



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2024

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 16 May 2024

Legislative Council

Thursday, 16 May 2024

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) took the chair at 10.00 am, read prayers and acknowledged country.

LAND TAX ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (BUILD-TO-RENT) BILL 2023

Assent

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the bill.

LIVE EXPORT — FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY

Motion

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [10.03 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (1) condemns the federal Labor government for its cynical and reckless decision to ban the live export of sheep from Australia and, in particular, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Hon Murray Watt for delivering the news via an online forum;
- (2) condemns the federal Labor government for the totally inadequate and insulting transition package and time line for the phase-out being offered to the Western Australian livestock sector; and
- (3) supports the Western Australian agricultural sector and calls on the federal government to reverse its decision to ban the live sheep trade.

I rise this morning to speak to this very important motion and to pass on to this place the shock and numb feeling that has hit the Western Australian livestock sector this week. Members might ask why that would be the case when the sector has known for some time that the federal Labor government intended the ban, but regional communities still have a sense of shock and numbness that the government has gone ahead with this bad decision. It is a very, very bad decision for Western Australian farmers, Western Australian regional communities and all of Western Australia. Make no mistake—this is an attack on Western Australia. Minister Watt said over and over again, “It’s just Western Australia. It’s okay. We can shut it down.” He has got that wrong.

Why should we condemn this decision? It is a viable, sustainable and profitable trade, and it has existed for decades. I spoke to my father this morning. Dad is well into his 80s and has retired from the farm. In 1960, as a very young man, he took a boat trip to Singapore. The 35 passengers on the boat were down in the bowels of the ship, and Singapore wethers were on top of the ship in the open air. We were trading live sheep to Singapore in 1960. The sheep fared far better than my father did on that trip; he got horribly seasick, but the sheep were fine. The point I am trying to make is that for generations my family and other farming families in Western Australia have been involved in this trade, and it deserves a future.

I would like to pass on some feedback, and I use this opportunity to read into *Hansard* some feedback from people in the sector. This is quite a lengthy letter, but it is an important letter that ASHEEP & BEEF, an organisation in Esperance in the Agricultural Region, sent to the Prime Minister and Minister Watt. It states —

13th May 2024

To Prime Minister Albanese and Minister Watt

It is clear that your announcement to end live sheep exports in less than 4 years, with just \$107M “transition” funding over 5 years, is designed to gut Western Australia’s sheep industry.

We are disgusted by your aggression toward Western Australia’s rural businesses and communities.

It does not take much to see that there is no way to lift onshore processing capacity to meet existing demand within four years. Your plan is a persecution of hard working, good people, who do not deserve this treatment.

You target all sheep producers and industry in WA, including many who have adapted their businesses away from selling into live export. Your intentness to destroy confidence in our industry through poor policy, interference and lack of transparency has been hugely damaging already and has significantly disrupted our market at a time when we are also faced with drought. You target our beef producers who rely on the same service providers as the sheep industry and who export cattle on mixed sheep consignments out of WA.

The impact of your decisions will be felt for generations to come in our communities and on our farmland. It is evident from your disdain that you do not care.

ASHEEP & BEEF attended the briefing Minister Watt delivered on Saturday 11th May to announce the phase out plan. David Vandenberghe raised that there are currently 500,000 sheep in WA with no market and limited feed, your announcement will add to this tally. He asked, “What do we do with these sheep now?” Minister Watt replied that “these are issues we will keep working with the industry on.”

How do you intend to work with us? Will we be involved in selecting the transition advocate? What are we transitioning to and how do you suppose we transition? Your one-page transition plan is light on detail. We need capacity to process an extra million sheep in WA to meet current needs. Please explain to us how you are going to do that in 4 years? The funding package and timeframe is vastly insufficient.

We have a livestock industry that produces world class food and sustainable fibre. It is an asset to Australia and it is worth decent treatment.

The letter is signed by the chair of ASHEEP & BEEF, David Vandenberghe, and the executive officer, Sarah Brown. I think it sums up very succinctly the feeling in the sector.

Ellen Walker, a third-generation farmer from Brookton, was less kind and more blunt, as reported in *The West Australian*. The article states —

Third-generation farmer Ellen Walker has called the decision to end live exports a “nightmare” ...

...

Ms Walker, a sheep producer who lives with her partner and three girls on her farm in the Wheatbelt town of Brookton, said the move was “absolute b...s...” and would compound the hardship WA farmers were already struggling with after an extended drought.

I think she has actually nailed it, and that is what it was. I apologise for the unparliamentary language, but this is not a polite thing that has happened to Western Australian farmers, and we cannot expect them to be polite in return.

There will be enormous flow-on effects from this ban, and one of the sectors that will be impacted is the shearing industry. Members from the Agricultural Region will have bumped into WA Shearing Industry Association’s Darren Spencer. Darren gets around the place, and I am sure members have seen him around and about. An ABC online news article from 15 May states —

WA Shearing Industry Association president Darren Spencer says his industry will be crippled without live export of sheep, accusing federal Labor of abandoning its working class roots in the sector.

The article goes on to say —

The 1891 shearers’ strike is considered a key factor in the creation of the Australian Labor Party.

Mr Spencer says the ban will see WA’s already-shrinking sheep flock reduce even further, leaving many farmers worried for their future.

Based at Lake Grace, 320 kilometres south of Perth in the eastern Wheatbelt, the veteran shearer said the ban would have a ripple effect.

Of course it will. The article goes on to say —

“Our staff contribute to so many local towns. People set themselves up and buy a house. It’s going to be hard for them because they may have to move on,” Mr Spencer said.

“Shearers struggling to make an income and a make a profit, they’ll be thinking, ‘It’s probably just time I walk away’.”

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am not taking interjections this morning.

Hon Darren West interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The member has indicated that he is not accepting interjections. Please allow him to continue with his contribution.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Thank you, President. We have heard a little bit about why it is reckless, but why is it cynical? There is a term in the media and public relations industry—“taking out the trash”. That is what one does to a bit of bad news, and one times it to avoid as much public scrutiny as one can. The number one day in Australia is the Tuesday morning of Melbourne Cup day. If one has really bad news, dump it then and hope nobody pays attention. Almost everybody is too cynical to do it on Christmas Day, so they take out the trash on Melbourne Cup day or AFL grand final day.

Minister Watt flew into Western Australia two or three days after the Prime Minister was here. The Prime Minister could have announced to farmers what was coming. He clearly knew, but he decided, “I don’t think so. I’ll send Murray over in a couple of days and we’ll do it on a Saturday morning. We’ll announce it late on a Friday night, and

we'll do it online. We don't want those pesky farmers in the room. We'll do it online." Therefore, Minister Watt snuck into Perth, had an online forum—called an industry briefing, which was interesting—and announced it. I think the head of the Western Australian Farmers Federation found out about it on Saturday morning and his organisation had found out about it late on Friday night. Senator Watt broke the bad news, saying that live sheep export is over because it is cruel and unsustainable. I assume he then flew back to Queensland, which exports hundreds of thousands of cattle by boat every year and will continue to do so. That has the support, apparently, of Senator Watt and the federal Labor Party because that is okay. This decision affects only Western Australia and Western Australian farmers. There are no votes over here, so it does not matter. It is a small industry and it is getting smaller. People would not want to be in a small industry in this state and have federal Labor pay attention, because it would want to shut it down, especially if it is getting smaller.

Hon Darren West: The Liberal Party is quite small.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Seriously, Hon Darren West? That is the best the member can do when we are talking about the live sheep export sector. That was a cheap political point. That is exactly why this is a cynical decision; it is for cheap political points. This is exactly what this is about.

Hon Darren West: You're leading with your chin, member.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Rightio.

Hon Darren West interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon STEVE MARTIN: We will move on to some other comments that have been reported since the ban was announced. This comment is from Tim Meecham, who operates a crossbred sheep enterprise at Quobba station, north of Carnarvon. He states —

“They weren't going to pay for freight, so I had to go and shoot them. It's a shit of a job,” he said.

This was after destroying 200 head of sheep this year and fearing he would have to do it again. It continues —

“[Live export] is one part of the industry [and] we need all parts there to keep the sheep industry in WA rolling.

That is a key point. The live sheep trade is a small component of the sheep industry in Western Australia, but it is a vital part of that entire sector. It is like building a bridge and saying that the bridge is fine, but we will just take that little bit out in the middle—it will be fine.

When we remove live sheep from WA's export sector, which involves the broader farming sector as most farms in this state are still mixed farming operations, we take out a key plank. Western Australia has a unique farming system because of our very dry summers and autumns. It is difficult to get sheep up and killable in autumn. It is hard to get sheep to a processor unless one feeds them a lot. Tim Meecham is absolutely correct: if we take out the live export trade, we will do harm to the entire livestock sector, which will then harm the entire farming sector.

I want to briefly talk about the flow-on effect. We have heard from the shearers about what that will mean, and it is just one small example. The livestock sector employs a lot of people. The numbers are clear; farmers are reacting to this ban and have been for some time, which has coincided with a very dry season. The flow-on impact will be fewer people in those towns. There will be fewer people to volunteer for St John Ambulance. There will be fewer people to take on parents and citizens association roles. There will be fewer people in the sporting clubs. There will be fewer kids in those small district schools, which will mean that subject availability will be even smaller than it already is. There will be flow-on impacts to those small communities. That is obvious. The state government has said that if the land use flows from sheep farming to cropping, that will be okay; there will obviously be a drop in sheep farming, but it will be picked up by cropping. Clearly, it is not that simple. Some land is useful only for sheep production, so that will absolutely happen.

The reaction to this “small blow” from the livestock sector and farming is larger than one would expect from such a small blow—if that is what members see it as. I think our farming sector sees itself as being under threat. When I was a child, I was very proud of the fact that my parents were sheep farmers. I knew they worked hard. I knew that what they did was a good thing, but I felt, even then, that the broader community respected what we did. There was a general love of farming, and I felt that as a young person coming from a farming background. Now, I am not so sure, sadly. We hear academics and intellectuals talk about the wheatbelt being an environmental disaster, and they will do it with a full stomach. They almost certainly do not live there; they live here. They will talk about livestock farming as being cruel, and they will do that with a full stomach. They live here, not out there. I think farmers are feeling that. I think people in regional Western Australia are feeling that.

The federal member for Fremantle said the live sheep export trade was cruel and unnecessary. Apparently, we in regional Western Australia are solely responsible for climate change. We heard that in the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation debate last year. It was almost contemptuous. It was okay if someone's block was less than 1 000 square metres because we know where they are, but if someone had a bigger block of land out in the regions, somehow what they did at a depth of 51 centimetres mattered, whereas in the suburbs it did not. People are not

silly. They knew why there was a differential between the suburban homes and blocks and farming blocks in regional Western Australia. If the government treats people like that, I think that is really disappointing. We need to do more to support our farmers. This place needs to do more to support our farmers.

I am sure it was a coincidence, but we heard a couple of days ago from the Education and Health Standing Committee about *How alternative proteins could improve dietary and planetary health*. It is an interesting little report from the committee chaired by the member for Thornlie, Chris Tallentire. I know Chris; he is a decent guy, but I have to say that the timing of this report on top of the live export ban was interesting.

I read the report. It talked about grasshoppers, tofu and fake meat. I did say there were a few problems! I notice our menu in the dining room still has lamb chops and roast beef—long may that be the case. There was some interesting wording in that report: “Alternative proteins are the next battlefield.” They used the word “battlefield” in this report. It continues —

What people often don’t know is that the food system makes up about 34 percent of the total greenhouse-gas emissions globally, and most of it comes from meat and dairy.

That was from a senior partner at McKinsey. I will tell members what the food system does provide: 100 per cent of food. Government members should be careful if they want to chip away at the food system. The footnotes on the next page make reference to *The politics of protein: Examining the claims about livestock, fish, ‘alternative proteins’ and sustainability*. That brings me to the politics around this particular bit of protein: the live sheep trade.

The Animal Justice Party issued a press release after Murray Watt announced the end date of the trade. I want to quote from that release. It described it as a “historic win”. It continues —

The work of the Animal Justice Party, alongside various animal rights organisations, has mounted political pressure to the point where live export is no longer accepted by the majority of Australians.

We are proud that the AJP could deliver the knockout blow by demanding the end of live sheep export as a requirement for our preferences at the Dunkley By-election in March. Ongoing conversations behind-the-scenes —

Of course they would be —

between AJP and Labor leadership has helped to finetune government policy.

That is good. That is great news. It continues —

While we wish the phase-out will happen more quickly, our contributions to securing financial support and certainty around transition dates mean there is no turning back!

Everyone should be proud of their work leading to today’s remarkable win for the AJP. However, we know the job is not yet complete.

They have bigger cattle to fry. It continues —

We are already in deep preference negotiations with major parties for the upcoming federal election, laser-focused on:

- Ensuring Labor enshrines the end of the trade in law before the election;
- Making the end of live cattle export the next AJP policy and political win;

Hearing that would send a tremor down the backs of anyone in the agricultural sector. This is an opportunity for this place to support our farmers and let them know we are very proud that they feed and provide fibre to tens of millions of people around the globe. That is a wonderful thing and is something that should be absolutely celebrated. It is a remarkable achievement. Most of the agriculture is on dry land in a part of the world where it does not rain much. I support them. I am very proud of what they do. I hope every single person in this place is as well. We should condemn the Labor Party for this dreadful ban and decision and we should support Western Australian agriculture. They are under threat in the middle of a dry season and need our backing. I welcome this opportunity to seek the state Labor Party’s support for Western Australian agriculture and farmers to get this ban overturned.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [10.23 am]: I, too, rise to make some remarks on this motion moved by my colleague Hon Steve Martin condemning the federal Labor government for its cynical and reckless decision to ban the live export of sheep from Australia. I think it is absolutely right that we do that and take the opportunity to send a clear message to Canberra that this place will not tolerate that kind of behaviour.

I can find no better words than those stated by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the other place on Tuesday this week. He stated —

The gutless federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry came across to Western Australia on Friday night. He did not tell stakeholders he was coming and barely told any media. I do not know whether

he told the state government. He flew over here at the expense of taxpayers, but what did he do? Rather than talk to stakeholders face-to-face, he held a Zoom meeting. He flew over to WA to hold a Zoom meeting to tell stakeholders that their industry is finished. He then held a press conference and flew out. At taxpayers' expense, he flew across, held a Zoom meeting and departed the scene.

That is gutless and disgraceful, but not unexpected. Let no one forget that the Cook Labor government has also taken the conscious decision not to back Western Australian farmers on the Albanese government's decision to ban live sheep export. Let no-one forget that the Cook Labor government decided to cut a deal with the Albanese Labor government rather than actually fighting for our farmers. Anyone in any doubt that the Cook Labor government threw in the towel should take the time to read the Western Australian government's submission to the independent consultation panel.

That submission was tabled on 8 August last year and read more like a document prepared by a government complicit with the decision to cease the trade, rather than one advocating for its continuation. Instead of making a strong case in support of farmers and those affected by this ill-thought out decision of the Albanese government, the submission advocated for a transition —

... with clear direction and sufficient time and resources for adjustment along the whole supply chain.

That was instead of highlighting the importance of the live sheep trade to our regional economies. The submission stated that there has been a long-term decline in live sheep exports and that given certain scenarios, there will be minimal to no impact to farmers.

Extraordinarily, the document almost set out a road map for the Albanese government on how it should go about killing off the industry and managing the transition. If the Cook Labor government and the Minister for Agriculture and Food were genuinely committed to standing up to the federal government and making the strongest possible representations on behalf of the live sheep export industry, their submission would not have advocated for a transition process.

All anyone who has any doubt about the Premier's conscious decision to cut a deal with the Albanese government rather than fight for our farmers needs to do is read *Hansard*. On 12 March 2024, the following question without notice was asked in the other place —

112. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Premier:

The Premier has said that the federal Labor government's live sheep export ban will be an unnecessary burden —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry, member, just pause for a moment. I will just ask people to not make farmyard noises!

Such is the contempt that the Labor Party has for agriculture, it cannot even be bothered to listen to a genuine question about a very serious issue facing an industry. Instead, it resorts to the behaviour of a five-year-old by making farmyard animal noises in the middle of a question on this particular important issue. What a disgraceful performance from members of a government that does not care about this industry.

In the response to the questions, which eventually the member was able to get through, the Premier replied —

We will continue to advocate for the best possible deal for WA farmers to make sure that our important agricultural industries remain strong into the future. We understand the important role that live sheep exports play in terms of the overall agricultural industry, and our submission to the commonwealth government made it quite clear that if a phase-out is going to go ahead, then significant support for our farmers in the transition is absolutely necessary and a reasonable time frame needs to be set.

If the federal government is going to go ahead with that, I want my Minister for Agriculture and Food in there, getting the best possible deal for WA farmers.

Well, we know what “the best possible deal for WA farmers” resulted in. I will quote again. The Minister for Agriculture and Food stood up in this place in response to a question by the mover of this motion, Hon Steve Martin. She stated —

I have sent a letter to Senator Hon Murray Watt advising that the \$107 million transition package will not meet the current and future needs of the WA sheep industry and supply chain. I am particularly disappointed that only \$64.6 million has been earmarked for sheep producers, the industry supply chain and regional communities.

There we have it, President, a glib and dismissive Premier whose government has managed to cut a disgraceful deal with their federal Labor counterpart that is a disgrace and patently inadequate. If it were not so absolutely heart wrenching for the farmers, businesses and families, who are in abject despair over this decision and the circumstances they currently face, it could almost be deemed a comedic farce. At its most fundamental, it is important to note that no deal with the commonwealth is acceptable on this issue, because the industry should not be shutting down. In any event, it would seem that the Animal Justice Party carries more influence with the Albanese government and its backroom preference deals than the Premier of Western Australia.

But it actually gets worse. On 18 April this year, the Premier's complete lack of understanding of the current devastating circumstances playing out in our state's livestock industry were on full display. In response to a motion moved in the other place by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition calling for financial assistance to assist our farmers with access to water, fodder and freight, once again, all the Premier could offer up was his usual political bile and vitriol. It is almost as though we were back in the dark days leading into the Premier's infamous backflip on the doomed Aboriginal cultural heritage laws, when his only response to the legitimate issues raised by members of the public, through the opposition, was to label the opposition dog whistlers. In his response to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's motion, the Premier was at great pains to explain to the opposition that there is absolutely no correlation between the current situation of farmers facing the prospect of having to euthanise sheep and the live sheep export ban, and that the opposition was simply using the issue to score political points. The fact that the Premier spent more time attacking the opposition for political pointscoring rather than addressing the substantive issues raised by the opposition speaks volumes.

It is also interesting that every single member of the Cook Labor government in the other place voted against the opposition's request to provide that necessary financial assistance. In any event, of course, as we know, the following week, after months of impassioned pleas from the opposition, industry groups and farmers in distress, the state government finally relented and took a small but welcome action to provide financial support to farmers, totalling \$8.6 million. I have personally visited many farms that are in the grip of this drought. Some of them, even only 60 kilometres from this place, are spending something like \$15 000 a week keeping their animals alive, with no ability to get them to market because the market is at capacity. It is a huge problem. Although this package is welcome, it is relatively small considering the circumstances those farmers face.

The inconvenient truth is that the opposition and industry groups have been raising the issue of increased carryover of stock and the impending risk of insufficient feed availability with the government for almost a year. Anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of how the livestock industry works understood that there was a potential issue coming as a consequence of the Albanese government's proposed ban on live exports due to the increased carryover of stock, plummeting prices and prevailing market conditions. We saw that there was a forecast for a dry spring, summer and autumn. I have raised this issue in this place throughout 2023, the deputy opposition leader and members of the opposition have raised the issue in the other place on many occasions, and yet it still took until 15 April this year before the government convened the Dry Season Taskforce and provided its assistance package.

