances means that every public school across Western Australia has received funding for vital maintenance works. All but one school in the electorate of Bicton is more than 50 years old, at least two local primary schools having been built over 100 years ago. As we all know, ageing buildings require a lot of work to keep them viable and fit for purpose. In all, \$724 624 was committed to the schools maintenance blitz funding in the electorate of Bicton. Our government has continued to deliver science labs across my electorate. Bicton Primary School has been running its lab successfully since 2019. Attadale and Palmyra Primary Schools opened theirs in 2021 and Melville Primary School in 2022. We are preparing our kids for the jobs of the future by investing in science labs, STEM and coding. As I mentioned earlier, many of my local public schools are ageing and no longer cater adequately to the changing needs of their communities or meet community expectations as facilities of learning. Richmond Primary School celebrated its centenary back in 2021, and, quite frankly, its administration building was looking every bit of its 100 years. That was until just over \$760 000 was committed to updating the building to incorporate contemporary features whilst maintaining the heritage exterior. It was an absolute pleasure to attend the official opening following those refurbishments back in 2022. Similarly, Attadale Primary School opened its purpose-built early learning centre in our first term of government. It was wonderful to be at the official launch of the then new school site-based early learning centre.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs L.M. O'MALLEY: It is wonderful to think that those first students who came through the upgraded facility are now, in 2024, making their way through the middle years of primary school, well equipped by the wonderful opportunities the dedicated centre has created for them. In between my parliamentary commitments this week, I have been popping out to my local schools, as school is either commencing or ending, to greet those cohorts of kids and families as they come back for the year. I was at Attadale on Wednesday morning before I popped in here. It is fantastic to see those facilities now, in 2024, well incorporated into the general feeling of the school.

Early years, of course, are such a crucial time in a child's life and they lay the foundation for life outcomes. Play builds imagination and creativity, fosters cognitive growth, delivers emotional and behavioural benefits, improves literacy, encourages greater independence and promotes physical fitness. That is why I am so pleased and proud to have provided \$50 000 to a nature playground at Palmyra Primary School, which I had the honour of officially opening a little while back. I can attest to it being well utilised by the current cohort of kids at Pally primary.

Post-secondary education and training is a top priority for the Cook Labor government, as we have been demonstrating repeatedly since coming to government in 2017. Many of the skills that are now in short supply are learnt at TAFE and training institutes. By reducing fees or removing fees altogether, we are creating opportunities for young people to launch their careers by getting the skills that employers want without expensive course fees.

Small business and medium enterprises are, as I said earlier, incredibly important employers and they represent around 97 per cent of all businesses in WA. From manufacturing and business services, to retail, hospitality, transport and so much more, the sector is a significant employer and job creator. This government is continuing to deliver for the small business owners of Bicton and beyond. I certainly again acknowledge all who have held the small business portfolio for their commitment to reform, particularly in the procurement space through local content in state government procurement and via the continuing implementation of the Western Australian Jobs Act. I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Minister for Small Business, Hon Jackie Jarvis, and her achievements since taking on the role. Her application of vast experience and knowledge to the portfolio is making a big difference across Bicton and beyond.

I am going to skip over a little bit of my notes because I am looking at the time. I am looking at the number of pages in my hand—so much has happened in the last seven years. I am going to skip down to a little more about what we have been delivering in Bicton, which again is due to good financial management. I certainly know that this is really important to the people of my electorate. I know it because when I knock on doors in Attadale, Bicton, Palmyra and East Fremantle, I am told repeatedly that this government is doing a great job of managing the state's books through seven years of challenge and change, which means that several locally important infrastructure projects, both big and small, have either been delivered or are in the process of being delivered. These include the East Fremantle Oval redevelopment. I am very excitedly looking forward to that facility opening in autumn. The mighty victorious premiers, East Fremantle Football Club, will have their first home game on 11 May. That is super exciting. There is also the synchronised crossing at Canning Highway, the nature playground in Davis Lawlor Park in Attadale and the bicycle pump track and nature playground in Gourley Park, East Fremantle.

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I am really proud of the Port Beach sand nourishment project. I know it is not physically in the electorate of Bicton, but we definitely consider it to be our local beach; it certainly is for the Port Beach Polar Bears, many of whom come from the electorate of Bicton. Therefore, continuing to protect that beach for future generations is really important and I am really proud of the advocacy role I played there. We have also delivered facility upgrades to Melville Reserve and an equipment fit-out at Karlup Ceramics Studio in Alfred Cove.

Another area I am personally proud of is delivering on preserving our environment and building healthy and resilient communities. We are taking the challenge of climate change very seriously. As a long-term community environmental advocate and former health and fitness leader, it is these matters that I am most emotionally connected to and engaged with. My passion and commitment has deepened and strengthened throughout my experience as the member for Bicton over the last seven years, and I am now more than ever aware of the link between a healthy planet and healthy communities. Wetlands keep our water cleaner and our air clearer, they contribute to mental and physical wellbeing and they provide a home for a diverse group of animal and plant life. Going back in history, I continue to be extremely proud of the role that I was able to play as part of this state government's commitment on coming to government in 2017 to protect the Beeliar wetlands by stopping the Roe 8 project.