Is the government extraordinarily inept or complicit? Take your pick. Either way, Western Australian farmers are left to pick up the pieces. What other industries should be looking over their shoulders if the new benchmark for closing down an industry is a simple survey of a few people that concludes, "We don't have a social licence, so we'll shut you down"? Or is it all just about backroom preference deals with minor parties? Is that the criterion that will determine the industries that exist within the Australian economy?

Visitors — Dayton Primary School

The PRESIDENT: Before I give the call to Hon Neil Thomson, I would like to acknowledge in the public gallery Dayton Primary School. You are welcome to the Legislative Council, and we hope you enjoy your time with us.

Debate Resumed

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.34 am]: I am hoping that members opposite will support this very sensible recommendation. I think it is really important for the Labor Party that its senior leadership is prepared to put to bed the extremists who are working within the Labor Party and groups like the Animal Justice Party who want to shut down the livestock industry. This is a modern challenge for all major political parties. It is time to make sure that these extremists, who are clearly coming through in the Labor Party, are rebutted on this issue and told to go and join the Animal Justice Party. Go and be part of that organisation! If someone wants to be part of an organisation that does not believe in the safe trade of livestock, they should go and join the Animal Justice Party. Go and join the dirty tactics of GetUp! and those organisations, with allegations of cash for comment or cash for cruelty, and dirty tactics of highlighting one or two incidents, which, of course, the industry wants to put to an end. For years—decades—this industry has worked diligently to reduce mortality in the live sheep trade.

I was an officer in the department of agriculture as it was called back in the 1990s, and I remember working with a veterinarian. We were writing a proposal to improve the feed arrangements—feed composition and conditions—on board ships transporting sheep, but even then, the mortality rate aboard the ships was lower than the mortality rate on farms. In farming, animals die. That is a reality. Animals have to go to slaughter. That is a reality. It is part of our wonderful evolutionary journey. As human beings, we partake in eating meat. But we have these extremists who somehow believe we in this land can all start living off grasshoppers and tofu, and they are starting to blame it on things like masculinity—seriously! I refer to honourable—no, I do not think he is honourable—Chris Tallentire in the other place. They are extremists! That committee is riven with extremists.

I think that the leadership of the Labor Party has a real opportunity here to get on board and support this very sensible motion. This is a result of extremism and the acquiescence to extremism by the federal minister. There is hypocrisy, as well, with a federal minister in a state that relies on a large cattle trade. I am very concerned for

the live cattle trade in my region, in the Kimberley. We saw what happened when Minister Ludwig capriciously responded to that ABC story on trade to Indonesia. He just shut down that trade without any warning, which led to decades of legal action and incredible mental health challenges for the farmers impacted. It was a disgraceful decision to shut down that trade instead of trying to get to the bottom of the issue, the facts, and look at how we could have continuous improvement that would provide a better outcome.

Of course, in any industry there are challenges. These extremists have twisted and amplified the issues in such a way that they go against the grain of tens of thousands of years of evolutionary development of the human race. We eat meat; most of us eat meat. We are happy with it, as long as we do it in the most humane and sensible way possible, with a process of continuous improvement. We should have that moderation in this place. Instead, we have extremists and the Animal Justice Party now running the federal Labor Party. We can see that in the *Countryman* article that was referred to by my colleague Hon Steve Martin. It stated —

The Animal Justice Party said that it was “proud” to “deliver the knockout blow” to the predominantly WA-based industry.

...

The AJP listed three major priorities the group were now “laser-focused” on, including ensuring that Labor enshrines the live sheep export end date before the Federal election and making sure Coalition parties also commit to the end of live exports.

The coalition has stood up for farmers in Western Australia. We are committed to ensuring that the live sheep export industry continues. As much as the official position of the state Labor Party is to support the live trade, I hope we get support for today’s motion. As much as the Labor Party might want to go on about it, the fact is that extremism is at the heart of the Labor Party, as outlined in a very timely way in the report produced by the Education and Health Standing Committee chaired by Chris Tallentire et al from the other place.

We know that the Animal Justice Party is looking to shut down the cattle trade. There are about 250 000 breeders in the Kimberley. It is a very small industry in terms of economic output but it is a very small cultural industry. There are not a lot of good things going on in the Kimberley—not a lot of opportunity. A few mine sites are going through approvals processes. The tourism industry is on its knees, struggling to get ahead and move forward. The live export industry is very important for native title holders and traditional owners. The Yawuru Prescribed Body Corporate owns the really important Roebuck Plains Station. It has a backgrounding facility that processes about 100 000 head of cattle for the live trade industry.

We have heard comments about the association between masculinity and meat eating. I would like Chris Tallentire to go to the Kimberley and talk to some of the traditional owners about that. He would get short sharp shrift because that just shows his stupidity. The traditional owners would say, “Are you going to make us all eat bugs and tofu?” I am sure they would just laugh. Those comments show the extremism exhibited. We have to put a stop to it. It is really important. It is incumbent on the leadership of the Western Australian division of the Labor Party to get on top of the extremism that keeps rearing its head on this issue. We definitely need to work very hard. Western Australians expect more. They do not expect the federal government to shut down a perfectly good safe industry that brings millions of dollars to families and underpins our agricultural sector. Banning the export of live sheep will be a terrible blow for agriculture in Western Australia. It will make it very difficult for us to really make sheep profitable. Many farmers already crossbreed their merinos, having moved to produce sheep that are more suitable for eating. We cannot just change that. Destocking will occur, which sends a terrible message to my region, the Mining and Pastoral Region, which is predominantly a cattle rearing area. What will happen next? We know what will occur next because of the march of ideology, and the appalling extremism that has been shown with crazy quotes like the one made by the Labor Party committee led by Chris Tallentire. The committee noted in its report —

... there are barriers to Australians changing their diets, such as the association between masculinity and eating meat.

How crazy is that? That shows the extremism in the Labor Party. That sort of extremism needs to be put to an end. We know where it leads. The report stated —

... it is food for women, while real men eat meat.

Why raise that? The Premier should come out and say, “Stop that rubbish!” The report goes on to state —

... I see that there is need for a lot of communication, a lot of change of attitudes ...

This is the kind of social engineering that some of these idiots in the Labor Party are heading to.

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [10.44 am]: I support the motion. Having just re-read the motion, I see incredible scope for the Labor government to support it. I see Hon Jackie Jarvis, the Minister for Agriculture and Food, as a practical person. Like me, she represents the South West Region. I commend the agriculture minister for sticking up for people in the regions over this issue, or at least attempting to do so, with her federal counterparts. What the Premier said on this issue recently is a sign that he is listening to people in the regions.

It is totally unacceptable for any industry to be shut down, be it the native forest or any other industry, once it meets certain minimum standards. Minister Hon Murray Watt has accepted that the live sheep industry has improved its animal welfare standards. I heard him say that on the radio. In those circumstances, no-one else in society, such as the extreme forces working in our society that Hon Neil Thomson referred to, should tell another person how to earn a living or how not to earn a living, such as the farmers that Hon Steve Martin spoke about today. No-one in our society has the right to encroach upon another person's way of earning a living provided that minimum standards are met. I am confident that the minimum standards are being met by the live sheep industry.

This is the thin edge of the wedge. We are under assault from extreme elements within our society. Hon Neil Thomson was correct to reference the Education and Health Standing Committee, partly made up of Labor Party MPs from the other place. This issue is about the Animal Justice Party and inner-city urbanised people who have probably not been to a farm for a long time. We are such an urbanised society and this crazy idea is creeping in that maybe we cannot eat meat because it is cruel to harvest an animal. It is not. An animal that is brought into the world by a farmer is cared for, nurtured and humanely slaughtered. It is simple. If people look on the internet or go to Africa, they would see a lion tear apart a baby gazelle. That is not particularly humane but it is biology. As humans, we have evolved—Hon Neil Thomson talked about evolution—to a point where yes, we are at the top of the chain. It is biology. We slaughter sheep humanely. No-one should be telling people in any small business—I always feel like it is an unconstitutional thing to do but I cannot back that up with any reference to constitutional law—to shut down an industry. That is just outrageous.

As much as I admire Hon Jackie Jarvis and Hon Roger Cook for attempting to push back, I think they will probably support this motion because it seeks to draw a line in the sand with their federal counterparts. I also see the political expediency. Having lived in this state pretty much all my life, I simply cannot imagine a Western Australian government going to an election saying that it would shut down something like the live sheep industry. I have been to Hon Steve Martin's farm, through one of his family members. It is a great operation. There are great people in the live sheep production and export industry in the wheatbelt. To go to an election with anything other than support for that industry, which I think is where Hon Jackie Jarvis is now, would be suicidal. We have seen it with the native forest industry. I do not think we would see it again. We could not go to a state election wanting to shut down an industry like that. I see the political reality of it but I also see some courage from the Labor government to push back against its federal counterparts. It is a totally natural industry. It is not for people to impose their views on whether producing red meat is ethical or anything like that onto others. We all coexist in society. The federal Labor government should not be looking to bolster its inner-city Greens vote, if you like, by completely, shall we say, executing people in my electorate and the constituents of many of us who represent the regions. Leave the Green vote to the Greens—Adam Bandt and all those people. Federal Labor should not be hunting for votes like that and, in return, executing an industry and the people who rely on it for their wellbeing.

Hon Darren West purports to be a wheatbelt farmer, but all I have heard from him today are cheap shots across the chamber. Hon Darren West should feel very embarrassed. If he purports to support people in that industry, he should have some courage and speak in favour of this motion and not worry about pre-selection and things like that. If Hon Darren West is going to take cheap shots, he should back it up with some courage. One Nation is very passionate —

Hon Darren West: Courageous!

Hon BEN DAWKINS: — and very courageous—that is right, Hon Darren West—about maintaining and restoring what we see as a traditional Australian way of life and values. That is a very simple objective to have, but it may be harder to execute. The assault on the red meat industry and on our right to not only eat red meat, but also support that industry, is a leftist greenie assault that needs to be countered, and that is what One Nation will do. We want to maintain not only our lifestyle in terms of a choice in what we eat and how we produce our food, but also a traditional farming lifestyle for people in the regions who have every right to expect to continue to earn a living from an industry that is meeting the required standards. We will fight for our right to continue to eat what we want, produce what we want and earn a living from industries and small businesses that are maintaining standards. Without wanting to be paranoid, there is a bigger agenda here and a larger assault on traditional ways of living and earning an income. That is why One Nation and I will definitely be supporting the live sheep industry going forward as much as we can. I commend to the house the motion moved by Hon Steve Martin.

Visitors — Beaconsfield Primary School

The PRESIDENT: Before I give the call to Hon Louise Kingston, I would like to welcome to the Legislative Council's public gallery the students and staff from Beaconsfield Primary School. We hope you enjoy your time with us.

Debate Resumed

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [10.53 am]: I rise today to support the motion and to speak on behalf of the farmers in my area in the South West Region. We are smaller farmers with smaller holdings and the live sheep export industry is absolutely pivotal to the profitability of farms in our area. We rely on strong markets across the whole sector. A lot of the farmers in our area are also regenerative farmers. We have low carbon stocks in our soils

and the hooved industry in Australia has been very important to improve the soil's capabilities and returns by adding carbon into the soil. The people from my area and I find this announcement to be so incredibly cruel after having dealt with the drought and the dry season this year. Our area is traditionally an area of high rainfall. For our area to run out of water is absolutely unheard of, so it has been incredibly difficult. I want to reiterate something that most of the other speakers have said. There is a disconnect between the people who make these decisions and the farming community that they no longer understand. The farming community, like the timber and fishing industries and the firearms sector, make up small numbers of our population and are easy targets. This decision is just plain cruel.

I would hazard a guess—I am happy to be corrected—that the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Hon Murray Watt, has never had to shoot an animal in his life. I came into farming late when I met my husband, who is a farmer. I had always supported farmers and thought I knew a lot about farming, but I did not. I have learnt so much over the last few years about animal welfare, looking after orphaned lambs—having to get up and feed them from midnight to two o'clock in the morning—and the pure joy that it is to be a farmer and produce food for so many people. Each time our product goes off on a truck, I think, "Gee whiz! Look at what I have contributed to feeding the population." But the population no longer understands this, as Hon Steve Martin said. They are so disconnected from where their food comes from.

Yesterday, Hon Dr Brian Walker spoke about the issues in the health sector and its relation to the consumption of highly processed foods. This also leads to that disconnect with purely produced foods. When we talk about animal products, we talk about it coming from its purest form—you literally take it and cook it; nothing is added to it. As we now know, the increasing incidence of health issues over the last 50 years is directly related to a decline in the consumption of animal fats and proteins. I personally know this because I have a health condition and I cannot eat carbohydrates. There are probably many members in this room who are in the same position. I had to adopt that diet and, I tell members what, it is absolutely delicious. Every day I get up and my food is just amazing. It is how food should be consumed. As Western Australian farmers, we have a responsibility to produce food for people around the rest of the world. Other members spoke about how we have improved animal welfare across the world. Taking us out of that supply chain does not make any sense. We need to continue to support the live sheep export industry. Those opposite also need to strongly advocate on behalf of our industry and find a way for us to continue to do what we do, and do it really well.

Country people work hard. I worked hard before I became a farmer, but it was nothing compared with the work those guys do, particularly in our horticultural area. They are up at goodness knows what time every morning and working all day and well into the night before they get to stop again. On the back of an incredibly difficult season, they have to put up with being treated like they are not even worthwhile. As the saying goes, you need a farmer every day, three times a day.

Speaking of having schoolchildren in the gallery today, we need to teach children about the value of our farmers in Western Australia, how much they contribute to the economy and the value of being involved in farming. It is interesting to note that many people from our area have gone away and found new and innovative ways to do things in the farming sector, and they are now coming back to the farms. We are seeing a resurgence in younger people who are getting excited about farming again, which is absolutely fantastic because it has definitely gone through a period of declining interest. We know that the age of people in farming is older. Part of the farming sector's challenges will be educating the wider public on the value of farming. I have spoken with the farming sector many times about the need to be more progressive in the way that they tell their story so that people understand the value of farming in Western Australia, getting involved in it and choosing occupations in those areas, ensuring that we continue to lead across the world with our fabulous outcomes for animal welfare.

I was very lucky that I had my grandmother with me until she was 95. She was a very—I suppose I would use the word "crusty". I think she would just be absolutely horrified today if she knew what was going on in the farming sector. She lived a tough life. She was born in 1909 and lived through the Depression, two world wars, the Spanish flu, the smallpox epidemic, the Vietnam War—you name it, she lived through it. She did not die until 2005. She was one of those people who I would like to take to visit with Hon Murray Watt because she would sit him on his backside, and she would tell him exactly how life was. She was always able to make me think about things. I suppose that is why I am so incredibly grateful to her. She did not ever tell me what I wanted to hear. She always told me what I needed to hear but in such an amazing way that had me consider that maybe my beliefs needed to be challenged. Maybe I needed to challenge the beliefs of others to ensure that everybody's story was told. She commenced work when she was very young, which was very unusual in those days. Things were really tough. They lived on the banks of the Collie River during the Depression. My grandfather had to work for the government because there were no jobs. He had to clean out the Collie River. During that time, he suffered infection in his mastoids—Hon Dr Brian Walker will understand that. He never overcame it. He had that infection for the rest of his life. They were really incredibly tough times. One of the most amazing things that she said to me one day when I might have been grizzling about something I should not have been grizzling, "Dear, do you know something? You do not make good decisions until you have been really hungry." I do not understand that because I have not ever been really hungry. Nobody understands that as much as that generation did. That was the generation that built this industry and handed this industry to us to take care of to ensure that that industry continues to be a vital

part of Western Australia's future. Why does government interfere in markets that industry has developed itself? It is not right, and it should not happen, particularly when the evidence shows that this industry is without a doubt the best run industry in the world. We owe it to the industry for it to continue and share it with the rest of the world and ensure that the people of the world are fed properly.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [11.03 am]: I rise today to speak on the motion brought to the house by Hon Steve Martin. This motion gives me an excellent opportunity to again speak about how the Premier, Roger Cook, and I will always do what is right for regional WA and the state. This is obviously not the first time a motion discussing live sheep export has been brought to the chamber. I remind members that back in March 2023, when I had been the Minister for Agriculture and Food for a little over three months, Hon Steve Martin again moved an excellent motion, if I say so myself, on Wednesday, 29 March —

That this house —

notes the repeated and enthusiastic comments from the Western Australian Minister for Agriculture and Food in support of the live-sheep trade, including her statement —

“I do support live sheep exports, it's an important part of the mix—I absolutely do”; and

calls on this house to endorse the policy position of the minister.

There was then an interjection from Hon Dr Steve Thomas that it was a positive motion for the day. Hon Steve Martin then confirmed it was indeed a positive motion. We have been speaking about this matter for a long time. Back in March 2023, Hon Colin de Grussa, who was the shadow Minister for Agriculture, also called on our house to endorse the position of the minister, being me —

Her commitment was unfailing. It was excellent to see the response to the question I asked around some of the statements made ...

We are here again, more than 12 months on, speaking about the live sheep industry. As I have said, I have been on record numerous times with my support for the sector. In June 2023, we had a rare question without notice. In this chamber we usually get four hours' notice, but Hon Steve Martin again wanted to keep me on my toes back in June and asked a question to confirm my support for the continuation of the live sheep industry. He asked about the economic assessment. Back in June 2023, I noted that there would be an economic impact regarding the value and that we were still working on that economic impact.

Economic modelling is not an exact science. I am not an economist, but there are a wide range of economic modelling scenarios. Hon Colin de Grussa spoke about the WA government submission to the live sheep export phase-out panel. I tabled that document on 8 August 2023 along with a number of other documents. I refer to the WA government submission on live sheep export phase-out tabled in this place on 8 August 2023 accompanied by my ministerial statement. In that scenario planning, we did economic modelling. The economists at the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development did this. They are much cleverer than me, and they were informed by a number of other reports also tabled that day. We talked about several scenarios. Scenario A, which was the current situation at the time of submission, considered a 12.4 million head flock size turning off 5.1 million sheep and lambs, of which 600 000 were exported live, and harvesting 53 million kilograms of wool. Scenario B considered no sheep being exported live, and negative sentiment in the industry leading to a 15 per cent drop in flock size, harvesting 43 million kilograms of wool, and impacted producers do not reallocate land. Scenario C considered no sheep being exported live, leading to the same impact on the sheep and wool industry as scenario B, but farmers change their land use of the 400 000 hectares of land previously used for the sheep and basically switch to a full grain operating system.

The executive summary outlines the economic modelling. I will read a paragraph —

On modelling of only a 15 per cent drop in the size of the WA sheep flock as a result of the ending of live exports, the cost to the agricultural industry without a reallocation of land asset to cereal cropping would be in the order of \$123 million annually. With a redeployment of land asset to cereal grains as a replacement, the cost would be in the order of \$22 million annually.

They are the two extremes that we looked at from an economic point of view. I know that the federal government has looked at that scenario in which everyone changes over to a full grain operating system. As Hon Louise Kingston mentioned, farming systems work better when we have livestock and grain in the systems. There will be an economic impact. I cannot not say exactly what that economic impact will be because I cannot say what every single farmer will do, but we know that there will be an economic impact. I have acknowledged that from day one. Yesterday I made some very public comments that the package on offer is simply not enough to cover what we are dealing with. We know that there will be a financial impact. We know that it will fundamentally impact our sheep systems in Western Australia. We know it will impact our wool industry. I have been telling Murray Watt that since the first day I became the Minister for Agriculture and Food. I will always do what is right for regional communities. The Premier will always do what is right for regional communities. We are standing up for Western Australia and it is great to see the opposition come on board team WA.

Several members interjected.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I did not interject at all, and so I will not be taking interjections.

Hon Steve Martin spent a significant part of his speech quoting from media statements, news stories and press releases. I might offer some of my own. The document I am reading is from a presentation I gave at the Pastoralists and Graziers Association conference in October 2023, which includes some of the media statements that have been published. I was quoted in an article published in *Farm Weekly* in January 2023, which states —

The Premier and I have been very clear that we believe the measures in place are sufficient ... the northern summer export ban has been sufficient.

An article published in *Sheep Central* in February 2023, reports that I said, “I will continue to advocate for the industry in WA”. ABC Country Hour in March 2023 reported —

... Steve Martin moved that the house endorse the policy position of state agriculture minister Jackie Jarvis who has repeatedly said she supports the trade ...

In April 2023, I gave an interview on ABC Country Hour, saying —

I made it very clear to Minister Watt, when I spoke to him in early January, farming systems are quite different to the east coast ... those sheep have to go somewhere ...

The *Narrogin Observer* in May 2023 reported —

Ms Jarvis ... was “acutely aware” of the issues and had discussed the matter with Senator Watt on “many, many occasions”.

Those opposite know that I have spoken to Minister Watt on many occasions. In the other place, I have answered questions on notice and have detailed the dates that I have met Murray Watt. I have had face-to-face meetings on 12 occasions in less than 18 months. By “face-to-face” I mean either an online Teams meeting or in person. I gave an answer to a question on notice asked by a member of the other place. Those dates are there for everyone to see. I stood next to Senator Hon Murray Watt at a press conference in July last year after our agriculture ministers’ meeting, when all the agriculture ministers from around Australia came to Western Australia. We stood together and agreed to disagree. I think that was quoted in the media. In 2023, *The Australian Financial Review* published a story with a quote from that media conference, which states —

“I’m not sure how deep minister Watts’ pockets are.

“We have a whole industry, so it’s not just processors, it’s also about regional communities, it’s about transport. There are lots of links in the supply chain that support our live export industry.”

That mirrors the comments I gave yesterday to the media. I reiterate that there are lots of links in the supply chain.

This motion gives me the opportunity to again remind the house that I continue to support and we will always stand up and do what is right for regional communities. *Countryman* published an article in August 2023, which stated —

“Yes, I’m frustrated by the fact that the Federal Government took this policy to the election ...

The *Weekend Australian* published an article in September 2023, which stated —

... Jarvis said ... the government would continue to fight for “the best possible outcome” for the sheep industry.

I am quoting from a document that was prepared in October 2023, and, according to my notes, I said on 7 Regional News —

“If the Federal Government force this upon us, then we will need to have significant resources to support WA farmers”

I again note that we want to make sure that the economic support that will be put in place by the federal government is sufficient. One of my concerns has been that although a \$107 million package has been announced, over \$20 million of it is going to Austrade to build markets. That is great, but I do not think that should be part of the transition package. Austrade does a great job. As some in this place may know, I have been on trade missions, most recently to the United Kingdom and China, who are buyers of our meat. The feedback I got from companies such as Fletcher International and V&V Walsh is that there are opportunities to sell more meat to the UK, but we need to expand our processing facilities. We know that. The industry is stepping up. V&V Walsh spent \$50 million in Bunbury. My understanding is that the V&V Walsh abattoir is one of the largest employers in the Bunbury region. Hon Dr Steve Thomas is looking at that. I think there are around 700 FTE there. It is one of the larger employers in Bunbury.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: There are a couple of contractors at 900.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: There you go. They are close, then.

V&V Walsh has put its money on the line. It just spent \$50 million to expand its coolroom facilities and to put in robotics. It is an amazing facility. I am asking the federal government to give a little more to those processors. The

company wants to spend millions of dollars more on biodigesters. It wants to make sure that it is meeting all the environmental requirements for wastewater and effluent management, which is a real pinch point for abattoirs. I am absolutely calling on the federal government to front up with some more money, particularly for the processing sector, because we know that is stage 1. If we want to have more sheep processing in Western Australia, we need the processing sector to be gearing up. An abattoir in Geraldton has been mothballed since 2015. New buyers have come in and are hopeful that they will get that abattoir up and running in coming months. I have charged and been working closely with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and have discussed this with Minister Simone McGurk, because the Department of Water put restrictions on abattoirs for the management of wastewater. We will be working together to make sure abattoirs get increased processing capacity as soon as possible.

That does not change the fact that I continue to support the live sheep trade. What we have, however, is a federal government that is saying it will legislate on this. My job is to make sure that we get the best possible financial outcome for Western Australian farmers, regional communities, people working in abattoirs and businesses that are putting their own dollars on the line to make sure that we continue to have a bright future for livestock in this state. As I have said, livestock is really important in our farming systems. We know that many farmers, for a lot of reasons, have transitioned out of livestock and have gone to full broadacre grain growing operations, but like Hon Louise Kingston and Hon Dr Steve Thomas, I am a member for the South West Region, where sheep production is a very important part of the mix. Obviously, we have had incredibly dry conditions. I am incredibly proud of the fact that we have launched the hardship grants, with a mind to making sure that people who are struggling at the moment can access funds urgently needed to buy fodder or to cart water.

We are doing what we can to support the industry during this incredibly difficult time of drought. Yes, we have had a bit of rain, but members will have noticed that it has been unusually hot and sunny for this time of year. A couple of showers in the last few weeks does not break a drought. We need to keep working together. I will go to Canberra in coming weeks and again speak to Senator Watt on this matter at another meeting. I saw on the news last night that a number of WA delegates are already in Canberra. I have reached out to them and made the offer that they can use the Canberra hub offices. They accepted. That facility is there for them to use.

I stand to again reiterate that the Cook Labor government will always do what is right for regional WA communities. We will always do what is right for economic diversity. We know that agriculture is a key pillar in ensuring that we have economic diversity in this state. As someone who lives in the south west and has lived in regional WA for close to 30 years, I am passionate about making sure that we do the right thing by WA farmers.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [11.18 am]: This is not the first time we have debated the live sheep export trade in this house. I can remember some significant debates, particularly with Hon Darren West, over a time. I appreciate that the Minister for Agriculture and Food has ramped up her rhetoric around the federal government's decision and toughened it up somewhat. I think that is reasonable. I want to say in the very limited time I have—I have jumped from third on the speaking list for the opposition, but never mind—that Hon Murray Watt, federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, has now set a timetable for effectively the destruction of the industry or its alternative. We all understand that there is only one alternative to this, and that is shifting that industry to processing a chilled product in Australia. I have said repeatedly in this house that shifting to a chilled product would be the best outcome for Australia if it is achievable, and I suspect that one day it will be. It might take 20 years, but one day it will be achievable. The market will decide whether it will accept a chilled product or it will demand a live animal. Right now, it demands a live animal. We are talking about the Middle East, which is where the marketplace is.

This government set an effective “death date” for exports of four years' time. The clock is now ticking, so the government in Western Australia and the opposition, both state and federal, should now demand that the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt, deliver that transition on the same timetable. If the sheep industry is to have a future, that transition is necessary because live shipping exports currently underpin the price of sheep in Western Australia. It underpins the farming operations and puts a floor on the price of sheep that abattoirs, to be honest, do not like because it pushes up the price for abattoirs. Abattoirs have been opposed to the live shipping trade for as long as I can remember because it puts a floor on the price and underpins sheep industries and farms.

If live export goes, the entire industry will be under threat, so a transition is required. If that transition is to be delivered, it has to start to be delivered now. We should all be demanding that the federal agriculture minister, Murray Watt, deliver that transition to the same timetable that he is now delivering the death knell of the sheep industry in Western Australia. He should be required to ensure that chilled product will go out of Western Australia at a rate that somewhat equates to the delivery of the live shipping export industry. That should be the measure by which Murray Watt is judged. I do not think that anybody in the industry currently thinks that that will be deliverable, so Murray Watt has jumped the gun. Murray Watt has jumped to the death of the sheep industry without delivering the alternative, but there is an opportunity for the Minister for Agriculture and Food to take a positive approach to this debate. If the federal Labor government is determined to end this trade, it should deliver an alternative to the industry. What will happen otherwise? The trade will shift from Western Australian live export to live export from

another country, probably a country that has a lower standard of animal welfare than Australia has. In recent years, there have been some improvements in our animal welfare, and we have given due credit to the government for being a part of that. The market will shift, and if it shifts in the live export stage, when the transition to a chilled product eventually occurs, the chilled product will come from the place that has been supplying the market in the interim. The chilled product will come from whichever country starts to fill that live export marketplace unless the federal government acts.

I have to say that the money that has been put aside for Austrade, although welcome, is not nearly enough. The work that has been proposed is not nearly enough. The state government needs to contribute dramatically. The state government has copped some criticism for having trade commissioners in various places in the world, and it is very easy to throw criticism when a government is spending, but if a trade commission costs \$1 million and generates \$1 000 001 in additional revenue for the state, it is not a bad investment. That is what the government has to consider.

Let us look at getting state-level investment into those marketplaces to open those markets. Let us get significantly more federal money into that marketplace to deliver those markets. Once those markets are lost—once they determine a country that is prepared to provide the live sheep that they want and the market demands—they will be very reluctant to switch back to Australia in 10 or 20 years' time when they are prepared to accept chilled product because the generations have changed. Will they come back to Australia? It will not happen. That is how Murray Watt should be judged.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LIVING TOGETHER IN PEACE

Motion

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [11.24 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house —

- (1) acknowledges that today is International Day of Living Together in Peace, a significant occasion that encourages dialogue and action towards promoting peace, tolerance and understanding;
- (2) recognises the importance of living together in peace and that embracing cultural diversity is essential for achieving sustainable peace and harmony in a globalised world; and
- (3) notes that fostering empathy and compassion is the key to achieving lasting peace and harmony in our global community.

Members, today is the International Day of Living Together in Peace, which is observed on 16 May each year. It is a United Nations–designated day. This day proposes to uphold our desire to live and act together, united in our differences and diversity, to build a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony. The day underscores the importance of living together in harmony despite our differences in culture, religion, ethnicity and other aspects. Martin Luther King was quoted as saying, “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.”

Australia, fortunately, is recognised as one of the most multicultural countries in the world. With the exception of the family of our Hon Rosie Sahanna, whose family has been here for thousands and thousands of years, the families of everyone else in this chamber chose to come here for a variety of reasons. They chose to come to a place that was safe and diverse, where they could raise their families to have a good life.

In Western Australia, we probably have the best of all worlds. We have an extremely diverse state. Almost one-third, or 32.2 per cent, of our population was born overseas, more than half, or 55.6 per cent, has at least one parent who was born overseas, and three-quarters, or 75.2 per cent, identify that they have non-Australian ancestry. Much of that success has come about because of successive government and community programs to encourage diversity, interrelationships and community growth. I hope that the minister, in response, will provide a bit more detail about what the government has done or is doing to promote and support the continuation of the state's harmonious arrangements.

Unfortunately, as we all know, although we celebrate our cultural diversity, we face challenges. A lot of those challenges are happening elsewhere, globally, and are out of our control. Geopolitical disruptions unfortunately have a ripple effect all the way back to Western Australia. There has been a series of disruptions and I have probably missed a lot. Unfortunately, since the COVID pandemic—when we thought we might have all become smarter and saner, and better able to work together, bond closely, ignore our differences and acknowledge our sameness—we have seen the eruption of significant crises around the world. The Taliban returned to take over Afghanistan. We saw the destruction of rights, particularly for women in Iran. We saw the constant challenges of threats from China to Taiwan, the eruption of war between Russia and Ukraine, an attack on Israel by Hamas and the continuation of the war between Israel and Palestine. From my side, we look with trepidation at the US presidential elections later this year, the spectre of a Trump return and the implications of what that would mean for the whole world. With growing alarm, we note the growth of right-wing extremism around the world.

Sadly, the Israel–Hamas war has had significant effects on racism and discrimination globally. The conflict has fuelled hate speech, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia worldwide. Both Jewish and Muslim communities and many other people have had strong reactions to what is happening, and for obvious reasons emotions are riding high in both faith communities. I will talk about both. Unfortunately, a hostile environment has been created in which targeting Jews seems to be acceptable again. It is almost as though the bandaid has been ripped off and people have given themselves permission to be hypercritical, use hate speech, target this part of the community and people in the Muslim community, and use language and force to harm or damage. People are going back to historical norms that, in the modern age, should not be acceptable in any environment or against any individual faith, race or group in our community. There are some significant challenges.

I have talked about this before. Whilst we are talking about global issues, we, as MPs, need to come back and localise this to ensure that we can continue to have a harmonious and peaceful way of life here in Western Australia. Sadly, there have been some incidents. I referred to the young child who was targeted by a group of boys at her school simply because she is Jewish; she has since been moved to another school. There was an incident at a Freo cafe run by some members of the Jewish community; they were threatened with a pro-Palestinian rally if they ran a certain event, and they had to cancel it. We saw in the media this week the story about Rabbi Dan Lieberman’s son, who was targeted at a soccer game. I recently had a constituent, who is a Polish Jew, tell me that his neighbour is constantly harassing him and his family, and showing them his swastika tattoos and threatening to cause them harm. That matter is being pursued.

Those are just a few examples, but I know from speaking to the community that, prior to the events in October, there had been minimal episodes. I have talked about this before, but there has been a significant escalation, and the government has had to step in and resolve those issues. At the same time, there has also been an increase since October in discrimination and harassment of members of our Muslim community. Sadly, we also recently saw the death of the 16-year-old boy who had been radicalised. Many members in this chamber know Suresh Rajan, who is a long-term advocate for migrants and refugees. He has said that he has seen evidence that prejudice against Muslims is on the rise in some local communities. Again, we have a significant job as MPs to work together to try to defuse these issues and make sure that members of all these communities can live safely and in harmony.

Going back a couple of years to the state and federal election campaigns of 2021 and 2022, coming out of COVID, other communities were being targeted. There was very strong anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment at that time and reports of people having been attacked, threatened with knives and discriminated against at work and in access to housing. I certainly saw evidence of that during the two campaigns I worked on; some of our candidates were abused because of their ethnic background.

As always, women are overwhelmingly the most frequent victims of these types of attacks. Sixty-five per cent of victim respondents to a survey were women. The same survey revealed that 40 per cent of racist incidents happened on public streets, and that almost 60 per cent of incidents involved physical or verbal harassment.

On 8 May 2020, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated —

... the pandemic continues to unleash a tsunami of hate and xenophobia, scapegoating and scare-mongering.

He urged governments to —

... act now to strengthen the immunity of our societies against the virus of hate.

The devastating effect of hatred is unfortunately nothing new. However, its scale and impact is now amplified by new communication technologies. It is no longer just daubing things on walls or putting up posters. Hate speech, including online, has become one of the most common ways of spreading divisive rhetoric on a global scale, threatening peace around the world and creating tears in the fabric of our cohesive societies.

In the Australian context, we all know that racism has always been a thread throughout our communities. This is something that successive generations pretended did not exist, but, unfortunately, successive groups of migrant communities that have come into our state and country have experienced racism. Most of them have tried to work through it and just get on with their lives, because they chose to come here and perhaps get away from conflicts in their original countries. Certainly, our Indigenous community has borne and still bears the brunt of substantial racism.

Why do I reference racism in relation to the matter before us today? We cannot live in a peaceful society if we do not tackle these types of issues. Unfortunately, since the events of October, we have seen a significant increase in racist events in our state, against both Jewish and Muslim communities. If we allow this to continue, we will see a breakdown of the social cohesion that our governments—particularly our state governments—and communities have strived to grow to make this country the best and safest place in the world to live. We will play a role in trying to counter hate speech and hate-related activities.

I again quote António Guterres —

Whenever we see racism, we must condemn it without reservation, without hesitation, without qualification.

It was very timely during this week's federal budget for the Albanese Labor government to announce an extra \$4 million in funding to support programs aimed at stamping out all forms of discrimination in schools, with a particular focus on Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. I note that the federal government has also increased funding to both communities to provide education and security in these complex times.

I want to congratulate Minister Buti, Minister Papalia and the Premier for the way they have stepped up and engaged with both those communities in such complex times. The minister, in reply, will provide some detail on the types of events they have attended, the funding that has been provided, the additional policing and the direct engagement with communities to try to allay their fears and concerns and enhance their safety. These are things that we should not have to do in a state that has always been regarded as safe and harmonious, but, unfortunately, we are not quite there. I hope the minister will go through that detail. The Premier, those ministers and other members have stepped up to engage with those communities. I also acknowledge that the Leader of the Opposition and other members of the opposition have done the same. Something that struck me in particular was the speed with which the government acted, the morning after the young man involved in the stabbing incident died, in calling together the leaders of faith communities right across the spectrum and other leaders of our ethnic communities to talk about how we can deal with and try to break down the types of hate activity that are happening, including hate speech and threats, and about what needs to be done to ensure that we can maintain the social cohesion that is so important to us.

I raised this issue today because I think there is a significant role for us as MPs. We need to ensure that we can live in a harmonious society. We need to act together in a bipartisan way. Tempting as it is to make comments on foreign policy, that is an issue for the commonwealth government. We are a state government, and we should be local, local, local. We should be doing what we can to provide solutions and create positive outcomes. Part of our role is to vigorously oppose any form of hate speech or action. We have to do whatever we can to support those communities so that we can continue to grow with strength of diversity in Western Australia. That, as we know, is a significant attractor for people who want to come here to live. Our diversity and our multicultural society in Western Australia have always been a significant strength and add great value to our communities. We have to ensure that our young people are educated and that we do not miss an opportunity to ensure that they know that if we want to continue living in a united and peaceful way, it is about accepting differences, having the ability to listen and recognising, respecting and appreciating others.

Last night there was an attack on the Slovakian Prime Minister. Although that is a global issue, the quote from his opponent is relevant to all of us, no matter where we live, particularly as we have seen some quite violent actions around the globe. Zuzana Čaputová said —

Any violence is unacceptable. The hateful rhetoric we've been witnessing in society leads to hateful actions. Please, let's stop it.

In conclusion, the International Day of Living Together in Peace encourages everyone to live peacefully and to unite and highlights the significance of unity and diversity. It serves as a reminder that, despite our varied backgrounds, it is possible to coexist harmoniously. To quote Pope Francis —

Living together is an art. It's a patient art, it's a beautiful art, it's fascinating.

We have a significant piece of work to do to make sure that we maintain social cohesion in our very diverse and wonderful community, and not allow it to be torn apart because of actions that we cannot control.

HON KLARA ANDRIC (South Metropolitan) [11.40 am]: I, too, rise today to speak on the motion before the house and acknowledge that today is the International Day of Living Together in Peace. Although it is indeed important to recognise the significance of this day, it is difficult to ignore how poignant this occasion is, given the wars unfolding around the world. We stand at a time when the world is witnessing frightening and unimaginable scenes before its very eyes.

As a migrant and someone who comes from a country devastated by the impacts of war, the words peace, respect, understanding, compassion, empathy and harmony hold great meaning. Vojvodina where I come from is a province in the Republic of Serbia, and is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in Europe home to several different ethnicities. These include: Serbians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Croatians, Romani, Russians, Montenegrins, Rusyns, Gorani, Macedonians, Romanians, Albanians, Ukrainians, Slovenians, Germans and many more.

Born in Serbia to Hungarian parents, my own ethnicity is like the melting pot of cultures of the region I come from. It is this diversity of ethnicities, faiths and the languages I speak that make me who I am today. On that note, I would like to mention the multi-faith city I come from—not only the city of Novi Sad, but other regions of former Yugoslavia in the Balkans, particularly Sarajevo. In that city centre alone, within fifty metres of where someone stands there is a mosque, an Orthodox church, a Catholic church and a synagogue. It is a very multicultural city that embraces the diversity of different cultures and religions. I, too, come from a multi-faith background. The history of my ancestors include Catholics, Orthodox Catholics and Jews. There are a multitude of religions from that region.

As I stated in my inaugural speech, in some parts of the world, including the Balkans where I come from, politics does not always serve its true and intended purpose. Indeed, it is sometimes politics that causes the destruction

and devastation of its people. The impact war has on civilians was made very clear to me from a very young age, particularly when I visited Serbia, then Yugoslavia, in 1993, 1996, 1998 and 1999 just prior to the devastating NATO bombings that rained down on my home town Novi Sad and neighbouring cities.