Locally, another significant wetland exists in Alfred Cove, and I am also proud of the fact that I was able to put my energy and efforts into protecting the open spaces adjacent to the Attadale foreshore and that local wetland area. The Swan estuary shoreline is part of an internationally significant bird migratory route and contains a regionally significant bushland-wetland linkage that runs from Alfred Cove to Point Walter. This Labor government delivered on protecting this important local space by refusing to sell crown land at Alfred Cove for the purposes of an artificial wave park. This resulted in the continuous use of the crown land and adjacent land as a vital natural buffer zone between river and land. The Cook Labor government has since delivered \$2 million towards greater river health by supporting the work of Nature Conservancy Australia's artificial shellfish reef restoration projects in local waters of the Swan River. It has also delivered a bird viewing deck at Point Waylen in Attadale so that all people, including those with low mobility, can enjoy the spectacular scenery and abundant birdlife without negatively impacting on this ecologically and culturally significant place.

Our beautiful tree-filled open spaces along the river and our local parks are incredibly special to the people of my electorate. The literature on the importance of public open space and its associated benefits are plentiful and well documented. Some of these benefits include providing places for people to meet, socialise, play and connect, which is associated with increased physical activity and improved mental health. It is fair to say that access to these opportunities is more important than ever. No less important are the ecological benefits associated with pockets of urban bushland, local parks and reserves. Large established trees provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife, welcome shade for humans and our furry canine companions, and a vital antidote to the urban heat island effect. That is why I am particularly proud to have successfully campaigned alongside my local communities and with my colleague the member for Bateman to ensure that 13 parks in Bicton and across Bateman are protected into the future as public open spaces. I acknowledge and thank the community campaigners who worked and helped to achieve this fantastic outcome.

I know firsthand what people power can achieve, so I strongly encourage those who live throughout my local communities to get active on the issues that matter to them—like Tom and Jenny who established the Melville Bird Sanctuary and discovery centre and single-handedly raised the establishment of a bird sanctuary in Alfred Cove to a point of such prominence that it is now a reality. I also acknowledge those involved in the Melville tree canopy advocates community campaign who are doing whatever they can to ensure greater protection of our local tree canopy. I take this opportunity now to recommit to the people of my electorate that I will continue to do all I can as their local member to protect our local natural environment now and into the future. The connection between a healthy environment and healthy humans is unmistakable. Healthy ecosystems provide shelter, food, clean air and water to sustain all living organisms, including us. It is evident that under the leadership of the Cook Labor government, our state's precious natural environment will remain a top priority.

Two-thirds of the electorate of Bicton is blessed to be bordered by the beautiful Swan River. We are incredibly fortunate to have several active and dedicated community groups, including the Swan Estuary Reserves Action Group, the Bicton Environmental Action Group, the Friends of the East Fremantle Foreshore, Melville Senior High School's sustainability group, the Friends of Attadale Foreshore and Santa Maria College's EcoSisters. I take this opportunity to thank the many community volunteers who dedicate their time, knowledge and skills to care for natural places throughout the electorate of Bicton. I greatly admire the commitment of those individuals, who go about their activities of weeding, planting, rubbish collection, revetment works, citizen science, data collection and many more important actions despite rain, mosquitoes or heat. It is always a joy to work side by side with some of these awesome individuals when my time allows. It is wonderful to note that some of those groups have been successful in receiving funding through this government's Community Rivercare grants program and

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natural resource management program. I am proud to be a member of a government that is delivering the kind of environmental action that my community expects.

In conclusion, I express my gratitude for the opportunity to represent the people of the electorate of Bicton in the Parliament of Western Australia. It is an enormous privilege—one that I never take for granted. I am proud of what I have been able to deliver so far for my communities in my role as the member for Bicton, and I look forward to working hard and engaging with my local communities and, of course, delivering more for Bicton in 2024.

MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville) [12.11 pm]: I rise to make my contribution to the Premier's Statement. Before I start, I want to comment on something that the Leader of the Opposition said this morning. The Leader of the Opposition made the comment that police in Kalgoorlie have low morale and that it is not a great place to live. My husband, Steve, worked as a paramedic out there for about nine months last year and had a lot of interaction with the Kalgoorlie police. He said that they were a great bunch of people who were committed and connected, and that they were a great team who were happy to be together and gelled really well. I was also a paramedic for nearly 20 years. When police and paramedics get called out by the community, we know that we are not going for tea and scones or for a sit down and happy chat. Most people who call us out are in some kind of difficulty or hardship, so we know that it is going to be a hard and tough time. Sometimes we roll around on the dirt and have to chemically restrain people. I am sure the police have a hard time when they have to put people in handcuffs and that kind of thing as well.

My point to the Leader of the Opposition is that the Kalgoorlie police understand and are committed to their job. I am sure that if the Leader of the Opposition spoke to some of them, he would find that they do not have low morale and that they are a good bunch of people who work really hard. I remember one job that Steve talked about that he had attended out in the bush with police. The off-road vehicle was at another job, so the police went with them. They went out at 4.00 pm and got back at one o'clock in the morning. They had gone out to pick up a motorcyclist in the bush who had a fractured femur. The police were a fantastic support. Six guys went out there and two guys had to come back in. Their services were greatly appreciated. The Kalgoorlie police go above and beyond what is asked of them. On behalf of the Cook Labor government, my husband, the ambulance service and, I am sure, Minister Papalia, I thank them for the fantastic job that they do.

The member for North West Central also made a comment about a 000 call that took about two hours to turn out to. Her comment was that, in the end, it was not for anything serious. I am sure that she understands how priority works, but I want to outline to the chamber that police utilise their resources according to priority. If the job card did not indicate that it was a serious matter, it probably would have been given a priority 3 or 4 rating. It probably should not have been a 000 call anyway. In the ambulance world, it is common for the community to misuse 000 for help when it is not an emergency and ambulances do not need to turn out straightaway. Those calls can wait until morning. They can be seen by a GP or go into a police station and make a statement. Sometimes people have an acute sense of anxiety or anger and they want the police there now, but, on reflection by the police, it is not a priority. As a paramedic, I have turned out to people who are lonely; I have been asked to feed their cat or a caller had vomited once or had a blocked nose, so I can only imagine what police turn out to on 000 calls. I just wanted to highlight my personal experiences.

I now turn to the Premier's Statement, Acting Speaker. I rise today as the proud member for Dawesville to make a contribution. I represent the hardworking and vibrant community that resides in this small corner of Western Australia. The suburbs I cover are Dudley Park, Erskine, Halls Head, Falcon, Wannanup and, of course, Dawesville. It has been a great pleasure to be here in this seat for the past years advocating and speaking for the community and delivering great things, along with my colleagues the member for Mandurah, David Templeman, and the member for Murray-Wellington, Robyn Clarke, who have mentored and supported me over this time. I have watched how hard they work, and they have advised me on the best ways to find solutions for community issues that have arisen in the last few years. It is a real blessing and I am lucky to have these neighbours.

Using this speech, I would like to reflect upon some of the recent achievements and promising initiatives for my electorate courtesy of the diligent efforts of the Cook Labor government, which is doing what is right for WA. Firstly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Premier Roger Cook for his steadfast leadership and unwavering commitment to the welfare of all Western Australians. Under the Premier's guidance and that of the Deputy Premier; Treasurer, Rita Saffioti, our state has seen remarkable progress and prosperity. I am honoured to be a part of a government that prioritises the needs of its people.

I now highlight some of the significant investments and projects that are set to transform the landscape of Dawesville and have enhanced the lives of people who live there. As I said before, I was an ambo and am a registered psychologist and I am particularly passionate about health care and mental health services. The Labor government has made a substantial investment of \$11.8 billion into the healthcare systems and mental health services across WA, which is a testament to our Minister for Health's work and dedication to providing quality care to every person in the state.

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Specifically, the redevelopment and expansion of the Peel Health Campus with additional beds, mental health facilities et cetera will be of great benefit to the growing population of the Mandurah region and will address the increased demands for healthcare services. The upgrades will include an operating theatre, 63 additional hospital beds, 12 chemotherapy places and 20 mental health inpatient beds. There is also a 10-bed mental health emergency centre. From a paramedic's point of view, when going into an emergency department, it is clearly for people who are chronically unwell. The lights are bright and everything is happening. There is a lot of energy. People are resuscitating people. Those with mental health issues really do not fit, and a lot of the time they are ignored, misplaced and parked up on the side. It is not that the consultants do not care; it is that mental health issues are not something that can always be fixed with a tablet or an intravenous drip. It takes consultation and time. It takes maybe a sleep and a conversation. I cannot wait to see this 10-bed mental health emergency centre that has been allocated to Peel Health Campus, as it will change the life of the campus and help consultants move people through faster. Minister Sanderson is always looking for ways to stop ramping and decrease the backlog in the emergency department. This will be a game changer.

There are also 15 palliative care hospice beds coming into Peel Health Campus. My Mum was nursed in palliative care until she passed away, and I was there and stayed with her for the two days that she was passing. I must say the staff and services were exceptional; I wanted for nothing and they did everything to help Mum. I take the opportunity to say thank you to the staff and nurses of Peel Health Campus. The work they do is exceptional. I really appreciate it. Peel Health Campus comes back into government hands on 19 August. Although outwardly we do not see much infrastructure happening, lots of work is happening in the back of house. I thank Ramsay Health Care for supporting the staff in the transition. All the staff are being trained on the new IT system that will bring them in line with the other public hospitals, such as Rockingham and Fiona Stanley. David, Rob and I are all very excited to see the takeover and for the infrastructure build to be underway. We know that it will get worse before it will get better. While we wait for this to happen, we understand that the population of Mandurah is growing and there is a need due to lack of space. The consultants, doctors and nurses in the emergency department and hospitals are doing a fantastic job.

I also give a shout-out to the staff, administrators, the parents and citizens associations, the kitchen staff and the people who we do not consider, may not see or who go unnoticed but who work tirelessly for our community. We appreciate their efforts in being there 24 hours a day, over long weekends and during Christmas and Easter. All those periods are spent away from their families, and I say thank you for that.

The investment in infrastructure by the Cook Labor government to build the Dawesville community centre for my community will create and much-needed hub for community activities. It will provide essential services and spaces for social interactions and recreation. This project reflects our commitment to supporting the flourishing community spirit in Dawesville and will cater to the diverse needs of our residents. The Mandurah townsite has a lot of community services, so having the Dawesville community centre there for outreach services will be exciting. Foodbank can come down. OVIS Community Services can come out. All the community services that we need can come out. It will be exciting to have them. Dawesville is only 15 to 20 minutes over the cut bridge from Mandurah, but for some people that means a bus ride and they do not have cars. Therefore, I am really excited to see that happen.

On behalf of the state government, as a 2021 election commitment, the member for Mandurah and I have already invested \$3 million into this project through the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, with additional funding secured to meet the project's full specifications. There was also a \$1.4 million capital contribution from Lotterywest. A few weeks ago, the Minister for Regional Development, Minister Punch, was in my electorate to announce an extra \$3.2 million boost to this amazing multipurpose community centre so the City of Mandurah project can get underway, and we can start the build. We will ensure that this project will be delivered to the people in my community as soon as possible. The proposed scope of the project includes a main hall, a stage, storerooms, a universally accessible toilet, a kitchen, an office space, a meeting room with sound insulation, landscaping and a play area. I am really excited to see that happen, especially with the growth in population over the Dawesville Cut bridge. Apparently, our population is expected to double within the next eight to 10 years, so this project will provide significant social and economic benefits.