In 1993, as a 12-year-old from Australia, the stark contrast of the two worlds that I belonged to was ever-present. It was during this time in my life at a very young age that my political views were formed. Injustice became something I refused to tolerate no matter whom it was occurring upon or where in the world it was occurring. It was always important to me to stand for what is right against inequality, bigotry and most certainly war. The significance of the International Day of Living Together in Peace is to remind us of the importance of promoting peace and inclusion and to celebrate cultural diversity in our society. Today is a notable reminder that upholding international law to prevent conflict and restore peace is paramount. Upholding international humanitarian law is not just a legal obligation; it is the blueprint for stitching together the fabric of global peace.

I am proud to be part of the Cook Labor government, which has a vision for an inclusive and harmonious society in which everyone belongs no matter their place of birth, faith, or languages they speak. I am proud that the members of our government reflect the diversity of the community we represent, including the culturally and linguistically diverse. It is a government that supports intercultural understanding through programs aimed to advocate for, and on behalf of, our CALD communities to ensure they feel accepted, included and respected. It is a government that stands against racism and division and embraces the differences of all of us, no matter where we come from or the faith we practice. It is a government that recognises that inequality breeds division, which is in direct contrast to the steps of achieving peace not just in Western Australia, but on a global scale.

The place of my birth and the place I live now share many similarities. Like Novi Sad, Western Australia is one of the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse states in Australia, with 32 per cent of our population born overseas. WA is in fact home to people originating from over 190 countries, speaking 240 languages and dialects. I, too, came to Australia with English being what I say is my third language, but if I was to include the languages of the former countries in the Balkans, I think I would be sitting with English being the fifth or the sixth official language I was taught. It is certainly something I am very proud of.

My migrant background is something I have not shunned away from speaking about. I have always stood very proudly and spoken about the lands from which I come from. In particular, I have spoken about the devastation of war upon the country I come from. I stand here as a member of Parliament who understands the devastation that war has upon people. It is something that has driven me in my political life and in my time as a young person who visited those regions during those very difficult times. The 240 languages and dialects spoken here include Aboriginal languages. In Western Australia we have people following more than 100 faiths.

I was trying to look for a quote to summarise my views when it comes to both racism, respect, equality, peace and the issues that matter to so many of us, not just here in Western Australia but around the world globally—now more than ever. I did stumble across a quote by none other than Nelson Mandela. His words said —

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.

Members, that is something I truly believe. Hate is something that is taught and should never be accepted in our society, be it Islamophobia or anti-Semitism. Neither can ever be accepted. They are the evils of our society. I ask that members take time to pause and think about the people who are most impacted. I know the devastation still not only bears on my family members from that region, but also beyond. War is a tragedy and peace is paramount in our society. It is only done through the respect of other people and their religions, faiths and their ability to live in a society free from any form of discrimination.

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [11.49 am]: I will not be long. The opposition absolutely stands to support the motion. I commend both Hon Kate Doust for moving the motion and Hon Klara Andric for the contribution she has given. It is exceptionally difficult—in fact, impossible—to disagree with the sentiments they have both expressed so well. I believe that sending an explicitly and implicitly signalled message is the responsibility we bear as parliamentarians. We need to weigh our words very carefully and follow through on commitments we have given, eradicate vestiges of ancient hatreds and assist, encourage and give life to true social cohesion. It is therefore an unfortunate obligation of mine to acknowledge some very recent discreditable and unfortunate statements made in both this Parliament and the national Parliament that betray a lack of any real historical understanding of the Holocaust. I refer here to statements made by the member for Scarborough last week, and also to those made by Senator Payman, who effectively reprised a militant phrase that is genocidal in its implication, because it would effectively diminish the right of Israel to exist as a nation. It is not just me saying this. This is a view held by the Labor Prime Minister, and it is a view comprehensibly held by the Senate of Australia, which voted today 56 to 12 to condemn Senator Payman for those remarks.

Unfortunately—this is absolutely no condemnation of this motion at all—it is too easy to move motions like this expressing the sentiment. It is much more difficult to live the virtues that they call us to live by. It is not the place

of the Western Australian Parliament to make opinions, drive foreign policy or commentate on very complex geopolitical affairs, which will have a bearing here. However, it is our responsibility to hold fast and hold dear the potential of this society, embrace our community in all its diversity and complexity, and encourage a social cohesion, which, I think, unfortunately—this is not a political condemnation—has fallen aside. Frankly, I think that it is less prioritised than the embrace of diversity for diversity's sake, which is absolutely no criticism of multiculturalism. I am an embodiment of multiculturalism. In fact, I doubt very much that the Labor government or its members, aside from their numerical superiority, hold any special claim to being any more diverse in proportion than any other party or independent member here. But I think there is an opportunity to, in a bipartisan way, drive meaningful, constructive policies of social cohesion, particularly those directed towards our young people, because the death of that young man on the cusp of adulthood should serve as a reminder that we all have a responsibility to encourage our young people to live full, meaningful lives, and not have the vacuum filled by ancient hatreds or modern perverted ideologies. This is an excellent opportunity to pause and reflect, but also to commit to living to values that are easy to express but much harder to live up to.

Well done on this motion, honourable member. We absolutely support it.

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [11.55 am]: I will keep this short because other members wish to speak. I start with a quote from President Carter, who I fear will shortly be passing from this world. At the 1976 Democratic National Convention, he said —

The foremost responsibility of any President, above all else, is to guarantee the security of our nation— a guarantee of freedom from the threat of successful attack or blackmail, and the ability with our allies to maintain peace.

But peace is not the mere absence of war. Peace is action to stamp out international terrorism. Peace is the unceasing effort to preserve human rights. Peace is a combined demonstration of strength and good will. We will pray for peace and we will work for peace, until we have removed from all nations for all time the threat of nuclear destruction.

That is a political speech from a Christian with a deep belief, and it is a wonderful reply, but it does not quite meet the needs of Hon Kate Doust and the wonderful motion she has put forward. I thank her for that from the bottom of my heart. We are talking here about a value: the value of peace, the value of love, or, as I like to say in some of my speeches, the value of kindness. If I were to encapsulate the Ten Commandments, or maybe the 11 commandments, into one particular word, it would be the word “kindness”. We can apply that to any religion or belief system in which we are going to work together. Kindness can clothe pretty much every act of our lives. With kindness, we can live in peace together.

We perhaps face a dichotomy here. We see a differentiation between hate and love, but that is a false dichotomy. Each is a very strong emotion. Members know that I tend to give philosophical discussions, and here I will again. Hate and love are both very strong emotions. The opposite of love is not hate; the opposite of hate is not love. For both, the opposite is apathy. The apathetic in our society are disengaged, disaffected and could not care about this issue. It is a situation we need to care about. We need to care about it passionately because hate and love are actually very strong emotions. We see them in our communities. I very much liked the contribution of Hon Klara Andric, with her expression of the multinational, multiethnic approaches in her home of the former Yugoslavia. I have also experienced that in my life. In fact, my family experienced hate as residents in Malaya, as it was then, when communist insurgents killed my father's manager and a week later shot my father in the side. Actually, they wanted to rip his stomach out with a shotgun. They got only his side, as he dove to the side. One of my vivid memories as a four-year-old is seeing my father lying in bed, blood all over the place, before he was taken off to hospital in Singapore. He survived, but that image remains with me as the result of hate.

If we are going to deal with hate from whatever source, we need education. We need the circumstances that will allow peace to evolve. We are looking for solutions here. I very much like this opportunity to speak to solutions, because with that also comes wellness. We see the issues we now face in society, especially the mental health issues, but we also know that thinking allows people to espouse hate as a reasonable approach to deal with their problems. It is not reasonable; it is not acceptable. We are talking here about teaching people communication skills. How do I communicate with someone whose opinion is so vastly different from mine, yet I am able to sit down with that person over a meal and speak about love and peace? We may have different opinions, but does that mean we have to exhibit hate? We do not.

One of the problems that we are facing, and this will be a governmental problem within the state of Western Australia, is how do we combat poor communication? Let us give it a name: miscommunication and “discommunication”. At the moment, we have thoughts flying around that have no basis in truth. They are perceptions, misperceptions and false perceptions that are happily espoused by those who want to foster hate, discord and disturbances in our society, and we, as a people—not just as politicians—suffer this. This is what we need to be fighting. We need to be fighting this not with weapons but with words of understanding to recover our basic humanity that we are but one people. We are but one country. We are all family—brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, and children. Did we not all emanate from one small site of survivors eons ago? We are the same, but we have a beauty in the

ways in which we diverge, and a beauty in the differences that make each one of us beautiful in our own way. Many of us attend citizenship ceremonies, so I delight in being able to relate that we are all different colours. We are forming a beautiful tapestry. When people come to our country, we do not all become the same. No, we are different, and the beauty is then woven into an ongoing tapestry of unimaginable beauty—something to be valued, praised and shown to the world. This is what we are. We are humanity.

Once again, I thank the member for the motion and for the contributions from members. I sincerely hope that we will be able to spread from this chamber these thoughts into our society as we see the people whom we represent and share with them this move to recognise that there is a problem we need to deal with through better education and communication skills, and that we can work to achieve harmony and the realisation that we are one.

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT (North Metropolitan) [12.01 pm]: I rise today in support of Hon Kate Doust's motion on the International Day of Living Together in Peace. I will draw from my personal journey and conviction in the transformative power of peace. In 2017, the General Assembly of the United Nations declared that 16 May would be the International Day of Living Together in Peace, as a means of mobilising the efforts of the international community to promote peace, tolerance, inclusion and understanding, and also standing in solidarity. On 16 May, we should aim to uphold our desire to live and act together and to be united in diversity so we may live in a sustainable world of peace, solidarity and harmony. The Western Australian government supports the objective of the International Day of Living Together in Peace. The Cook Labor government's vision is for an inclusive and harmonious society in which everyone has a strong sense of belonging and can participate and contribute fully to all aspects of life to achieve their goals.

On a personal note, having come from a war-torn country, I experienced the devastating impact of conflict when I lost many of my cherished family members, including my father, when I was only two years of age. Having witnessed the harsh reality of war, I carry a deep desire for a world that acknowledges the human cost of violence and conflict. Before coming to Australia in 2005, I endured the pain of separation from loved ones who I left back home in South Sudan and around the world. In Australia, some of our community members, as we heard earlier, face discrimination and racism. As we heard earlier from some members, we should be the ones who promote peace and harmony in our communities. It is important to do so because we are the last hope, the lawmakers, and if we do not help our community, our hope for peace around the world will be affected.

I was not planning to say anything, but I would like to make a small comment on the recent statement made by Senator Fatima Payman. We heard some words on this from Hon Tjorn Sibma. The only thing that I would like to say about what he said about Senator Fatima Payman is that the member does not stand in her shoes. The senator is a human, she has her reasons for making that statement yesterday, and we should respect her decision just like we would for other members.

Hon Tjorn Sibma: Will you take an interjection?

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT: I am not going to take an interjection from the member.

Hon Tjorn Sibma interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Sandra Carr): Order! The member on her feet has indicated that she is not taking interjections.

HON AYOR MAKUR CHUOT: The senator is human. She came from that community. As a mother and as someone whose father was killed in a war, I do not think Senator Fatima Payman is promoting the war. She is basically asking us to put ourselves in the shoes of the people who did not start the war in which innocent lives have been lost. I did not like the honourable member's comment but will now stop speaking on that matter.

My experiences fuel my belief in the importance of peace, empathy and cross-cultural understanding as pillars of the harmonious world that we talk about. It is urgent to recognise the significance of peace at an international and individual level. Countries ravaged and torn apart by conflict experience a huge amount of suffering from the loss of innocent lives, as we heard earlier from my personal story.

As Hon Kate Doust said, innocent lives have been lost around the world due to war, particularly in Gaza at the moment, as referred to by Senator Fatima Payman, and also in Sudan. I come from the South Sudanese community and currently a lot of lives are being lost in —

Hon Neil Thomson interjected.

Hon Darren West interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! The honourable member will take her seat for a moment, please. Members, the irony must surely not be lost on any of us. Today's motion is based on the notion of peace and respect. Can we please respect the member's request that she not take interjections and offer each other respect.

Hon AYOR MAKUR CHUOT: As the Acting President mentioned, today is all about promoting peace. I am not here to attack honourable members. I am here to talk about the impact that war can have on people, including me as I lost my father when I was two. I get sensitive when people comment about this because they have not lived the life I have. I lost my father in a war, so I understand the impact that it can have on innocent civilians. Peace promotes stability, prosperity and the wellbeing of citizens, and it fosters a conducive environment for progress and development. On a personal level, peace ensures security so that individuals can thrive and fulfil their potential. A peaceful existence enables meaningful human connections, mutual respect and a society grounded in harmony.

Again, I am proud to be in this government. I commend the Cook Labor government and Minister Dr Tony Buti's commitment to fostering peace and inclusivity through various programs and capacity-building initiatives in our community. The Western Australian multicultural policy framework is an important method of acknowledging WA's vibrant cultural diversity and was implemented by our government.

Another thing we do quite well in the community is support the youth. The multicultural youth sports partnership program is aimed at engaging young people from diverse backgrounds and promoting understanding among the young people in the community. Our culturally diverse grants support projects that celebrate and showcase the richness of the different cultures, fostering unity and mutual respect. The grants support festivals, including Diwali, the Jambo Africa festival, Eid events, Buddhist birthdays and the South West Multicultural Festival. Harmony Week is celebrated across schools, workplaces and communities, providing opportunities for dialogue, cultural exchange and building bridges across people's differences. Through the Welcoming Australia program, refugees and migrants are supported in their settlement journey, emphasising the importance of hospitality and integration.

On this International Day of Living Together in Peace, let us reaffirm our commitment to combating discrimination, upholding equal rights and nurturing a society that emphasises tolerance and peace in our daily interactions and decisions. We can contribute to the collective efforts towards a more peaceful and compassionate world.

I am running out of time, but as a member here, I will keep advocating for peace and making sure that our future generations will not go through some of the suffering that many of us have. I was left behind by my father when I was only two years old, and my mum ended up travelling between countries.

HON JACKIE JARVIS (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [12.12 pm]: I, too, rise to thank Hon Kate Doust for bringing this motion to the house today and indicate that the government supports the motion. I think it is incredibly important in this place and in a lot of places to hear from people with lived experience. I thank Hon Klara Andric and Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, who have experience of living in and fleeing from a war zone. The International Day of Living Together in Peace is a United Nations declared day. We all know the history of the United Nations, but I think it is worth reminding ourselves of one of its purposes. I am quoting from the website, which states —

To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems ... in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion

Four pillars are mentioned. I will bring back the focus to what we do at the state level. Hon Kate Doust quite rightly pointed out that at the state level we are looking at what we can do internally. Foreign affairs is a matter for the federal government, and I thank her for acknowledging that. We heard members talk about some incredibly powerful lived experiences. My lived experience is nowhere near those. I am the daughter of an Irish Catholic father and an English Protestant mother, which has implications, albeit that I grew up in very safe, suburban Perth, and I am very thankful for that. I am the daughter of immigrants, and my father and mother reiterated to me how lucky we were to live in a multicultural society in Western Australia.

I will not use my whole time because I want to give Hon Kate Doust time to respond. I will follow on from Hon Ayor Makur Chuot and talk about what we do here as a state government. The Cook Labor government has a vision for an inclusive and harmonious society. We do that through the Office of Multicultural Interests. That is a fantastic office. It is a small agency, but it does great work. As we heard, it supports festivals. We have the African Australians forum and the Everyone Belongs community sporting day in Kalgoorlie. Multifaith forums have been held annually since 2015 at which we engage WA's faith leaders and organisations. We heard from Hon Kate Doust that the multifaith forum was called together recently following a tragic event.

As we know, Harmony Week is held in March each year. This year it was held between 18 and 24 March. Harmony Week is a state government multicultural community relations initiative that encourages everyone to experience, explore and appreciate WA's amazing wealth of culture. As the Minister for Agriculture and Food, I am pleased that Harmony Week includes sharing foods from around the world. It is a beautiful celebration of multiculturalism.

I will leave my remarks there to allow Hon Kate Doust time to respond. It has been an interesting day. As one of my staff said, we have gone from fleece to peace today in the chamber. This is an important motion. I thank the Acting President (Hon Sandra Carr) for her wise words and direction. We are talking about peace here today and

I think it would be fantastic if we could all cooperate and take the motion with the good grace in which it was offered. I am not a person of faith, but I deeply respect everyone who is. We are privileged, I think, in this chamber to have people from across many, many faiths to give their lived experiences and viewpoints. I commend the motion to the house.

HON SOPHIA MOERMOND (South West) [12.16 pm]: Thank you, Hon Kate Doust, for recognising the International Day of Living Together in Peace. I abhor violence. I have always abhorred it and would like to see society free from all forms of violence, including from wars and sexual violence. When we look at hatred, we see that ignorance is the driver. Ignorance drives fear, and fear drives hatred. The way to fight that is through education and exposure. That reduces ignorance and creates acceptance and tolerance. We can see in this chamber the blending of many nationalities, and I really appreciate that. I would like to thank all members for their thoughtful contributions. Thank you.

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [12.17 pm] — in reply: I thank all members who have spoken today. I did not put up this motion to cause any distress. I think it is useful in our current climate to have these discussions because whatever is happening globally has a direct impact on the people who live in this state. The one thing I always liked growing up as an Australian is that we were free to practise our faith, and enjoy and share the benefits of our separate heritage. That is a significant strength of living here. Diversity and the different layers of our communities tighten the bonds. The Minister for Agriculture and Food outlined a range of activities that we now see as the norm in our calendar every year. Some 15 or 20 years ago, we may not have considered them, but now people see it as normal to go to an Eid festival event, or an Iftar or Passover dinner. On the weekend, I went to a Sikh event to learn about Guru Nanak. I will misquote something he said. It was a fantastic event with the Sikh community. As he travelled through different continents centuries ago, he said, “Diversity is our strength and together we weave a tapestry of shared humanity.” Those words still hold true.

The discussion that we need to have is about how to work together to make sure that we continue to have a community that can live in peace and harmony, so that our children can grow, enjoy life and obtain all the good things that we want for them. I pick up on the minister’s comments about how we deal with each other. As role models, one of our challenges is that we need to be kinder to each other in this chamber and demonstrate to our community that we actively listen, engage and discuss how we will do things in an appropriate manner. Picking up on what Hon Sophia Moermond said, role modelling is linked to education. We cannot educate people unless they know how to actively listen, discuss and put in place sensible outcomes.

We are caught up these days in the online manner in which information is communicated. It is speedy, can be quite horrific and can be misinformed, but it gets out there. We have to make sure that people have access to history, have the right and capacity to have open and frank discussions, and can work through the issues. People should not be afraid to articulate a view. If we start to shut down debate, that is when fear grows and intimidation rules. People close up and then we lose opportunities. We go back into our groups, shut the doors and do not have the capacity to engage with our neighbours to work in harmony in our communities, grow our society and have the cohesiveness that we desire in this country.

I think Donald Horne said that we are indeed the lucky country, and we have to work extremely hard to make sure that that holds true. I thank my colleagues Hon Klara Andric and Hon Ayor Makur Chuot for sharing their experiences. They are right: I do not know of anyone else in this chamber who can relate in the same way. I thank Hon Sophia Moermond for her comments about abhorring violence, which is a problem that we are starting to see. Instead of using words and instead of communicating appropriately, we are seeing demonstrations of violence and intimidation that I do not want to see here. That is not something that I think is relevant to our society as it will not achieve the outcome of living in a peaceful and harmonious society. I very much thank those members for their contributions. I thank Hon Tjorn Sibma for his contribution as well. Challenging as it is, I think it is useful to have these discussions in this chamber. We do not just talk about sheep or transport or the dollars in the budget. We need to pause for thought and to sometimes talk about some of the big-picture issues and how we deal with and work through them, so that everyone in our community can live in an appropriate way in their country of choice—somewhere they chose to come and raise their families for generations in a safe and healthy environment. Thank you very much.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Consideration of Tabled Papers

Resumed from 15 May on the following motion moved by Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services) —

That pursuant to standing order 69(1), the Legislative Council take note of tabled papers 3131A–E (2024–25 budget papers) laid upon the table of the house on Thursday, 9 May 2024.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West) [12.23 pm]: I intend to have something of an intelligent economic debate about this budget, and we need to look at a few particular outcomes, despite the fact that we are in

a pre-election year and it is definitely a pre-election budget. This speech will be broken into two halves, no doubt, because the dinner break will interfere. I will address some of the key budget figures and then investigate some of the economics that stand behind them at both a state and federal level.