I turn to education. Education is the cornerstone of a thriving society, and the Cook Labor government's investment of \$243.3 million in TAFE and training facilities across the state will equip our young people with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce. Initiatives such as the hospitality training centre at South Metropolitan TAFE in Mandurah will open doors to exciting career opportunities and contribute to the economic growth of our region. The \$16.9 million hospitality and tourism centre is a key project in the state government's record. It is named Saltbush Training Restaurant. A hairdressing salon is also on that side, but the place that I went into I did not get my hair done; I went for food. For anyone who knows me, it is pretty much always food over the top of hair. I have visited the Saltbush Training Restaurant a few times now. Its menu is always thoughtful. It uses local produce and makes unusual mixes, which always taste fantastic. It has aspiring chefs, baristas, front-of-house staff and event managers

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who are studying commercial cookery, tourism and event management. The kids are using practical skills in real time, and there is nothing better than on-the-job training. It is fantastic to go in to see these kids. They are there. They come and meet people at the door, place them in a chair and look after all their needs. They take the menu. Someone is always hovering nearby to help the kids, and it is just wonderful and everyone there is very supportive of the kids, and it gives them a really safe space to learn before moving out to the real world. The restaurant includes a live-works restaurant complete with a production kitchen; a dining room, where locals can enjoy lunchtime and evening meals; two full-sized industry-standard kitchens; a cookery and barista demonstration classroom; an information technology classroom; and a student hub. The Minister for Training and Workforce Development is doing amazing things.

The other thing I love that Minister McGurk is doing for all Western Australians is the investment in fee-free TAFE training. On behalf of the Cook Labor government, she is supporting thousands of Western Australian students to kick off their education by making skilled jobs a priority. I recently read that enrolments for 2024 are still being finalised; however, there has been a record number of applications to study fee-free courses in 2024, with a 29 per cent increase in applications compared with this time last year. There has also been a 25 per cent increase in applications for TAFE courses overall.

I am a mother of two young men who are now in their late 20s. Alex started a cert IV in TAFE after he dropped out of high school in year 11. I remember that it cost us around \$1 500 for the first year. While Minister McGurk was talking about how the Liberal government had increased the fees, I was thinking about how not everyone could afford those kind of prices, especially every year. The fact is that we now have a labour shortage in practical skills. My son is now 30, so he would have been doing the TAFE course 10 years ago when he was 20. That gap shows why a lot of people are short on practical skills. It runs in line that we missed the ball from the hiked TAFE fees.

I have a newspaper article here, which is a timely reminder, from *The West Australian* back in 2015, when the Liberals were in power. It features a young lady. The article is dated 3 February 2015. It states —

... TAFE student Chloe Howarth had not yet been told how much she must pay for her course.

The 20-year-old from Secret Harbour said tuition fees had risen steadily since she started her three-year fashion design course ... in Bentley, from \$3000 in 2013 to \$4000 last year.

That was 2014. The article continues —

She said she feared her course may be among those set to be uncapped and fees could be as high as \$7700 for the year.

What kid could afford to put themselves through TAFE? That is just incredible. The Liberals not only charged exorbitant prices, but also abolished the course cap. The article goes on to say —

... TAFE fees had risen by 515 per cent since 2013, —

That is just crazy —

threatening to create trade shortages because students would be priced out of courses.

It just goes to show that maybe the gap we struggle with now is a result of the decisions made back then.

I move on to transport. Improving access and affordability of transport systems is a priority for people living in the Mandurah region. The two-zone fare cap was an election commitment made by the then McGowan government in 2021 and continues with the Cook Labor government, with people paying a maximum of \$4.08 for a standard fare with a SmartRider, and only \$1.84 with a concession. When I was studying psychology at Murdoch University, it was \$10 one way, so that was \$20 for the day. I went to university maybe three times a week, so that was \$60 a week for me. I worked full time so that I could afford it, but I can imagine how many workers who now pack the train from Mandurah to Perth every day would be super happy about this two-zone fare cap.

[Member's time extended.]

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: The Cook government likes doing what is right for us, and the Minister for Transport has gone one step further—probably a lot of steps further—to assist with cost-of-living relief by providing free public transport to every school student, every day of every school week, and the rest of the community gets to travel free with a SmartRider every Sunday. I think that is an incredible saving for us, especially in our area. I used to pay seven zones to get to Murdoch, which was crazy.

I now switch to talk about some local legends, with some good news. I was at the City of Mandurah Australia Day awards. We welcomed 67 new citizens and the city acknowledged the great work of lots of local legends. Many people were nominated; however, my great friend Lisa Kelly was named the City of Mandurah's community citizen of the year. I would describe Lisa as everywhere, all the time. She would make a great politician. She is particularly known for her contributions as a major organiser for Cycling Without Age. She and her beautiful husband, Geoff, donated a trishaw. I am not sure how much it cost; I will not even guess the amount. They bought their own trishaw —

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Ms R.S. Stephens: They are about \$25 000.

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: Yes. I was going to say it cost \$25 000 to \$30 000 for their own trishaw.

They named it after Lisa's mum, Barbara. I know Lisa would not mind me telling the chamber that, because she joked that her mother would be very happy to know that her namesake has been ridden by a lot of people in the Mandurah region! Her mother would be very happy that she makes elderly and disabled people who cannot ride feel very happy on a cycle along the Mandurah foreshore.

Lisa attends lots of events. The reason why I think Lisa received that award, other than her amazing contribution to volunteering and Cycling Without Age, is that Lisa is a selfie queen. Wherever she is, she is in a selfie. If we go to an event, Lisa will be there taking photos. No matter where she goes, she will be in a photo. What Lisa realised is that this highlights everyone else's purpose and meaning and highlights the different community groups and volunteers who spend hundreds of hours following their passions. The thing I love about Lisa is that, even though she is in every photo, she is very humble. She promotes anything and everything to make the community great. I love Lisa's work.

The award for senior community citizen of the year went to another good friend of mine Kath Palmer, as well as Mandurah RSL sub-brand president David Mabbs. Interestingly, my dad is David Nabbs and this is David Mabbs, so it is a bit weird when I read it out. David is a third generation Army veteran and has contributed a huge effort to the Mandurah branch of the RSL club. It is wonderful to see him recognised for his contribution to the community. I have often listened to Dave talk to our local school students—fantastic.

Kath Palmer is another great friend of mine. She has spent—I do not know how long—years and years on the board of the Peel Community Kitchen. However, she also runs a local team of people called Hands Up, which I am very lucky to be part of. It is a large network of people and businesses and it helps to find and contribute goods and services to assist anyone who is struggling. She has worked to connect people with anything from baby car seats, wardrobes, washing machines, clothes, groceries and fuel vouchers. She always works tirelessly to help the homeless.

She makes hampers in her own home. Every year at Christmas time, we go there. We use her house. Last Christmas, Minister Sanderson came to help wrap presents. We wrapped and sent out 298 hampers for the community. She also delivers food to the Peel Community Kitchen. The best thing about Kath is that she puts on a great lunch at Christmas time. Her lasagne is next level. I will be there again at the end of this year and even when I give up my seat, or if I am lucky enough to win again, I will be there until I retire.

The active citizenship award went to the Mandurah Murray Mayday Club. It has celebrated 50 years of its Mayday shops. I think it raises something like \$300 000 each year. It was just incredible for it to be awarded the active citizenship award for the work it does.

The Mandurah youth community citizen of the year went to Joshua Zilani. Joshua is a young man who was also nominated twice to be in Youth Parliament. Both times, he has been the member for Dawesville. Last year, he was the Leader of the House. I think he was also the chair of Mandurah Youth Advisory Group. There could not be a better young man to be the citizen of the year in Mandurah. Congratulations, Josh.

I will move on to talk about the Mandurah bridge. The commencement of the Mandurah Estuary Bridge began in January. The project took off like the wind. It is amazing how fast Georgiou Group works. It is little wonder that it completed the Fitzroy Crossing bridge, bringing the contract in six months early. The bridge is a significant endeavour aimed at alleviating congestion, with over 33 000 vehicles utilising the existing bridge. The project was a large commitment made by the member for Mandurah, member for Murray–Wellington and myself. There is a bridge now, and a duplicate two-lane bridge will be constructed alongside it, with capacity for a third lane as the population increases. It will have a four-metre-wide shared path for people to walk under it and a fishing bridge. It is a \$136 million project, jointly funded by the Australian government and the state government. We have been waiting for the bridge for a while and a lot of residents—every resident south of the Mandurah island—will be very grateful to have it.

Tomorrow, we will hold a mobile office in Dudley Park. Dave and I will meet with local constituents who are on the coalface of the works being undertaken. As the member for Darling Range said, new infrastructure brings dust, sand and noise, and I know it is not pleasant at the moment, so we will go to listen to them, hear what they have to say and see whether we can do anything to help. Unfortunately, sometimes it takes a bit of noise and dust for the greater good. We will ask them for their patience. A Main Roads Western Australia person will also be there to discuss any concerns and questions. I am very excited about doing that tomorrow.

I refer to community safety, and the safety and security rebate for WA seniors. My electorate's population is the oldest in WA, so the \$400 security rebate was taken up massively in my electorate. People who are not IT savvy

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inundated the office, and we did a lot of scanning and form filling for them, but it has been an absolute pleasure to do that.

The other thing about safety is that the member for Mandurah and I committed \$200 000 for initiatives such as the automatic numberplate recognition. Covert cameras will target hooning and antisocial behaviour, and this will contribute to creating safer neighbourhoods and ensuring peace of mind for residents. Like a lot of peri-urban areas, Dawesville is not very built up, so hoons take the opportunity to race around the backblocks. We have fantastic police in our area. The officer in charge, Ross Blake, makes himself available to me and helps a lot with community concerns. I thank Ross for all his efforts and for his police work.

With five minutes to go, I will quickly talk about local school commitments. Ocean Road Primary School had a nature playground. South Halls Head Primary School had a playground upgrade and a STEM room. Glencoe Primary School had a new play space for seniors, which was fantastic. Halls Head Primary School resurfaced the basketball courts. Dudley Park Primary School had an upgrade for shade sails and new play equipment, and I think it also received a STEM upgrade. Falcon Primary School had a nature playground and a STEM upgrade. Halls Head College had a massive \$1.5 million upgrade to all its science areas. A lot of STEM opportunities have happened, and I am looking forward to seeing what the Mandurah region turns out for our young people.

Another thing is the Halls Head Football and Netball Club, where we supported female change rooms, so that is fantastic. For the South Mandurah Tennis Club, we agreed to help with two new disability courts. Corrie and Belinda are always striving to find grants for all-inclusive sports, and Gay and Alan work hard for the tennis club, increasing its membership base and working on getting more community work.

Knowing that I have four minutes left, I will jump down. I play cricket for the South Mandurah Cricket Club. We lost our final on Sunday, which is a bit of a shame, but we played on a hybrid pitch that David and I sponsored.