This budget is remarkably similar to the previous three budgets. It is focused on revenues that are obtained from iron ore and the effective redistribution of those. Once again, the government will claim good financial management. Once again, the government has been the beneficiary of some incredibly good luck from the current economic boom, which remains the biggest economic boom in the history of any state.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, the boom started in 2019.

Hon Kyle McGinn: No, the luck that you are talking about—you started saying that in 2017.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, I started saying it in 2019. Hon Kyle McGinn, do not forget that in February 2019, the price of iron ore went above \$US90 a tonne. In this house I asked, “What is the government’s financial position going to be if it remains above \$US90 a tonne?” The then Treasurer, Hon Ben Wyatt, came back and said that the chances of it remaining above \$US90 were highly unrealistic.

Hon Kyle McGinn: That is good financial management.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We will come back to what good financial management is in a bit.

An iron ore price above \$US90 a tonne was considered highly unrealistic, but it has barely spent any time under \$US90 a tonne, with little blips here and there. This is once again a budget that is based on a high iron ore price with an underestimate during the year, so that the government can then reap the benefits of having higher royalty revenues than it had in the previous budget. It has money to splash around. We have had \$6 billion surpluses year in and year out. The government has managed to take it down to \$3.3 billion. I did not get the opportunity this year to put in a prediction. The midyear review said that it would be \$3.6 billion and, to be honest, because Treasury can manipulate the outcome, I would have manipulated it to \$3.6 billion and left it there, because I think Treasury could use a bit of a boost in getting a bit more accurate with its estimates. The reality is that the government has taken a \$3.6 billion surplus down to a \$3.3 billion surplus. I would have kept it at \$3.6 billion.

There are a couple of things that I think are great, good fun. For six years, and now seven years, this government has argued that the previous government was heading to \$42 billion worth of debt. What an outrage that was. Based on the forward estimates of the 2016–17 budget and the *Pre-election financial projections statement*, that debt was going to \$42 billion. How often have government members stood in this chamber, particularly the Minister for Emergency Services, and berated the former government for having debt projected to reach \$42 billion? How often has he stood and berated the debt levels formerly proposed? Let us look at page 4 of budget paper No 3. Let us look at the net operating balance and compare it with net state debt. The budget is predicting a \$2.6 billion net operating surplus for next year, then going to \$2.4 billion, \$2.8 billion and \$2.5 billion. It is still predicting \$8 billion to \$10 billion worth of surpluses over the next four years. Look at net debt at 30 June. In 2023–24, it is projected to be \$28.6 billion. In 2024–25, it will be \$32.7 billion. The budget proposes that net debt will go up by \$4 billion at the same time that it is claiming a \$2.6 billion surplus.

Hon Darren West: Yes, member, they are very conservative economic —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We will come to that.

Net debt will go to \$36.9 billion in 2025–26—so, \$37 billion—and the government will still have a profit of \$2.4 billion. Net debt will go to \$39.8 billion in 2026–27, and it will have a profit of \$2.8 billion. Net debt will go to \$40.1 billion in 2027–28 despite a \$2.5 billion predicted surplus.

Hon Darren West: As you pointed out, the iron ore budget estimates are always kept in surplus for good reason.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is right; the government does that. The federal government knocked them down to under \$US70 a tonne. The government’s prediction for the iron ore price is \$71 a tonne.

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, but we are trying to get to some economic literacy here, so I need Hon Darren West to stop interjecting and listen for a while. The low iron ore price projected in the future means that the government will have more money, so its surpluses will potentially go back up, but if it has tied that debt spending in, will it therefore reduce debt by those levels every time? Will the government give that commitment? If the government does not, its financial position is exactly the same as the financial position that this government berates the previous government for—year in, year out, day in, day out. The government predicts that it will go to \$41 billion in debt. The 2016–17 budget predicted that the previous government would go to \$42 billion in debt. In the end, the government is debating a rounding error. The predicted debt under this government will reach the same debt level that it has complained about now for the last seven years. I look forward to the new contributions from the new government that will have to eat a bit of humble pie and acknowledge that perhaps it got it wrong on future debt.

In a little while, I will explain some of the risks of this future debt, but as has been habit and a tradition to some degree in this place when I talk about economics, I would like to update some graphics and charts. I have updated my total government revenue and expenditure chart for people to browse so they can understand that this is still the biggest boom that any state in Australia has experienced. Yes, Queensland had a \$9 billion surplus compared with this state's \$6 billion surpluses, but this has now been maintained over a long time. In the new figures the gap in revenue and expenditure, as put forward by the state government, shows the biggest boom in the history of any state in Australia, and at the same time the government's net debt will rise from \$28 billion to \$41 billion. According to the government's own budget papers, its debt will go up \$13 billion during the continuation, on its figures, of the biggest boom it has ever seen. I seek leave to table documents showing general government revenue and expenditure up until the current budget.

[Leave granted. See paper [3154](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I thank members for their enthusiasm! I have a couple more documents that I will put in place.

Hon Stephen Dawson: We are saving energy for interjecting!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Excellent—okay, good!

The basics of the budget this year compared with every other year are very similar—a higher than predicted iron ore price, a higher than predicted GST payment, and higher than predicted tax receipts. Also, payroll tax is up, stamp duty is up, expenditure is up, and revenue is significantly up. Everything continues to rise under the government. The government has been lucky.

The interesting thing is that the current Treasurer, Hon Rita Saffioti, must be the most promoted Treasurer in the media I have seen. The media's obsequiousness, its obeisance to Hon Rita Saffioti, is just astounding, be it headlines or whatever. Hon Ben Wyatt was a bit loved by the media, but I have seen nothing like the worship of Hon Rita Saffioti that is going on. If I were Hon Roger Cook, I might be a bit nervous because the media —

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is like Wham?

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I thought Hon Kyle McGinn was talking about the band!

I have never seen such obsequious coverage, and I find it astounding. I occasionally still communicate with the person whom I think is the best economics writer in the country at the moment, Shane Wright, who currently lives in Sydney. In the days when he was the economics correspondent for *The West Australian* 20 years ago, there was outstanding coverage—even-handed but tough and economically literate. I do not think we would have seen the same obsequious coverage, which seems to be universal. I have never seen it like this.

Very simply put, this budget, once again, has a massive revenue that the government is determined to spend in a number of ways. I want to examine those ways. Historically, I have tried to cross as many areas of economic theory in these speeches as I can, but with the limited time frame and perhaps a limited level of economic enthusiasm around the membership, I suspect we may need to focus on a few specifics.

I want to start with the cost of living, which is the one issue that we have heard about almost constantly for the last 12 months—cost of living, cost of living. Federal governments talk cost of living, federal oppositions talk cost of living, state governments talk cost of living and state oppositions talk cost of living—everybody is talking cost of living. I am sure the Labor Party has its polls out there, and they are saying the biggest issue to be addressed is the cost of living.

Hon Kyle McGinn: What about your polls?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: If I were aware of them, I am sure they would say the same thing.

In fact, that is probably why on page 5 of the budget speech there is a nice, big section on the cost of living. As I have done every year, I welcome the cost-of-living proposals that the government has come up with—the \$250 per high school student and the \$150 per primary school student, the increase to the Regional Pensioner Travel Card of \$100 and the repeated electricity rebates of \$400. Every year I have said that I welcomed the government's contribution to ease the cost of living. I do not think it fixes the problem, but I am happy to see the government putting cash into the pockets of Western Australian families; that is good.

Hon Kyle McGinn: It is good policy.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: But we have not got to the question yet.

Of course, the federal government is doing the same thing. It is putting \$300 into families' pockets through electricity credits as well, so electricity is doing very well, thank you very much. It is a pity that the management of the electricity system does not match that level, but we might come to that later if we get time.

I now speak to the economically literate rather than economic “illiterati” who seem to frequent the wider debate.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Don’t look at me!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I was not looking at Hon Stephen Dawson; I am sure he will make a good contribution!

The question is whether it is inflationary. The answer to that is that it depends how it is spent. If those people who receive cash handouts say that that is \$300 or \$400 that they do not have to find for the electricity bills so they will spend it on a new DVD player or consumption —

Hon Darren West: You are showing your age!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, I am showing my age! I called myself a dinosaur this morning in a speech!

If the money is spent on consumption, it is inflationary. If it is spent on debt reduction on the family home, it is not. Do members know why we know that? What is the one tool that the Reserve Bank uses to control inflation? It changes interest rates. It pushes interest rates up or down. Do members know why it does that? I wish Aaron Stonehouse were still here for this debate because I liked his contributions.

Hon Stephen Dawson: He is listening!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Is he listening? Good! He would be listening. I miss you in these debates, Hon Aaron Stonehouse!

What does the Reserve Bank do?

Hon Dan Caddy interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It raises and lowers interest rates. Why does it do that? It does that solely to take cash out of the economy. Well done, Hon Dan Caddy, it was word for word. Hon Dan Caddy has joined the economic literacy club. Well done!

Hon Tjorn Sibma: He always is the one with the most potential.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Excellent! How is his preselection looking? We have just cruelled his preselection. That is a job done, Hon Tjorn Sibma; he is now number 38 on the ticket.

The issue is that the Reserve Bank takes money in and out. That is what it does, and it does so to control inflation. Alternative methods could be used to take cash out of the economy, but they are all deeply unpopular. One of the most obvious ones is to increase taxation so that money, instead of sitting in the banks as interest rates go up, sits with the government. The government could then, in theory, pay down debt in the same way that households could pay down debt at the microeconomic level. Then, spending is not being stimulated; cash is effectively being taken out of the economy. It is possible to do that, but can members imagine going to an election and saying, “Interest rates are high and inflation is too high, so we will raise taxes”? That would not be the most popular move, but it is economically literate. We are left with raising interest rates. Ultimately, we do that because governments figure that it is easier for people to blame the banks than it is for them to blame anybody else.

It is very interesting that when Philip Lowe was the Governor of the Reserve Bank last year there was a visceral campaign to blame him for increasing interest rates using the only tool the Reserve Bank has. Blaming Philip Lowe was one of the most disgraceful episodes in the coverage of economic activity that I have seen. The sheer joy when he lost his job and the welcome for Michele Bullock, the new Reserve Bank Governor, were astounding. People were saying, “We’ve got rid of Philip Lowe. Isn’t it great! How dare he raise interest rates!” despite the fact that inflation was out of control at eight per cent. He was blamed for that. Just so members know, I attended the Reserve Bank dinner for which everyone who showed up was pilloried for the cost of the dinner. I went to that and I asked Philip Lowe a question, which probably was not popular because the media thought that it was all for them. I asked him a question about whether the Reserve Bank’s economic modelling has slipped because it seemed to have got things wrong on interest rates, which is the one thing that the Reserve Bank is largely there to control. He denied that it had a slippage in its standard of research; I think maybe it did, but not getting the full truth out of government or government departments is not an uncommon episode—just look at question time in this house. Michele Bullock comes in, and guess what the Reserve Bank does with Michele as the Governor of the Reserve Bank? It raises interest rates! Inflation was high, so the new Reserve Bank Governor used the only tool in its armoury, the exact same tool as the previous Reserve Bank Governor used, but it was okay because we had blamed Philip Lowe, poor devil, for it. It was all Philip Lowe’s fault; he hated home owners. We go through, and the new Reserve Bank Governor has done exactly the same thing.

We are now debating budgets, both state and federal, that are tipping significantly larger amounts of money into the economy. To the economically literate in the room and watching online, I say this: if that money goes into discretionary spending, we will have another inflation problem. Instead of the Reserve Bank lowering interest rates, which I do not think it would have done this year anyway, I suspect that there is now a chance that it will again raise interest rates early next year, depending on how the government money is spent. This will not be because the new Reserve Bank Governor hates families or the community; it will simply be because that is the only lever the

Reserve Bank can pull. I will be very interested to see the media's coverage, particularly of those who are supposed to be the economically literate group. In many cases, I think they are still the economic "illiterati". The reality is that the Reserve Bank will have no choice but to do so because it is supposed to be independent of politics.

The federal government is handing out cash. The state government is handing out cash. Both can do it at the moment because the coffers are full. The money bin is still full. Scrooge McDuck may have moved on, but Donald and Daisy's money bin is still overflowing to the point that there is no room left. There is no room at the inn, and the cash has to go somewhere. We had better throw a bit of it back. The money bin is full. In both cases, federal and state, the reality is that they can afford to do that. They have the cash in the bank and in the money bin because of the resources sector, which is largely driven by Western Australia. Good luck to them. This government did not deliver the resources sector of Western Australia; the federal government did not deliver the resources sector.

Hon Kyle McGinn: It kept it open during COVID.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The state government made a contribution, but so did the previous government.

Hon Kyle McGinn: We kept it open during COVID, unlike the federal government that was in charge at the time.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: If we are going to give thanks to governments who developed the resources sector in Western Australia, I reckon a couple of Court governments beat yours. Go back to Sir Charles Court to see when it was truly kicked off, and Hon Richard Court also made a significant contribution. I reckon that they both made a much bigger contribution to resource development. That is not to say that the government did everything wrong or that it was completely incompetent. I am happy to give credit where it is due. The government has done a few good things, but the reality is that other governments have made a much bigger contribution.

Hon Kyle McGinn: You are talking about the coffers today.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am talking about the coffers.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Where would they have been if the resources sector was shut down under Scott Morrison?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Well, it was not, so there you go.

Hon Kyle McGinn: It was strong leadership in Western Australia. That's what it was.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I know that the honourable member is looking for credit, but in the circumstances it was not.

I want to get back to the economic principles that should be underpinning all the state and federal budgets but are not. The first thing is, quite simply, that state and federal governments will have no control over how their cost-of-living expenditure will be spent. The cash is simply handed out. It comes off people's electricity bills, but if that is transferred to other discretionary expenditure, that is fine. The school budget will presumably be just cash handed out electronically. Ultimately, the government will have no control over how that cash will be spent, and neither does the commonwealth government. It will potentially drive up inflation and make the cost of living worse. Having said that, in economic terms, the drive to increase inflation is actually the smaller component or impact on inflation. A much bigger and much more dangerous economic trend is in play, both in the state and federally; as governments have had more cash in the bank, they have tried to spend it—I guess, fair enough—largely for their own political benefit, and they have spent it largely on infrastructure. Not every government in recent years has done that, and I will go through some examples on the conservative side for which that was not the case because it has not been the case universally.

I bring members back to Keynesian economics. What did John Maynard Keynes say about the management of government budgets? John Maynard Keynes was not a socialist, a left-winger or a communist, but he might not have been as right-wing as some of his contemporaries. I have always said in this place before that I have always been more of a Friedman man, myself. What did Keynes say? His theory of economics is actually pretty valid, and it is not a socialist utopia. He simply said this: government should increase its expenditure and take some of the reduction out of the economy when times get tough, and when times are good in the private sector, government should step back. Effectively, in a downturn, government should borrow if it needs to if it does not have savings, and it should spend to level out the boom–bust cycle. Then, when the boom starts to come, government should step back and allow the private sector to do its thing. That is the basics of Keynesian economics.

Hon Dan Caddy: And solve problems as soon as possible.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is to smooth out the boom–bust cycle. I have to say that not many economies in the world have a boom–bust cycle like the Western Australian economy, because it is based on the mining sector. There are not many economies to which Keynesian economics is as applicable as it is in the state of Western Australia.

What has happened? Have we got anywhere close to Keynesian economics? In fact, we have done the opposite. I want to look at the asset investment program in this state in a couple of different ways. I seek leave to table an updated asset investment program chart, showing what the government is doing with asset investment in this state.

[Leave granted. See paper [3155](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Simple economic terms, what is occurring? This government —

Hon Stephen Dawson: Did you say Milton Keynes?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: John Keynes. I meant Milton Friedman, sorry. John Keynes. I think I said John Keynes. Did I say his middle name?

Hon Stephen Dawson: Yes, Milton Keynes is a place.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes. John Keynes.

What has happened? We have actually thrown out economic theory for political expedience. Governments—probably across the board—are more than happy to spend money when they get a windfall budget in, and of course they want to spend on infrastructure. They want to put hard hats and hi-vis on and go out and spend their money, but just remember this: in 2021, the mining sector came to the government and the public and said, “We are going to need something like 30 000 new workers in Western Australia to meet the demand of all the expansion that is going on in the mining sector.” Lithium and iron ore were expanding. Oil and, in particular, gas, were trying their best to expand. There was a whole pile of other minerals that were trying to get going. The mining sector said, “We’ve got a mining boom going on, so we’re going to need 30 000 new workers to fulfil that boom.” Industry came to the government and said, “We’re going to have a massive expansion plan.” If the government at that point believed in proper economic principles, it should have said, “You know what? That’s going to put huge pressure on the marketplace. There will be a shortage of workers and materials, because the mining sector has come and told us that.”

So what did the government do in response to that? The chart shows that the government increased its own spending on infrastructure. The government took infrastructure spending from the long-term \$6 billion average to more than \$10 billion. At the same time that the mining sector was trying to expand dramatically, the government was doing the same thing in direct competition. But it actually gets worse. At the same time, there was the COVID stimulus and a bit of fear in the construction industry. That industry was already going to benefit from an extra \$10 billion a year in resources development and \$10 billion to \$11 billion of government infrastructure development, and it said, “We need housing stimulus packages as well.” At that time people could get up to \$70 000 off the price of their house construction through grants and subsidies et cetera.

Applications for house construction went through the roof, plans for mining expansion went through the roof and government expenditure on infrastructure went through the roof. The government delivered a triple whammy to what was, up to that point, a relatively free market in Western Australia. That is one of the problems when governments manipulate the free market. That was a triple whammy, and what then happened should have been seen and accounted for much earlier. What happened? Funnily enough, the price of building a house probably went up by \$70 000 to \$100 000. I think Hon Tjorn Sibma might have built a house at that time; that is why he has had to go back to his bicycle—he cannot afford to drive around! He is really doing okay. I exaggerated a bit.

The price of housing went up to absorb all that extra cash. Was the housing industry cynically making a fortune from all this extra money? For a little while some of them made additional profit, but guess what happened when we had a massive residential construction boom competing with a massive industrial construction boom, a resources construction boom and a government construction boom? They had to try to find workers and materials, and the price for everything went through the roof. Do members know who found that the toughest? It was the poor devils who were trying to build a house. The mining sector is not doing too badly. As we said, the price of iron ore was up as high as \$US234 a tonne and averaging well over \$US100 most years at that time. If the price of production for those big companies is \$US20 a tonne, they are making a pretty good profit, so they can afford to pay significantly higher wages and put additional money into infrastructure.

The government is rich; Donald and Daisy have inherited Uncle Scrooge’s money bin. They have no shortage, so they can chuck more money at stuff. Guess what we have seen? A blowout. I am not going to go into detail about Metronet. There have been some blowouts in cost and some addition in scope. I think the government should be a bit more up-front and honest about which is what, to be honest. It might actually be to its benefit to talk about the original \$3.5 billion blowout versus the additions of scope. That would be a useful thing; that is a free tip for the Treasurer. It might actually do the government a bit of good.

The blowout of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road is a better example: is it \$750 million? No? Is it \$850 million? No? Is it \$1.35 billion? No? Guess what? It is \$1.5 billion; I said a year ago that it was going to be \$1.5 million, and the government has not increased the scope of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road, it has reduced it. It has removed overpasses and replaced them with roundabouts and traffic lights. It has cut it right back and is struggling to get it out there, because it has blown out. Why has it blown out? Because it is competing with everything else.

However, the government can afford the blowout because it has \$12 billion in royalties income, \$11 billion of it coming from the iron ore sector. The government just forks out more money. Donald and Daisy have their pitchforks and shovels out, and they are throwing the money out the door. Guess what the mining sector is doing? It has its big diggers out there and it is throwing money out the door as well. Do members know who does not have a pile

of money? It is the poor people trying to build a house. When their construction costs go from \$220 000 to \$300 000, they do not have a money bin to cover it. Their money bin gets smaller and smaller because they have only a set amount of resources that they can put into it.

The state government, the federal government and previous governments have thrown money out there into these sectors and have created a problem that they are now trying to address by putting money into a cost-of-living package. The inflationary effect of cash handouts is not the biggest issue; that is a minor issue. A bigger issue is the inflationary effect of the price of construction and the wages that have to be paid.

Wages have stabilised a bit; it looks like they will stabilise at about a four per cent increase. Again, the state government is fighting to keep that down. It put another \$2.8 billion into the budget for its blowout in wages costs over a few years. It threw out the standardised wages policy; it actually had a fairly good one, dare I say it. I think I have said that before, over time.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: You should go out there and tell all the hardworking public servants that they don't need a pay rise.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, that is not what I said, member. The economic "illiterati" need to listen more carefully. When the government threw out a standardised policy, it turned each union against each other in a competitive bidding war for how much money they are going to get paid. It has 58 agreements to work through, and it has to work out who gets more. It is going to have this debacle of an industrial relations system, and I am quite looking forward to it.

Hon Stephen Dawson: Very Stalinist!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am quite looking forward to watching the government take everyone out.

The bigger inflationary effect is the cost of construction. What has it done to the average household? Again, I seek leave to table an updated chart showing the cost of housing versus the average income in this state.

Hon Stephen Dawson: What size font is it?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The minister can order a copy. I am sure the Clerks will give it to him to read.

[Leave granted. See paper 3156.]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I urge members to have a look at that chart, because it is actually not a political one. It is not one that says, "Labor good, Liberal bad" or "Liberal good, Labor bad".

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Before we were so rudely interrupted by the lunch break, we were discussing the budget in what I like to think of as economically literate terms, and I propose to continue to do that going forward. Can I first make a couple of quick clarifications? I do not remember which name I used the first time, but it should have been John Maynard Keynes. I may have conflated him with Milton Friedman.

Hon Sandra Carr: You said Milton Friedman.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Okay; thank you. I obviously need to go back and correct that in *Hansard*. John Maynard Keynes was a Nobel Peace Prize-nominated economist. Milton Friedman was the much more conservative economist of the same era and the two economic theories were largely held in competition for a period.

If I had a greater opportunity this morning in the debate on live sheep export, I would have included an additional sentence, but it was obviously shortened.

Hon Dan Caddy: You should have been higher up.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, I should have been higher on the list; that is right. The reality is that the transition to chilled product should have been guaranteed as part of the transition out of live export. I said to the Minister for Agriculture and Food at the time that that would be a campaign to build that marketplace, which I think the minister should take up. What I probably did not get time to say is that my view is that if the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Hon Murray Watt, has not delivered that transition from live export to chilled market, he should resign as a failure to the agriculture industries that he is supposed to represent. I think that would be the minimum standard that we could expect in Western Australia. Murray Watt should resign if we transition out of live export by 2028 and the chilled market has not expanded to take up a significant amount of that product. Hopefully, the work of the state and federal governments has opened up those marketplaces to chilled product. If that does not happen, he should resign or be sacked. I just wanted to reinforce those points and make sure we have the names of the economists right.

We were considering the impacts on inflation of various budgetary actions. Before the break we said that the drive to spend money on infrastructure is causing more inflationary impact than governments believe and, in my view, more than the cash handouts the government has splashed around over the past week. It is a significant increase that is very difficult to maintain over the forward estimates.

The second reading speech delivered by the Treasurer last Thursday proudly states —

Government investment is expected to grow by 10 per cent this financial year, underpinned by our record \$10.6 billion infrastructure spend in 2023–24 alone.

To put that in perspective, this is more than double the annual government investment when we came to Government.

That is true; \$5 billion to \$6 billion was about average. To continue —

Our \$42.4 billion investment in infrastructure over the next four years will continue to drive our economic expansion and meet the needs of our growing population.

The government is quite clear that flying in the face of good economic theory, it will continue to ramp up its asset investment program in direct competition with the resources sector and in direct competition with every person trying to build a house, and it will go on for years. There has been a correction in the housing market. The housing crisis we talk about, in significant part created and exacerbated by the actions of state and federal governments in their management of their fiscal responsibilities, will continue, probably far beyond the next four years, because we will see all the additional investment being thrown into place. Of course, there are potentially worse outcomes. A government can increase infrastructure expenditure and the bonus is that if that infrastructure expenditure is causing the negative economic impacts, as it currently is, it has an answer: it can deliver a properly spaced and planned infrastructure investment plan. It could spread out its infrastructure investment over a period so that it does not have an inflationary effect on the economy. It could space it out so that it is reducing the direct competition with the resources sector and the direct competition with the housing construction sector. On one hand, the government is saying that it wants to build all these things so it can open them up before the next election, and it will do it for the next four years as well, going into the 2029 election; on the other hand, it is saying that it has a housing crisis and it does not know what to do about it, except its solution is to throw money at it to try to build more houses in an already overstimulated marketplace. It is not the case that that is the only way a government can mismanage the fiscal economy; it could spend it on other things. I suspect that probably the worst way to spend it would be on a blowout in wages, particularly in the public sector, because it will never get that back. It can spend \$10 billion on infrastructure and reduce or spread out—do something different and not build some of that infrastructure. However, when it puts it into a wages package, it never gets it back, so it builds in a structural change to the budget.

This graph on general government revenue, asset investment and public sector wages from 2001 to 2017 is an example of that, and I seek leave to table that document. This will be the last document I attempt to table.

[Leave granted. See paper [3157](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I thank members for that enthusiasm. Members will see that significant wage increases have a massive impact on the budget going forward. It does not impact on just the year in which it is done, but impacts the budget going forward. When there is a revenue correction, which will eventually occur, requirements are unable to be met. That is the risk, particularly in throwing out a uniform wages policy that the government is now engaged in. It has worked out that it will add \$2.8 billion to the wages bill over the forward estimates. The reality is that is fine so long as the government is receiving the massive royalty income that it currently has. When the correction comes, things will get particularly tight.

That was one section of the Treasurer's speech. Another section deserves to be read in as well in full because it is a very short section. Every year I have a conversation about economic reform. No government has had a greater capacity than this government to engage in economic reform. No government in the history of this state and no government in the history of any state in Australia has had the opportunity that this government has had for economic reform. It has had \$6 billion surpluses flowing into the money bin and a massive opportunity to engage in significant economic reform.

I will read in the entire economic reform chapter of the Treasurer's second reading speech. Take a deep breath, members; this might take a while. I will read the entire economic reform chapter from the government. It reads —

Economic Reform

Our Government is also making it easier to do business in Western Australia, slashing red tape to unlock job-creating projects.

Late last year, the Premier announced an overhaul of Western Australia's environmental approvals system, building on the nation-leading reforms we've made to our planning system.

This Budget includes \$36 million to facilitate those reforms to help drive the projects of the future, while protecting our environment.

The end. That is the entire economic reform chapter of the budget speech.

Hon Dan Caddy: It is three paragraphs more than any policy statement we have seen from your side over the last seven years.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is three paragraphs. It is probably a paragraph bigger than the equivalent statement last year.

Economic reform—congratulations. There is \$36 million worth of economic reform to facilitate things the government has already announced. There is no mention of payroll tax, stamp duty or much else. I understand that the Minister for Emergency Services did not write the speech. The Minister for Emergency Services did not construct the budget—all hail the Treasurer, whom we are all expected to bow to. The reality is that it is not the minister's fault and I understand that, but if we wanted an example of a lost opportunity—economic reform is three paragraphs in a multibillion-dollar budget surplus. There is a three-paragraph response for an estimated \$2.6 billion surplus, on top of the \$3 billion surplus, on top of the \$5 billion surplus, on top of two \$6 billion surpluses. Economic reform has received effectively nothing all the way through.

There are enormous opportunities that the government may have looked at. Here is a suggestion: land tax. Reduce or eliminate land tax on an investor's first residential property investment. It might be a huge incentive. There are a lot of houses out there that people are sitting on, partly because the government keeps making it more difficult for landlords and partly because they do not think it is worth the investment, particularly when they look at damage. Here is an opportunity: go to land tax and let the first residential investment property be land tax-free. That is a significant reduction in cost. We could make it as long as it is rented out to the private sector. There is an opportunity. There is an economic reform the government can borrow. One of the members said we are not offering enough recommendations on economic reforms. Hon Dan Caddy can borrow that one if he likes. He can run it by the mighty Treasurer and see what happens. I can lend him that one. I have a few more but let us start small. Let us start light. There is an easy one. There are a lot of other things that can be done in economic reform. There are plenty of things that can be done in terms of taxation.

There are other reforms that can be done. Three sentences that say nothing except that money has been put into things already announced is not economic reform. If the iron ore price corrects, and it is remarkably resilient at the moment, the opportunity for economic reforms will have been lost. In the biggest boom that this state has ever seen, the opportunity will disappear. There is a fairly simple policy option the government may play with. Have a bit of fun with that.

There are a few other issues that I want to talk about, none more important than the capacity of the state to keep the lights on. The state has done some reasonable things and I have to say that the contribution of the former Minister for Energy, Hon Bill Johnston, was pretty reasonable. We found ourselves with a lot of common ground on lots of issues—some we did not, but some we have. We came to the joint conclusion that the state government's transition plan for electricity does not work. It started as completely dysfunctional and some things have been contributors. I say a few things from the outset. The investment in storage is a good start. The second big battery in Kwinana and the big battery in Collie are reasonable investments that will be required over time but they will not be enough to keep the lights on under the government's transition plan.

The government is billions of dollars short in terms of the storage of energy. The government is also billions of dollars short in terms of the transmission of energy. It talks about 4 000 kilometres of required additional transmission lines, which is anywhere from \$1 million to \$8 million a kilometre—somewhere between \$4 billion and \$32 billion in total. The government assumes that the private sector will build all of that and the government will nationalise it—a bit like what it proposed for western rock lobster and crayfish—but I hope the plan to nationalise privately constructed transmission lines might go the same way as the plan to nationalise the rock lobster industry and get sunk. It will need significant additional investment. I have no problem with the private sector building additional transmission lines. Let us let the private sector build, own and operate.

The government also has a shortfall in generation. Nothing shows that better than the heatwave conditions that caused the new maximum demand in energy on 18 February this year. A new peak demand of 4 233 megawatts, from memory, was required. Bear in mind that was after demand-side management after which some energy units were closed down. Interestingly, in the middle of a drought they closed the desalination plants. They also asked other industries to shut down. The actual peak would have been higher than that. Where did the energy come from for that? At 5.00 pm to 6.00 pm in the afternoon, 90 per cent of the energy that kept air conditioners running and the lights turned on came from coal and gas—90 per cent. By 10 minutes to six in the afternoon, solar was producing next to nothing and wind was producing, but it is generally intermittent. Wind will generally produce roughly half its nameplate capacity over time. If we going to replace a lot of stuff with wind, we have to build twice as much. That is not necessarily a bad idea. But, at the peak of demand, 90 per cent of the energy required to keep the lights on and air conditioners running at 4 233 megawatts, came from gas and coal.

Next year, the government proposes to close down another 200 megawatts of coal generation. Over the next four-and-a-bit-years, it plans to shut down 1300 megawatts of coal because it is going to shut down its state generation: 200 megawatts at units 6, 7 and 8 in Muja. That is 600 megawatts. It will close down 300 megawatts at Collie 8; it is aiming for 2027. The government is also trying very hard to drive the Bluewaters coal-fired power station out of business by not allowing it to contract for its existing contracts. That is another 400 megawatts. We

will lose 900 megawatts of state capacity and 400 megawatts of private capacity in a system in which coal was running flat out to keep the lights on. On 18 February 2024, 90 per cent of the energy that was in the system was delivered from coal and gas, and the government wants to shut down 1 300 megawatts over the next four-and-a-bit years, without having the capacity to replace it. There will be some more rooftop solar that goes on and I acknowledge that. There will be additional rooftop solar that goes on. There are some windfarm plans but I am violently opposed to windfarms going out in Geographe Bay. It is the wrong location. As I have told the opponents of the Scott River windfarms, as an example, I think that is a good location for them. I am a supporter of the Scott River windfarm proposal; that is a Synergy proposal—Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy. He was previously, sorry.

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: I was, yes.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am not opposed to windfarms per se, but there is not enough in the system. There is not enough storage, there is not enough generation and there is not enough transmission. As the government shuts down 1 300 megawatts of coal, it would need to construct additional dispatchable energy—we used to call it baseload energy—to keep the lights on. Either that or the government would have to turn off even more parts of the state. It would have to shut down all the desalination plants and most industry. The 1 300 megawatts that the government is closing down is a lot more than a quarter of the demand at its peak. Sure, on a summer's night when it is cool and the wind is blowing and there is some stored solar, there is plenty of generation in the system and the batteries will be able to store a few hours' worth of energy to keep the lights on, if necessary, for a little while, but it is not enough. I think the government needs to build more generation capacity, and I would be building a gas plant north of Perth along the Dampier to Bunbury gas pipeline with just enough capacity to meet enough dispatchable demand when peak hour hits. Do members know who else suggested that might be the case? It was a particularly reasonable Minister for Energy from the Labor Party, Hon Bill Johnston.

During estimates last year, he said that he realised the government might need more dispatchable gas energy, not to run 24 hours a day and all the time or even, effectively, as a baseload unit, but to be available to keep the lights on and the air conditioning running when it is needed at peak demand. I am disappointed that the budget has not addressed that issue.

On one level I want to see the lights go out before the next election because it is probably the best opportunity there is to roll the government when the lights go out. Think about the 2008 election that the Labor Party should have romped in but did not, partly because Alan Carpenter panicked and partly because the government could not keep the lights on. That would be a significant issue. If the government can keep the lights on, it makes the job of being in opposition much tougher, but the government's plan does not do to that. I do not mind if the government keeps its plan for the time being. I suspect that wise heads will eventually work out that more dispatchable and peak load energy is needed, not necessarily baseload, or the government will have to spend a lot more money on storage to store wind and solar power when it is supplied. However, it needs to be a lot more than the 2 000 megawatt hours that are available at Collie and now the 800 megawatt hours available using the Kwinana big battery. That will keep the lights on for a few hours, but it will not do the job. Unless the government engages in some more dispatchable energy, it will spend billions more on storage, on top of the billions the government will be required to spend on transmission.

The only other thing I want to raise in the short time I have left is the section in the budget speech on safety and security under "Safer and stronger communities". There is reasonable investment in the budget for that. I acknowledge that there have been some improvements in the operations of unit 18. That unit houses youths within Casuarina Prison. I also suspect there have been some improvements at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. Unit 18 is very difficult. It houses the most difficult prisoners from the youth setting. They are not there because they were caught shoplifting or because they are petty thieves; they are there because they are dangerous to the community, the staff and each other. I am always astounded that we do not remember that in the discussions about it. Whatever is ultimately done to house those young people, we will need the equivalent of that unit where they can be adequately and properly restrained.

I am a conservative. I will spend a lot of time over the next year describing what that means. It means that I believe in individual responsibility, individual reward and individual rights. In my view, those on the left wing of politics believe in communal responsibility, communal rewards and communal rights. Some members opposite will acknowledge that. Those of the communist persuasion believe that everyone works and everyone deserves an equal share. I am from the right wing and believe that those who work deserve the majority of the benefit from that work and that those who do not work should not get the same benefit.

At the same time, I believe in personal responsibility. Those people who are incarcerated are incarcerated through their own actions, not the fault of society. It has become too easy to blame society for where people end up. I am unashamedly right wing and believe that we need to make sure that people take responsibility for their actions in the same way that I think they should take the bulk of the reward for their work. I will spend a lot of time over the next 12 months going through that in far more detail because I think it is important.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Hon Peter Foster**.

FIREARMS BILL 2024*Discharge of Order and Referral to Standing Committee on Legislation — Motion*

Resumed from 14 May on the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier (Leader of the Opposition) —

That the Firearms Bill 2024 be discharged and referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation for consideration and report by no later than 13 August 2024.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [2.25 pm]: At the conclusion of the debate last Tuesday, I was discussing the e-petition that had been presented and the number of people who had expressed the view, which I thought was very reasonable, that the Firearms Bill 2024 should be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I refer to paragraph 5 of the petition, which states that the petitioners —

5. Urge the Legislative Council to refer the Bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation for a full public inquiry into the policy of the Bill to assess its impact on the rights and liberties of law-abiding Western Australians and its efficacy at tackling those with a history of showing disregard for the laws of our State.

I am sure that I could rewrite that sentence slightly differently. Some of the things I plan to outline today will highlight the sorts of things that the legislation committee should examine in its assessment of the bill. As I said in the first five minutes or so at the beginning of my presentation, I believe in a stronger safety regime for firearms. I think it is vital that we have as much safety around firearms as is reasonable. I shared the story of when I was a child and my father was a police officer. As a kid, I heard all the stories when dad came home and explained what had happened in the small country town. In the late 1960s someone attempted to shoot him, but fortunately the firearm did not discharge. Sadly, the felon who was later out in the community, went on to do terrible crimes with firearms. There are some very bad and disturbed people who have evil intentions. That is why we have our wonderful police, whom I fully support.

We see the impact of all sorts of weapons in our state. Most notably, there seems to be an outburst of knife crime. In saying that, firearms are an important part of our culture. For some people at least, it is part of their lifestyle. We are talking about the lawful use of firearms as part of the lifestyle of particularly regional and rural people. It is very important to them. I got my firearms licence in New Zealand when I was 16 years old. Again, it was under a very different regime than probably applies today. At the time, I was given a little notebook with my name in it, and it was a licence for life. Of course, New Zealand has changed its firearms laws significantly over many years, and, of course, the terrible atrocity that was committed in Christchurch led to even further controls, which was very important to do. As someone who was brought up in a regional town, notwithstanding in a different country, we had the same sort of idea. People went out shooting and fishing, and things like that were just part of the culture. For people in our regional communities, shooting is part of our culture. We go out shooting for enjoyment, shooting to control feral animal numbers or even shooting for sustenance, which probably does not happen as much as it used to, but it was part of the culture. We know that members of gun clubs, in particular, shoot at targets for sport, which is a very big aspect of their lives.

I know that this bill claims to balance all that, but it is an incredibly big tome. It is a massive tome. I have my file, and I will be quite glad when we get through this debate because I have to pull it around in my wheeled bag. Not only do I have that; I have all the budget papers. It is a rather hefty tome, and it is important that we take time to consider all the aspects of this bill.

We come to this place as the opposition. We hear the concerns of the community. I have heard many concerns, and I am sure members opposite have received the same sorts of emails. I think Hon Peter Collier said that he has never spent so much time on a bill—I am paraphrasing Hon Peter Collier—in his time in Parliament. I am not surprised because it is so complex.