Ms S.E. Winton: Are you a batter or a bowler?

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: I am an all-rounder.

Ms S.E. Winton: Of course you are.

Ms R.S. Stephens: She's better when she's on her feet.

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: Yes. I am probably a better bowler than a batter. We lost our final. We won the last two years of grand finals but we lost to our own team this year. Because we were so popular, we ended up splitting into South Mandurah Cricket 1 and South Mandurah Cricket 2; team one won, and team two lost. Team one is going on to the preliminaries. We are with them in spirit. Good luck, South Mandurah Cricket 1! The hybrid pitch was part of that.

I also play darts on a Monday night. I gave Mandurah District Ladies Darts \$4 000 worth of awards. Sorry, minister?

Ms S.E. Winton: I was just going to say that you would like an extension.

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: I have done that. Thank you, though. The Mandurah darts association did not win the finals last year, although we were in the finals. I cannot say that I am great at darts, but at the age of 56, I am the youngest player in the team, so that is always a win.

I am also the patron of the Port Bouvard Surf Lifesaving Club, and part of that gig—for every member of Parliament who takes over after me—is that I had to swim the Cut 2 Club. I swam 2.5 kilometres with a snorkel and goggles because of my vertigo. I came fifteenth out of 40 people in my age group. I do not know how everyone else went; I struggled, but it was a lot of fun. I will leave a note for the member of Parliament who follows me that they have to swim the Cut 2 Club. Next year will be the swim's fifth year and I hope to get the Premier involved. I know he is very fit and healthy, and he would probably absolutely slay me in a swimming competition. I will ask him to open the event.

I have been named patron of the Peel Lightning Netball Club. I played netball in my younger years, so I live vicariously through those girls. Part of my commitment is that I sponsor one of the players. I have sponsored a player every year since I started. David and I sponsor Kasey Ridout. She is an open grade member and a fantastic player. She is an excellent goal shooter. I always played goal defence or goalkeeper because I was not great at shooting. Good luck, Kasey; I know you are going to do well. It is going to be an exceptional year for you—you will be fantastic!

In conclusion, I am immensely proud of the achievements and initiatives outlined in the Premier's Statements over the last three years, which reflect our government's vision for a prosperous and inclusive future for Dawesville and Western Australia. I extend my gratitude to Premier Roger Cook and my esteemed colleagues for their dedication

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and hard work in realising those goals. Together, let us continue to work tirelessly to build a brighter tomorrow and do what is right for all Western Australians.

MS E.L. HAMILTON (Joondalup) [12.41 pm]: I rise to make a contribution on the Premier's statement as we begin the 2024 parliamentary year. I start by acknowledging this government's commitment to the people of Western Australia. I am part of a great team and a government that is delivering. We have a strong vision for WA, now and into the future. We are a government that is experienced in managing the economy. During this term, more than \$3.8 billion has been invested into economic infrastructure and diversification to ensure WA continues to be the jobs and economic powerhouse of the nation.

This is a government that stood up to Canberra, got back our fair share of GST and regained our AAA credit rating, which was lost under the Liberal Party. Our Labor government is committed to investing in health care, education and transport, and doing what is right for WA. We are diversifying the WA economy by investing in industries like advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, tourism, international education, defence industries and more. We are delivering cost-of-living measures to help the people of Western Australia. We have delivered \$1 400 in electricity credits to every WA household since 2020. The second \$200 household energy credit for this financial year was provided in December and January. We made travel in our outer suburbs cheaper through the two-zone fare cap on public transport and made public transport free for school students and for everyone on Sundays.

We introduced the WA rent relief program to help financially vulnerable tenants at risk of eviction remain in their homes. This includes rental assistance of up to \$5 000. We have stopped the Liberal's plans to privatise our energy system and prevented the skyrocketing increases in household power bills that have been seen in the eastern states. We are a government committed to maintaining our wonderful and unique natural environment, which makes WA the envy of the world. We have committed to net zero by 2050 and we are making it law. We are implementing a world-leading plan for plastics, which has already stopped billions of single-use plastics from entering our environment and waterways. The government's Plan for Our Parks will create five million hectares of new national and marine parks. We ended the logging of our magnificent south west native forests to protect the environment and to preserve them for generations to come.

We have achieved so much as a government since taking office in 2017 and have not let our foot off the accelerator since. Our WA Labor government has delivered critical reforms and made the right decisions to ensure fairer and more prosperous lives for all Western Australians, while supporting local communities. It is a privilege to serve as the member for Joondalup in this Labor government. We have started work on the Ocean Reef Marina. We are delivering a major upgrade and expansion of Joondalup Health Campus, the Yanchep rail extension as part of Metronet, as well as investing in our schools and community and sporting clubs. We have done this while untangling the Liberal's legacy of debt, deficit and disappointment.

Today I have the opportunity to update the chamber on the fantastic things happening locally in Joondalup. Last month, Joondalup hosted Australia's largest Australia Day citizenship ceremony, at which 305 of Australia's newest citizens from all corners of the globe took their pledge and made a commitment to call Joondalup their home. Premier Roger Cook attended the ceremony at which outstanding community members and organisations were acknowledged and celebrated. I would like to congratulate all the recipients of the 2024 Community Citizen of the Year Awards. Congratulations to citizen of the year Catherine Kolomyjec, who co-founded Soul Gestures, which is a local charity focused on inspiring our young people to shine through everyday moments of compassion and kindness that bring positivity to our community. The young citizen of the year award was shared by Harry and Tom Linehan. Those two brave young brothers pulled a man out of the water after his kayak toppled over in Sorrento. The senior citizen of the year is "Nev" Maw, who was recognised for his good work at the Veterans Support Centre that operates locally in my electorate. I have previously supported that centre through IT upgrades and am always pleased to hear about the positive impact that the hardworking team of volunteers and advocates have on the lives of veterans and their families in the northern suburbs. The group event category winner was Fostering Hope Australia. That organisation supports carers and foster carers across WA with essential goods donated by the generous public as well as through its child-focused Fostering Joy events. I thank each and every one of this year's award recipients for their contributions to the northern suburbs community.