Another equally complex bill—maybe even more complex—came into this house when I started as a member of Parliament, in my first year. I was the lead spokesperson for it in the Legislative Council. That legislation was rammed through in the space of two days. We had the second reading debate speeches and then we used the emergency bill provisions that were in place. I must say that I felt incredibly under-equipped to deal with the detail. I felt an immense amount of pressure as the lead spokesperson in the few days we had to take, read and understand the bill and all its implications and how that would then flow out. I did what I thought was my best effort to highlight our concerns. As the regulations came out, people started to understand the impact on them. Suddenly, there was a huge explosion of concern from the community. There was massive concern.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! Hon Neil Thomson, I will allow some latitude to touch on some peripheral issues, but the purpose of the motion before us is for members to articulate why the bill should or should not be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation, and I ask you to try to confine your remarks to that issue.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Thank you, Deputy President. The exact point I am making at this time is with the example of a bill that was rushed through in a way that gave us no ability to assess it. I was actually going to say to the government that at least it has not done that this time. A draft of this bill has been available for a longer occasion,

but we still have a problem with it, just as we did with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill and the issues it had once the regulations became apparent. We had an explosion of concern because people started to understand in more detail the implications of how it would impact them. It suddenly became very, very apparent in that case that it was going to impact the community, and people could see how it would affect them. But we have the same issue here today with the complexity of this bill and the fact that we do not—as has been explained in the report of the committee, chaired by Hon Donna Faragher, who is a very eminent member of the opposition, and by the Liberal team—have details on the regulations available for our consideration at this time.

My point in raising the issue of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act is very much about why this bill should be referred to the legislation committee. The legislation committee, with the support of the secretariat, can sit down and actually consider it and ask some questions that might not have been asked, which may pick up some unintended consequences, for example. I will raise one in the hope that we get agreement from the government, notwithstanding its position on this. The government has stated that it is not going to support the bill being referred; that has been made clear. But I am hoping that during the course of the debate the government will reconsider that matter because it sees that there are potential challenges to this.

At the end of the day, I guess the alternative is that we will go into Committee of the Whole and the opposition and the crossbenchers, or whoever chooses to ask questions, will try our very best to tease out all those issues, just like I did on the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill when that massive tome was presented, but I had only one sitting day to do it. Maybe this time we will have more time because the debate on the bill will not be limited; it could be considered over several sitting days. We, as the opposition, could then go through the bill clause by clause and ask the hard questions. But there is a problem for the community and those gun owners out there who have legitimate concerns. As I said, I support gun controls. I support that. History notwithstanding, I have used guns in the past. I do not own any guns now. That is a person's choice. If they want to have a gun, we are a free country. They can enjoy the use of them and continue to do so under this new regime. But the problem is that these concerns are being raised, and we then have to somehow represent those concerns at a level of technical detail, and I think that is the issue.

An excellent job was done by the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review, chaired by the very capable member Hon Donna Faragher, and I will refer to that in a bit more detail shortly. It would be much better if we had the time to look at some of these matters in detail, had technical support and had the ability to invite advisers and witnesses in to ask more detailed questions around the specifics of how those provisions will impact the community. That very sensible process could be expedited in a more timely way than if all members of the opposition tried to use their own expertise. I intend no disrespect to members of the opposition because I include myself in this. We are non-experts who are trying our very best, on behalf of the concerned community, to raise those technical questions on some very detailed issues in the health sector, for example. I am happy for the government to give some feedback because I will raise this again in committee. I can imagine the Standing Committee on Legislation talking to people in the health profession about what they think might be some of the unintended consequences of the mental health checks that will be imposed and the detriment they might have on the mental health of people in Western Australia. People might be worried that giving a more full and honest disclosure of their mental health, or their perception of their mental health, might result in some form of perceived penalty. I am not saying that it will be a penalty. I heard the minister say that it is a privilege to own a gun and that it is not so much a right. That is the minister's viewpoint and that is fair enough. The fact is that a person might perceive that any kind of negative diagnosis might end up in a situation in which they lose access to something that means a lot to them.

Hon Ben Dawkins: Shouldn't the government have to prove that there's not going to be these adverse effects?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The member asked a question in his interjection. That is a question the member should ask at the committee stage.

I counsel the government to consider that it might be beneficial for the committee to have a very intensive, short, sharp review of this bill with professionals from a wide range of sectors. The committee could find three or four things that could make the bill vastly better. I do not know. I believe that amendments have already been made through some of the discussions that have been had. I suppose this is where we get down to doing it the easy way. The committee has not done very much at all; I think it has had one referral. It is not exactly busy. We have another week of sitting and then there is a bit of a break coming up. We have a break next week and then a week of sitting before another break. There is a real opportunity, if the government looked at the Parliament's timetable. Given it has taken this long to get to this point—I did not see the government prioritising this bill earlier—this bill could go to the legislation committee if we get, in the words of other members, a tiny little bit of humility from the government. The legislation committee was established for the specific purpose of looking at really technical bills like this. I must be getting tired because I just did a Kiwi accent! Bills such as this need to be considered with that level of detail and have those questions asked. I am hopeful that the bill will be referred and I have made a few points that I think are important. This is the sort of bill that the legislation committee could consider.

We know that firearms are used in actually quite a small percentage of homicides in Western Australia. Of course, we can say that every death is terrible. Of the 29 homicides in Western Australia between 21 July 2020 and

30 June 2021, only two involved firearms; eight involved knives or sharp instruments; one involved a blunt instrument—they record blunt instruments, which I suppose is something that is not sharp; two were caused by hands and feet; two were caused by vehicles; and two were caused by other instruments. Weapons were used in 17 of the 29 homicides, but most of those weapons, by the looks of it, were knives. This data is from the Australian Institute of Criminology’s national homicide monitoring program. The pattern is the same right across Australia, with firearms involved in 23 out of 210 incidents.

Every death is one too many, but we could use the same analogy in relation to the road toll. We could say that if we all drove at five kilometres an hour, the road toll would drop, but that is not practical. The only difference here is that there are only 90 000 licensed firearm users. I understand the concerns of the community. The concept of guns can be terrifying to people who are not familiar with firearms and have not used firearms. I was brought up with firearms as part of the culture. Sadly, we have seen a bit of a change in the culture. In those days, children were taught how to manage firearms carefully—to never point them at anybody, to never have a bullet in the chamber, to always remove the bolt when carrying them and so forth. That was just part of the intergenerational teaching. As a teenager and when I was at university, I had a couple of firearms and I used to go hunting. It never crossed my mind that those things were dangerous because they were just part of life. They were dangerous in the sense that I took precautions, but the nefarious use of them never crossed my mind. My next comment is my personal view. Sadly, the proliferation and popularisation of first-person shooter games has had a negative impact on our cultural perception. Of course, we have seen terrible atrocities committed in the US, where firearms are a lot more prolific and high-powered firearms are readily available. We have seen how that has changed that concept. There has been some change in attitudes. Clearly, social media has led to the popularisation of these games, and sometimes negative aspects creep into the minds of particularly vulnerable people who are able to be persuaded or have mental health issues.

If the Firearms Bill 2024 were referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation, it could undertake research, because the research the government has presented in the explanatory memorandum has not been presented to any great degree. The committee could consider the fact that, over time, there has been a decline in the number of firearm offences in Australia that have resulted in the charge of murder or manslaughter. If members look at the sources I mentioned, the National Homicide Monitoring Program and the Australian Institute of Criminology, they will see that back in early 1990s the figure was around 70 or 80 firearm incidents that resulted in the charge of manslaughter or murder. There was a reduction around the mid-2000s. That might have coincided with some of the Howard government changes. I am thinking about 2007 when the “Ruddslide” occurred, and Kevin Rudd’s government came into power. The figure declined in 2006–07, possibly as a result of the buyback. A gun buyback is great because people get an opportunity to hand in the guns they do not want to keep or are not allowed to keep. We should probably have periodic buybacks to get rid of surplus guns.

Hon Dan Caddy: Is that a policy?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am giving my opinion. It is probably something that should be done. I know that Hon Dan Caddy likes to promote me as the future Treasurer of Western Australia. I would be very happy to advocate for that in the cabinet of a future Mettam government. We live in hope. We are very optimistic on this side of Parliament.

The 2021 figure, which is the latest figure, reveals that there were 23 firearm incidents that resulted in the charge of murder or manslaughter. That relates to a general trend in the number of homicides that we have seen across Australia, notwithstanding the fact that Western Australia is the violent crime capital of Australia, as I have said previously, and notwithstanding the fact that we have seen terrible crimes against persons in Western Australia, particularly in our regional areas. The committee could look at the efficacy of that and consider that in terms of some of the measures. The question asked by petitioners is really all about that. The petition refers to the efficacy of tackling those with a history of showing disregard for the law of our state. That should be implicit in the terms of reference for the Standing Committee on Legislation. Another point that is made in the data that I have read is that the vast majority of crimes involving firearms occur with unlicensed firearms, which will not be affected or impacted by this bill. The committee can look at what could be done to crack down more heavily on illegal firearms. I am sure that the police are doing everything they can.

The Minister for Police has been quite happy to use the point that there is a lot of fear in the community. There are probably some in the community who believe that there should not be any—zero—firearms in private hands because the right to hold or not hold a firearm licence has no impact on them. We live in a society in which we take due consideration of people’s enjoyment and the things they do. We also look at evidence to determine how our laws impact outcomes. That is what this is all about. If I had written that line in that amazing petition that received 32 234 signatures, I would have added a line about the impact of these laws on existing firearms owners and their ability to comply without fear of failure and the unintended consequences whereby someone might be unfairly impacted because they use their firearms for legitimate purposes.

I understand there were changes in the numbers and in the exemptions that allow a person to apply to be a licensed firearm holder—for example, a sports shooter or an Olympic athlete. I have received complaints from members of

the community who use a shotgun for clay pigeon shooting—I think that is what they call it—who are also involved in pistol shooting. They might be involved in three or four different disciplines. A lot of avid sportspeople would have a range of different of weapons. I understand that there is provision in the bill to enable high-level sportspeople to continue with the sports that require them to have several guns for one discipline. These are the sorts of concerns that have been raised. The last thing we want to do is curtail our amazing sports history. Australians, and Western Australians in particular, are very proud of our sportsmen and women. We love to back a winner. I am sure that firearm sports are just as important.

I will save a lot of my conversation around the specifics of the bill and the uses of firearms in the community, particularly in my region, other than to say that they are a tool of trade for a lot of pastoralists. I have seen firsthand the need for the use of high-powered firearms, for example, in the control and cull of feral animals.

Hon Dr Sally Talbot: I thought this was meant to be about the referral.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am providing advice to the committee about why it is important that it look at all these aspects and understand what the impacts will be on stakeholders, such as those in the pastoral industry and those who, importantly, control feral animals. Feral horses and camels in Western Australia are a massive issue. The last thing we want is this law to come along and have unintended consequences. Members opposite might like to shut me down right now and stop me from exercising my right to give a very important presentation. This is what the members in this place do. They like to shut me down. I am talking about the very important environmental issue of feral camels and horses in our regions. Has the government considered the impact of that? I know recreational shooters who do everything lawfully, by the book, and shoot camels in the Pilbara region for free.

I was a public servant and my minister at the time—Hon Peter Collier will know about the horses around Balgo. That was one of the greatest pieces of work done and we had the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development involved. It also meant getting the community involved. We had the guts to do it. That was an important thing. I had calls from people over in the eastern states, from —

Hon Dan Caddy: Trump calls?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: No, these were the chief veterinarian officers, and people from the RSPCA. They wanted all the technical detail on that because of the great job we did. They were concerned about feral animals in Kosciuszko National Park. Look at the mess that was made of that. Look how quietly we did it and how well we engaged with the community. It was all done with very little hassle and it resulted in the culling of over 10 000 feral horses. There were a couple of culls here and I was involved in managing one. The second one was 3 000, and then another 700 camels or thereabouts were culled. These are big numbers. A huge number of animals are destroying the environment. Members opposite say not to worry about it. They say just to ram it through because we never know. We just want to pause and have some experts, with the support of that very important committee, look at this legislation in detail and ensure that we are not going to end up with another 10 000 horses running rampant over the place.

I can talk about the useless Minister for Environment, for goodness sake, who just abandons all that natural habitat out there; all that land that it has signed off as national park. I could talk about how useless he is!

Hon Dr Sally Talbot interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I will be talking about the referral to the committee, if I am not distracted by the commentary from the other side. I will have a lot more to say about this bill in the second reading debate.

Hon Dan Caddy: You will be saying exactly what you said in the second reading debate.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I will have a lot more to say and I am sure my side will have a lot more to say about this referral, because would it not be great if for once we wear down the government and it does the right thing by the people of Western Australia? That is what we want to do. We want to get it to do the right thing for once instead of this Orwellian-style approach to things like we saw yesterday when it tried to change a motion and got up to all this rubbish because the government dares not have anything questioned.

Talking about questioning, there is another report that could be considered.

I am going to run out of time for my referral speech, so I will have to put it in my second reading speech. I refer to the *Western Australian Auditor General's report: Firearms controls*.

Hon Peter Collier: Is there an option for an extension?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Maybe I could ask. Is there a process? Could I ask for an extension? I could have another half an hour.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You can't; the standing orders do not allow it.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am not going to get support from the government for an extension.

Hon Donna Faragher: They are tempted; I can tell.

Hon Stephen Dawson: If you start talking to the referral, we might consider it.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am laser-focused on the referral. It is all I have been talking about. If the government just listened, it would be great.

Hon Stephen Dawson: If you start getting cheeky, you are not going to get an extension, so you've just got to be nice for two and a half minutes.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I refer to the *Firearms controls* report. I will wrap it up, but I am flagging the fact that we had four reports from the Auditor General. The most recent one was "Report 18: May 2019". I will not go into all the detail because that will be part of the second reading debate, but this would be an excellent source for that committee to go into, to see where things under existing regulations have not been kept up. There have been lots of findings over time. Sometimes, we take what we have and refine it, and we will get a better result. It is a bit like cooking a cake. If we just tweak the ingredients a bit, we get a much better result, instead of trying to be so ambitious here and ram through something; we just do not know what we are going to get because there are different ingredients.

I point to the findings. The first one is that "Licence assessment procedures are not sufficient and transparent". I am not an expert —

Hon Dan Caddy: Finally, you have said something we all agree on.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: — on this particular regulatory arrangement. I am very expert when I come to my portfolio areas of responsibility.

Hon Peter Foster: How many cakes have you baked?

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I am not an expert at baking cakes, I can tell the honourable member that. Maybe the honourable member will bake me one for Christmas or my birthday. I know Hon Peter Foster is a very kind and generous member. However, I am not sure about his government's results at Tom Price Hospital. Anyhow, I will not get distracted by interjections from the other side.

This report has a lot of good data here and in the transcript that could be used by that committee. The committee can take note of the recommendations that flow and ask some questions of the police. It could ask: Will they be able to manage with all these new regulations? They could not manage with the last lot. Will they manage to keep up and deliver with their resourcing? Will they be able to? These are a few ideas.

I know that the government members are just smiling, which means they are supporting me.

Hon Stephen Dawson: I thought you were going to ask us for an extension.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I will let it go because I know others would like to speak.

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [3.06 pm]: For those watching at home, this is going to be a laborious process, I suggest, having listened to some speeches, and we are going to be hearing quite a lot more. The people at home need to understand that we are in this situation because of a number of bills and things that this Labor government has either supported or brought in and has been belligerent about changing and modifying, and has been belligerent about demonstrating that it is good legislation. If this turns out to be a laborious process, it is purely of the government's own making, I am afraid.

This motion is about a referral of the Firearms Bill 2024 to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Yes, I support the motion to refer. There has been a complete belligerence. I do not really see belligerence in the ministers' behaviour in this place. I do not think the ministers in this house are belligerent or show belligerence. The Minister for Police, Hon Paul Papalia, is the minister in charge of this bill; perhaps there is some belligerence there. But I do not think there is belligerence in here. I suspect we can refer this because why would the government not want to improve its own work by using the resources that are there? Why would it not want to do that, unless it has something to hide or it is being belligerent? Let us be honest. Let us improve. We are all grown-ups here. Let us use those processes like the Standing Committee on Legislation to improve upon the government's work.

We are seeing a loss of trust. I will talk to the Acting President (Hon Stephen Pratt). Our constituents no longer trust the government. The government will get a lot of pushback on all these sorts of bills because we have been through vaccine mandates and very inhumane job losses, which show that the government, to this day, does not understand principles like bodily autonomy and such things.

There is actually a responsibility when it comes to individual rights. I will talk about that in a second. Far be it from me to use a legal term, Hon Matthew Swinbourn, but to my mind the burden of proof rests with the government to show that this will not adversely impact the existing rights of law-abiding gun owners. The government has to discharge the burden of proof if it wants us to all vote in favour of this bill and allow its beautiful swift passage. That is work that the government has not done. It has not demonstrated in any way —

Hon Stephen Dawson interjected.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Excuse me, Acting President, I cannot hear myself because of the minister.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members. Hon Ben Dawkins has the call.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: To my mind, a government should discharge —

Hon Stephen Dawson interjected.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I still cannot hear myself, Acting President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, the member on his feet is struggling to focus on his presentation. Could you please try to keep it down. Thank you.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: To my mind, the government has a responsibility to discharge the burden of proof to show that there will not be unintended or adverse impacts on the rights of existing law-abiding gun owners. I say that because the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia said that. It said that this bill should not impact the existing rights of law-abiding gun owners. I take objection to —

Point of Order

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN: The question before the house is about the referral of the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I have been listening very carefully to the member's contribution, and I am struggling to make the connection between his comments and the question before the house. Acting President, I seek your guidance on whether the member's contribution is actually relevant to the question before the house.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Stephen Pratt): There is no point of order, but I will remind the honourable member to make sure that his comments are relevant to the referral motion.

Debate Resumed

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Thank you, Acting President.

We need to refer the bill for the following reasons. I have mentioned the word “referral” several times. I do not need to keep coming back to it. Henceforth, the parliamentary secretary can assume that everything I say is about why the bill needs to be referred. Thank you.

I really take objection to Hon Stephen Dawson's language—I think it could have been Hon Paul Papalia—in his second reading contribution. He introduced this concept that gun ownership is not a right but a privilege. I understand we do not have the second amendment, I think it is, in this country —

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: You understand that we don't have it?

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Yes, I understand that. This is not America.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Are you sure? Are you sure you understand? I am pretty sure we don't have it, member.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I just said we do not.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: No, you said you were unsure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Okay. I said I am pretty sure, but what I should have said is “I am sure.” Thank you for that correction.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: I am sure constitutional law was part of your legal degree.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I am talking about the Constitution of the United States, which we do not have here. Is that okay?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Be certain about it! Be certain, member.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: We do not have it here. I am very certain we do not have the second amendment here.

Hon Colin de Grussa: Just trying to make sure you use the point right.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I did apologise already to members that this will be a laborious process, but there are reasons for that. The people I represent are very offended by the way that this government intrudes into their individual rights. The Law Reform Commission of Western Australia says that this bill must not intrude into the rights of existing gun owners, and that is exactly what it will do. If the government wants our cooperation, I believe that honourable members have a duty to prove that the legislation will not have adverse impacts, such as the mental health checks that may lead to a lot of law-abiding people being struck out of gun ownership—things like that. The government should show us the regulations and how this will be enforced if it wants our support. Otherwise, I think we will all be here for a long time.

However, these problems probably can be resolved by referral—there is that word again. I am saying that rights exist on different levels. I think it is a fundamental right in the US to have a firearm. No-one is suggesting that it is that kind of fundamental right here, but rights exist. I think Hon Dr Sally Talbot, with her philosophy background, might be able to help me, but I think rights also exist subject to legislation. People have a right to drive a car provided they follow the rules and the right to apply for a firearm and retain that firearm provided that they follow the rules.

It is offensive that it was portrayed as a privilege by Hon Stephen Dawson. That is offensive. Is it a privilege or a right to have a public education in Western Australia? I would argue that it is a right, and I would argue that it is a right for the people whom I represent to have a firearm on their property under the existing categories for recreational activities, for competition shooting and any of the other existing categories, and those rights should not be taken away.

Hon Darren West: Have you read the bill?

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I have, yes.