I would also like to acknowledge Sally Allan, who was awarded senior citizen of the year at the neighbouring City of Wanneroo ceremony. The award acknowledged Sally's dedication and tireless efforts over the past 23 years in supporting those affected by stroke. Sally's volunteering peer support and motivation in recovery is second to none. She is a force to be reckoned with. She has been a very strong advocate and driver for additional support for stroke services in the northern suburbs for many years. Sally is a founding member of the Northern Suburbs Stroke Support Group, which I am told will celebrate its thirtieth anniversary this year. Sally was instrumental in ensuring that we opened a stroke unit at Joondalup Health Campus. She championed her cause well before I came into this house, having worked in the northern suburbs for many years beforehand.

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I congratulate Pat Strahan, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for her significant service to the tourism industry and the community of WA. In Joondalup, we know Pat through her role as chair of Relay For Life West Coast that holds an annual 24-hour relay at HBF Arena. The relay event has been taking place for many years and is the culmination of the work of everyone involved who raised funds throughout the year. In 2023 alone, the teams raised over \$305 000 to support the important work of the Cancer Council WA, which is an amazing effort.

Last year marked a year of numerous significant anniversaries. Joondalup Districts Cricket Club celebrated its 125th anniversary, the Ocean Reef Sea Sports Club turned 50 and Edgewater Primary School and Ocean Reef Senior High School celebrated their fortieth anniversary. Joondalup Primary School and the Joondalup Education Support Centre celebrated their thirtieth anniversary, along with Mater Dei College and the Friends of Yellagonga Regional Park. It was a pleasure to take part in a number of those milestone celebrations for those groups last year. I am particularly proud to have provided support for the new mural at Edgewater Primary School that was commissioned as part of its anniversary celebrations. The mural was painted by local artist Peter Ryan and is a stunning piece along the science block facing Treetop Avenue. The artwork drew inspiration from the workshops Peter undertook with the students and contains many elements and ideas that were thought up by the students that have been interwoven into the artwork. I look forward to joining members of the Joondalup Districts Cricket Club in Parliament next week when I will share in a statement to the chamber more about its massive 125th anniversary celebrations.

Locally, I am proud to be delivering on many election commitments. One in particular is our \$8.5 million investment to preserve and enhance Yellagonga Regional Park. It is one of the largest remaining natural wetlands in the Perth Basin. This commitment will create a Kings Park of the north. Joondalup will see the delivery of the new \$2.9 million seven-kilometre mountain bike trail that will connect the local community with our amazing Yellagonga Regional Park, providing not only great physical and mental health benefits locally, but also becoming an urban trail. There will be events and activities for our mountain biking community and it will become a destination in its own right. Tenders for the design and construction of the trails were released in November. Along with the trails, we will see improved public amenities, a gathering area, a shelter, picnic tables, a toilet block and a car park. I thank Chris Howard, Mark Papadopoff and members of the Northern Beaches Cycling Club for their strong advocacy on this project.

Any contributions that I make in this place that include the delivery of election commitments in Joondalup must include an update on our landmark development, the Ocean Reef Marina, which continues to make impressive progress. We know that the marina will be a thriving coastal hub and a landmark attraction. It will be a world-class development expected to deliver a \$3 billion injection into our local community. It will be a place where locals can spend time with family and friends and interact with our pristine coastline, and a tourism destination.

We have seen record investment in health and mental health, with \$10 billion of new funding over the last three years. Notably, WA has the highest level of health funding per person of any state in the nation. Over the past two years, we added 571 new beds to the system, which is the equivalent of a new tertiary hospital, and committed to constructing a new world-class women's and babies' hospital. It is worth mentioning that despite global health workforce shortages, we increased our workforce by almost 25 per cent.

Locally, we continue investing in critical health infrastructure in one of the fastest-growing regions in Australia, including a \$269.4 million upgrade to Joondalup Health Campus. Since coming to office, we have seen the opening of a new mental health observation area, comprehensive stroke unit, palliative care unit and multistorey car park, and major upgrades to the emergency department. Most recently, we opened the 102-bed mental health unit. This world-class mental health facility doubles the capacity of the previous unit. Something really important that I have been advocating for is supporting our young people, and there are youth mental health beds at this facility. The state-of-the-art facility in Joondalup really sets a new benchmark in WA. We now need to ensure that we support and meet the needs of our community, particularly young people in the northern corridor who are outside the health system. It is something I hope to continue working on. As we speak, construction is underway on a new public ward, theatre and catheterisation lab.

Moving on to public transport, we know that Labor governments make the necessary investment in public transport. We are delivering 72 kilometres of new rail and 23 new stations. The Cook Labor government continues to invest in the northern corridor, which will see the growth of Joondalup as Perth's second CBD. Importantly, this includes the Yanchep rail extension as part of Metronet. As I mentioned, we know that the northern suburbs is one of the fastest-growing regions in the country, and with a train line comes investment and growth along that major transport corridor. The line will provide easy access to Joondalup for those living further north, around Yanchep. We returned railcar manufacturing to Midland by re-establishing the Bellevue railcar facility.

In June last year, my colleagues and I had the opportunity to visit the facility to see firsthand how the cutting-edge locally manufactured railcars are built. The C series railcars are being tested on our northern line and have started entering service on the Joondalup to Mandurah line. Transperth's pioneering electric CAT buses are, excitingly,

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being trialled on the Joondalup CAT bus route, which started in 2022. Just as an aside, this came from some strong advocacy I had out on the doors from local Edgewater residents who brought this issue to my mind. We were able to advocate for this and then see the delivery of it locally. The trial has been a massive success, with high levels of passenger support, while saving hundreds of tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

We also saw the rollout of this electric technology for buses and infrastructure on other Transperth suburban routes. We are working with the federal Labor government to deliver a \$250 million program to locally manufacture the future electric bus fleet here in WA. This will deliver local jobs and high-tech skills right here in Perth, while also creating a cutting-edge new bus fleet that is cleaner and, of course, quieter.

There has been significant investment in major road projects around Perth, including the extension of the Mitchell Freeway to Romeo Road, and a combination of smart freeway technology, additional lanes and upgrades to Mitchell Freeway southbound. Over the summer we introduced free public transport, which saw an increase in patronage of about 40 per cent. This has been expanded so that public transport will continue to be free on Sundays, and students will be able to travel to and from school for free. This is a cost-of-living measure that will help families.

On the topic of education and training, I first say welcome back to our school community—parents, students, teachers, education assistants, staff, and the entire school community. I have begun connecting with all the school principals, boards, P&Cs and parents and friends groups, and have begun greeting parents and students at the school gates. As in previous years, I look forward to continuing to engage with our schools throughout the year. Thank you also to everyone who dedicates their time to support our children in their learning journeys.

This month, the Cook Labor government signed a partnership with the Albanese government to boost funding to public schools in Western Australia by \$1.6 billion. Since 2017 we have delivered 30 new primary schools and nine new secondary schools across the state, with more to come. For those living north of my electorate, our newest school in the area is Burns Beach Primary School. Although it sits just outside of my electorate, I know that many families in Joondalup have children attending the new school and I look forward to connecting with them soon. We are upgrading, refurbishing and redeveloping schools across WA, including new performing arts centres, sports halls and early childhood learning facilities, and over 330 new science labs to prepare our young people for the jobs of the future. In my electorate, all public primary schools now have a dedicated science lab, and Ocean Reef Senior High School has a wonderful new performing arts centre, a sports hall under construction and a new dedicated science, technology, engineering and mathematics lab on its way.

When talking about schools, I like to mention Dandelions WA. Over many years here in the chamber I have mentioned its fantastic efforts. For the past four years, Dandelions WA has run a back-to-school campaign providing backpacks for students in need. Unfortunately, the number of requests from primary and secondary schools continues to grow, and this year that number is in excess of 12 500 and still climbing. There has been overwhelming community support in donating items. Thank you to everyone across the state who has participated, including those in my electorate. I congratulate the amazing team of volunteers led by Jan and Vicky, who, as well as running their back-to-school campaign, continue to provide wonderful support to those in our community who need it. Over many years I have shared information with colleagues in this house, and I have spoken with both the former and current Minister for Education to highlight the need to support WA families particularly as students head back to school. It can be a real hindrance for students who do not want to attend because they do not have all the necessary items. There has been wonderful support to date. I plan to continue to advocate on behalf of Dandelions WA to ensure that we are supporting our kids as they head back to school.

Joondalup is doing its part to train the WA workforce. We are home to a learning precinct—North Metropolitan TAFE, Edith Cowan University, Edith Cowan College, the Western Australia Police Academy and the College of Electrical Training. The Cook government is investing in training to support thousands of Western Australian TAFE students by offering 130 fee-free TAFE courses across a range of key industries. This initiative is enabling Western Australians to reskill and upskill for work in a variety of priority sectors, including health care and social assistance, information and communication technology, building and construction, transport, hospitality and tourism. At the beginning of this month, with 2024 enrolments yet to be finalised, there had been a 29 per cent increase in applications for fee-free courses compared with the same time last year. We are investing in the biggest capital works program for TAFE in WA history, with 15 major upgrades of TAFEs across the state to create world-class learning facilities. Work is underway on a light automotive training facility at our North Metro TAFE, which will bring high-tech training in new and emerging auto technologies, including electric vehicles, with students expected to be learning in the new centre during semester 2 of 2024.

[Member's time extended.]

Ms E.L. HAMILTON: I take this opportunity to congratulate the very talented junior and senior Australian national culinary teams from North Metropolitan TAFE Joondalup, who recently headed off to represent Australia in the IKA/Culinary Olympics in Stuttgart, Germany. Before they left, Minister for Training and Workforce

Extract from *Hansard*

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Ms Libby Mettam; Mr Shane Love; Ms Merome Beard; Mr Paul Papalia; Mr Kevin Michel; Ms Mia Davies;
Mrs Lisa O'Malley; Mrs Lisa Munday; Ms Emily Hamilton

Development, Hon Simone McGurk, MLA, and I met the talented chefs to wish them every success. I understand that the team, headed by local legend and North Metro TAFE director Patrick O'Brien, OAM, won bronze in the Restaurant of Nations category and silver in the Chef's Table category. This is a fantastic achievement by the three lecturers and five culinary arts graduates, and each and every one involved should be extremely proud of their efforts—congratulations!

Edith Cowan University is training our future healthcare workforce and has the largest school of nursing in the state. Around 300 students are studying across ECU's two campuses in Joondalup and Bunbury. Our College of Electrical Training in Joondalup continues to provide the industry with the highest quality apprentices.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

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