Hon Dan Caddy: Well, you wouldn't know it.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I do not need to refer to it in detail because that will be the subject of my second reading contribution. I am making my speech about the referral at the moment. Thank you, Hon Darren West—referral.

Hon Darren West: I don't think you have read the bill.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I have got it here, actually. Has the member got it?

Hon Darren West: Yes.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Good.

Obviously, the 32 000 signatures on the petition are indicative of what I am saying. The bill must be referred. Hello? It must be referred. I agree with Hon Peter Collier, Hon Nick Goiran and those who have spoken already. There are clear grounds for referral here, and that is what we must do.

The Law Reform Commission made the recommendation that no upper limit be put on the number of guns. What is the bill doing? It will do precisely that. Hon Louise Kingston, are you with me here? It will do precisely what the Law Reform Commission said it should not do. We can talk on a bit of a grander scale if we want; I have got plenty of time. We actually have a problem with the separation of powers in this state. From what I am hearing, and I am prepared to believe it, the Western Australia Police Force has put this bill forward as a goddamned wish list for how it would like to regulate firearms. No; that is not how it is supposed to work. We are supposed to have the Minister for Police pushing back under the separation of powers and saying no. The public service does not get to control what the people get; that is our responsibility here as lawmakers.

I believe there are now very many police officers in senior positions who did not start their career in our state. They started their career in other jurisdictions in which there may be more hysteria about firearm ownership. Well, what those police from other jurisdictions who now work here need to know is that when someone comes to Australia, as Pauline Hanson has often said, they need to respect our way of living and respect our rural and regional people, who have grown up with firearms. They need to respect the law-abiding people who already have firearms. Just because they have an idealistic idea of what utopia is—I am sure it is not where they come from—they do not get to impose those values on us. The police minister should be pushing back against an out-of-control public service. It has happened in so many other jurisdictions. It happened in many other areas. This is why I mention these problems. This laborious process we are going through now was created purely by the government; it is of the government's own making. We saw with the workers compensation bill that one of the executives in WorkCover wrote the bill to suit himself and to get his budget in order. The minister of the day from the Labor government was unable to push back and make the bill fair for the people, which is what he is elected to do. The Minister for Police is supposed to make this bill fair for the people, not just put forward a wish list on behalf of particular Western Australian police officers who have some other idealistic notion of how they want to live in another country. When they are here, they are to respect our traditions, and that is what firearm owners are telling me through the relevant firearm recreational shooting and sporting associations. I respect those people and I am trying to do my job —

Several members interjected.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: We are talking about the separation of powers. Everyone is to remain in their own lane. Public service—great. Police—great. But they do not get to run the country and write the laws. The minister should be pushing back to make sure the laws are appropriate. It is all well and good to be a public servant or a police officer—very good; they are doing a great job—but they should not try to encroach on lawmaking. That is what we do here.

It is the right subject, to comply with the laws. I do not think it is a privilege. It is demeaning to people to say that it is a privilege. What Hon Stephen Dawson is doing by using that language—I am not sure whether he was just reading out something from Hon Paul Papalia—is belittling what is a very important thing for people. As I said, we would not say it about public education. That is a right; we would not say that is a privilege. Things have morphed over time to having expectations of rights. This is about individual rights.

Members opposite should not be talking about respect because a lack of respect is shown through bills like this, and the bills that have preceded it. I go back to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 and the absolute assault on farmers and landowners and on their rights to manage their properties in a reasonable and profitable way. Members should be quiet about that because I have extensive communications from people, such as Brent in Badgingarra,

who has about 12 firearms. He is a recreational shooter, a competition shooter and a primary producer. He is all of the above. Like a lot of farmers, he has confided in me and other people about his sometimes fragile mental state. It does not rain that much. There are some bad seasons. There is a lot invested in every crop, Hon Darren West. Do members think that he really wants me to say that it is okay for there to be an open-ended mental health check? We have not seen the regulations. He could be eliminated based on having bad situational depression related to the seasons and to his crop. There is nothing in this legislation to protect him from being eliminated as a firearm licensee and user. Do members think that Brent from Badgingarra wants me to vote in favour of this, or do they think he wants me to push back? Does he want to see some more detail around the mental health checks?

What about views and attitudes and ways of living? Are we going to hand over to the Commissioner of Police the absolute right to determine whether a person's views and attitudes and way of living makes them suitable to have a firearm? Come on! The amount of power given to the police commissioner, including other things such as questioning and searches, will make it a police state. One Nation will always look to protect people's individual freedoms and rights. These guys over here, the honourable members, think it is okay to have a draconian police state environment. There is a complete lack of understanding of what individual freedoms even are. I liked listening to Hon Dr Steve Thomas talk about political theory today because he spoke about individual responsibility and individual freedoms. I should take that back; some honourable members opposite do understand because they are extremely well educated in philosophy, politics and other things, but they choose not to recognise when it is not their constituent or when it is not their target group—obviously, there is an assault here on agriculture and farmers—and they choose to ignore the impingement on individual rights and freedoms.

I have said that it should not impact on existing gun numbers because the Law Reform Commission said that it should not have an impact on the number of guns held by any one person.

Point of Order

Hon LORNA HARPER: This has been raised before: I am really struggling to see how this has any relevance whatsoever to the referral of the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I feel as though the honourable member on his feet is just presenting the speech he would have given had he been talking about the bill. I would appreciate it if he got back to the motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Stephen Pratt): Thank you, honourable member. There is no point of order. I take your point and I will be the judge and assess that as the speech goes on.

Debate Resumed

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Thank you, Acting President. I have learnt a hell of a lot from Hon Lorna Harper in my year here and I am continuing to learn. In fact, Hon Lorna Harper is right; I am almost at the end of my list. It might please her that I will be sitting down shortly, before my allocated time is up.

I will leave it there. I close by saying that this government has brought this situation on itself. I apologise to the people at home who see a long, drawn-out process, but this will be a drawn-out process because history has effectively awoken the public to the way this government operates. Look what happened with the Voice. It was a ridiculous proposal from the federal Labor government, supported by members opposite and defeated at a referendum. There was a belligerence about not revealing more detail, as I am asking for here. People have lost trust because of past behaviour. The Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation is an example. No-one should be complaining—I do not think they are—about us standing up here, fighting for our constituents and looking to protect their existing rights, being the existing rights of law-abiding gun owners. No-one should be complaining about that, however long it takes, because this is a situation of the government's own making. However, in this house the government members and ministers are reasonable people and they absolutely will take an opportunity to refer legislation to a committee that might be able to put forward something that will show it has taken a more considered approach, and listen to the committee to which this bill will be referred, hopefully, and refine things and look at areas such as the fit and proper person test. That test is outrageous. What is it, Hon Lorna Harper—views and attitudes and the way of living? Does anyone in society get to say that someone cannot have a gun licence because of their way of living and domestic circumstances? Come on! It would be an absolute police state to give the commissioner that sort of power. There is some sort of fit and proper person test at the moment, but nothing that extreme. This government has lost all ability to have empathy for people. If these powers are vested in the government and, in this case, the police commissioner, it will be an intrusion into people's lives. I appeal to the government to think that a committee might be able to help it with those things.

I do not think members opposite really want to be on the side of history when they are involved in ramming through another piece of legislation that is disgusting to the common person and to many law-abiding people in the regions. I do not think they would want to be on the side of history that shows that they supported this legislation, or they rammed it through this place when there is an opportunity to refer it to the committee. Some of these abhorrent things—I know “abhorrent” is a word that members opposite sometimes like to use—can be ironed out. Let us refer it to the committee. I have plenty of time left on the clock, but I will please Hon Lorna Harper and will pass over to someone else.

HON DR BRIAN WALKER (East Metropolitan) [3.29 pm]: On the referral to the Standing Committee on Legislation, I am going to put into practice what we should do at the firing range—that is, to make sure that the few bullets we use hit the target, rather than spraying a huge amount of ammunition around at anything and everything. There are a few points that would merit the careful consideration of the referral to the committee. I point out three particular details. First of all, we have the overarching issue of a very complex bill. Nobody in their remotest mind could suggest this is a simple bill. It is predicated upon the simple findings of the Law Reform Commission's review. We also have an explanatory memorandum that is larger than the actual bill. For that alone, it ought to be referred, but I will defer that to another point.

There are three main areas on which I suggest we ought to give careful consideration to referral to the committee. Those three areas regard trust, the detail and the consultation process. Trust, as we know, as parents of children, is earned with difficulty and lost with ease. It is important that we respect trust within the passage of this bill, because once we have lost trust, everything is to be doubted. I wish that the points I make are brought to my respected colleague, the minister, for careful consideration, because I appreciate that the opinion has been given that this will not be referred to the legislation committee. I suggest to the minister that that decision is wrong. One of the reasons that it is a wrong decision is because it demands that we earn trust. When I think about the originator of the bill, the minister, I think about the level of veracity that I can give to the individual.

As a trainer of young doctors and medical students, I will give an aphorism. That aphorism is really quite simple. If they have a patient in front of them—it does not matter who, what, where, when, why or how—everything the patient says has to be believed, 100 per cent. With the next breath I say that everything that patient says must be disbelieved. We take on board everything that patient says and we believe that, but we check everything and seek to establish the veracity of what the patient is actually saying. For example, someone visits the doctor with a sore throat. The doctor may think, "Sore throat. Waste of time. Get out of here." We need to establish why they are really there—the hidden agenda. It is an essential part of medicine. We then find out that the patient is concerned about his throat because his friend, who just died of leukaemia, had symptoms that started with a sore throat. Could he have the same thing? Is it contagious? Someone else may want to travel tomorrow to an important meeting where over \$1 billion will be transferred and he needs to be sure he can speak at that meeting as the main person. The sore throat is irrelevant; it is the communication behind it. Trust what he says? No. He is not going to get penicillin and Panadol; he is getting a proper examination to see what is really going on. This is the aspect of veracity in the clinical context. I believe what is really said; however, it has to be said, and I regret that I have to say this, but I disbelieve the minister. Why would I disbelieve the minister? Let me provide the example of the last paragraph of the second reading speech —

Finally, pursuant to standing order 126(1), I advise that this bill is a uniform legislation bill. It is a bill that ratifies or gives effect to an intergovernmental or multilateral agreement to which the government of the state is a party.

That statement demands a referral to the uniform legislation committee, does it not? There is no question about that. The bill was not referred because of the merits or policy of the bill; it was referred because of the statement at that last paragraph. At the bottom of page 1 of the speech extract, he says —

This bill will bring the state closer in line with firearm legislation in other Australian jurisdictions and, in some instances, exceed some of the concepts within the NFA to better meet the public safety principles it proposes in Western Australia. It will also implement, or exceed, the majority of recommendations arising from the Law Reform Commission's report.

Members, this is not a uniform legislation bill.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: But it gives effect to a national agreement.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: It also gives rise to the disagreement that this is a necessary referral, because the appropriate committee surely has to be the legislation committee.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: It has been declared as a uniform bill.

Hon Donna Faragher: Because it is!

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: I take that point. I may have misinterpreted. I am relatively junior in this chamber, so I will believe the member.

Then the question is: why has it not been referred on for the other merits we have got there? Look at the Western Australia Police Force in that same category—earning the trust in the community. I do not think it can be doubted that the police do a wonderful job under unenviable circumstances, and they are to be respected; however, there are exceptions to the rule. I think this bill must stand above all question of doubt. I am sure members all agree with that, because the bill is really important and, in fact, it is a well-written bill, but it needs to be looked at with rigour.

The briefing I had was quite distressing for me because in all the briefings I have had, I had never before had a briefing that quite so thoroughly insulted and disrespected me and the other members who were there. Members could ask how I know that, and I would tell them about body language and verbs and language used and attitudes that were expressed, but that is unimportant; that is how I felt. I may be completely wrong, but I have been to quite a few briefings and I have had a lot of consultation over four decades with people who have tried all kinds of methods to tell me what is going on, and they were lying through their back teeth. One of my skills is the ability to interpret what is being said and how it is being said. If there is any doubt there, questions arise, and we ought to take that further.

Let us move on to consultation. Consultation is an interesting word. I walked past some buildings here —

Hon Darren West: You need to talk about the referral, not the bill.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: This is regarding the need for the referral, so I refer the member to that. I quite agree with him and I thank him for pointing that out.

When we talk about the extent of consultation, I am immediately drawn back to discussions I had with the very same minister about the level of consultation for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021. We have been here before, have we not?

Hon Darren West interjected.

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: Which is why we need to have this referred to the committee to have a good look at it.

Hon Darren West: Do your second reading speech later!

Hon Dr BRIAN WALKER: I will.

The words I saw were that a “boutique” unit was for sale, which actually means small, within a “quality” building, which means that it has working air conditioning. We have had examples of previous bills where words have been used to say that they were perfect bills, but they plainly were not. If we are going to bring this bill forward and it is going to last for several decades, it is imperative upon us, as good, working people, to make sure that the job we produce is perfect or as near perfect as we can make it. We need to have pride in what we do—that the laws that come from this chamber are above reproach and are of quality. Otherwise, we have bills coming through that say that THC is associated with impairment, which is a blatant lie. We cannot tolerate lies in legislation, can we? We cannot tolerate legislation that is faulty. We should do it well or not at all.

The third area is the detail. This refers specifically to the legislation committee and the referral to it. It has been said many times in this chamber during this motion that it is an important committee. It is a very important committee. As a member of that committee, I agree it is a very important committee. Over the last term of Parliament, 14 bills were referred. I think Hon Colin de Grussa said that every bill needs to be referred. He pointed out how important it is because even in innocuous bills we can find areas for improvement. Some random bills include the Sentence Administration Amendment (Monitoring Equipment) Bill 2023, Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill, Electoral Amendment Bill 2023. There were 14 of these bills in total for the fortieth Parliament. In this current Parliament, there has been only one—the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill—over three years. That bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation, which everyone would agree is an important committee. The inference to be drawn from this, and this is a fact, is that all bills brought forth before this chamber have been perfect, that the Parliamentary Counsel’s Office has been perfect in drawing up the bills, that the minor amendments made in this chamber are perfectly good and that all is well. I doubt that. I think that anyone with an open mind would also doubt that. Why do we have this pattern of inaction during this term of Parliament? If all legislation ought to be reviewed competently, while we might do a good job in here, it is more efficient to send the majority of bills to a committee for a proper review for two reasons: one, so that we have time to deal with it; and, two, it would cut the time we spend on it in here, would it not?

We have a perfectly good Law Reform Commission of Western Australia report that gave some very good recommendations, with which the shooters, I am reliably informed, were well pleased. We cannot please everyone all the time, but the shooters were well pleased. Now we find that the Firearms Bill 2024 purports to contain everything from that Law Reform Commission report, with a few minor changes. I have gone through the bill with a fine-tooth comb and compared it with the Law Reform Commission report and I agree that 90 per cent—well, actually 60 per cent, but it comes to about 80 to 85 per cent of the report that has been transferred into this bill. Why then do 32 000 signatures appear on a petition demonstrating great concern? Under the Star system for social media, every Star report is equivalent to one-tenth of what is felt by the buying public. Only one-tenth of the public will give any comment or feedback on their purchase. If that is the case and 32 000 people had the nerve or the urge to comment, that is about 20 per cent of our voters. If that is the level of concern in the community, we, as a Parliament, ought to do something that Parliaments should do all the time—that is, listen to the people and serve the people. For these reasons, the need for a review of the consultation, to go into the detail and to establish trust—three very important reasons—I recommend that this bill be taken back to the responsible authorities on the government side and consideration be again turned to referring this bill, as is appropriate, right and proper, to the

Standing Committee on Legislation, so that it can report in due course, as it is bound to do. That would save us the trouble of going through every clause and holding up the passage of this bill. It would also allow us to be sure that what we present to the public matches its needs.

We can all agree that it is an important bill and that it must happen. We can all agree that the situation in the United States, with rampant firearms and killings all over the place, is not what we want in our country. We can also all agree that significant concerns have been raised by the people who are intimately involved with firearms on a personal and daily level. If sufficient people have raised sufficient concern, we, as representatives of the population, must listen, respect and earn the trust of those people. We can do that by referring the Firearms Bill 2024 to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I recommend that that task be done.

HON COLIN de GRUSSA (Agricultural — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.43 pm]: I, too, rise in support of the following motion moved by Hon Peter Collier —

That the Firearms Bill 2024 be discharged and referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation for consideration and report by no later than 13 August 2024.

It is important that we note that the referral motion is about not only referring the bill, but also when that committee will report back to the house to give us time to consider that report and debate the legislation. I want to echo the sentiments of my colleague Hon Martin Aldridge who in his referral consideration also mentioned that he endorses the system of scrutiny in which bills are automatically referred to legislation committees. That is the ultimate. It certainly would be a better result if Parliament allowed these bills to be automatically referred to those committees such that they could be considered. It would make for better legislation, which ultimately is our job.

The Firearms Bill 2024 was referred to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review, and that is absolutely right. This is uniform legislation that gives effect to some national agreements. As a result, it had to be referred to that committee and that committee did its job in a fine manner, as it always does. It is worth noting that the uniform legislation committee is constrained by what it can look into, but the Standing Committee on Legislation is not. In fact, the functions of that committee are to consider and report on any bill referred by the Legislative Council. That gives that committee the ability to inquire more broadly into the policy of the bill and other aspects of the legislation. In the forty-first Parliament, the Standing Committee on Legislation has looked at only one piece of legislation, whereas in the fortieth Parliament, it produced no less than 15 reports. I was a member of that committee along with Hon Pierre Yang, Hon Nick Goiran and Hon Simon O'Brien, with the committee chair being Hon Dr Sally Talbot. That committee did a vast amount of work in that Parliament.

Members here have spoken about why we need to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. We have talked about the complexity of the legislation and its deviations from the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's 2016 report. Those things are what I would call, to borrow the phrase, the known knowns. Those are the things we know about the legislation. We know that they are cause for concern. Those are the issues that have been raised by members of the community and by petitioners on that petition that other members have talked about with the 32 000-odd signatures. It is complex legislation, it deviates from the Law Reform Commission's report and it introduces things that have not been contemplated in other jurisdictions. That, in and of itself, is a good reason to refer the legislation because we do not know what the effect of applying those things will be on firearm owners and the community.

There are also things that we know about the legislation but we do not know what their effect will be. I will call them the known unknowns, to borrow the phrase again. Those things might include something like the health checks. We do not know what their effect will be. We do not know how that will work for medical practitioners or situational mental health issues, as we have heard about from other members. We do not know what some of those effects will be. Again, that is another good reason for referring the legislation to the Standing Committee on Legislation for inquiry.

Perhaps, and more importantly, we need to be concerned about the unknown unknowns—those things that we do not know we did not know about the legislation. Despite the government's promise that the bill is perfect, some things always slip through. Invariably, throughout this Parliament, we have had a number of government amendments to many, many pieces of legislation in this place and the other, including this bill, because things have been identified along the way. Some of those may not be of particular gravity and some of them might be, but there are probably more that we do not know about, and when we are talking about legislation to do with firearms, it is incredibly important that we find out what the bugs might be, so to speak.

The bill has significant regulation-making powers. Other members have spoken about what those regulations might look like. I have talked briefly about government amendments also, and we do not know what consultation has taken place on those.

The Standing Committee on Legislation has the ability, unlike the Legislative Council, to call witnesses and hear from a number of different groups, be they medical practitioners, licensed firearm owners, WA Police or others, on any and every aspect of the legislation. The committee is far more able to properly scrutinise the legislation and identify any of those unknown unknowns, as well as address the concerns raised by other members, which, obviously,

we will try to do in the committee stage of the legislation in this house, but, invariably, we do not get the answers. We can try as we like, but we cannot call witnesses here. We can obviously leave and talk to stakeholders, but the ability of this committee to thoroughly scrutinise the legislation is incredibly important.

I will use one example from the Standing Committee on Legislation's—I am trying to remember what the report was titled—fortieth report. Back in the fortieth Parliament, a piece of legislation was referred to the committee, for a number of reasons, after being identified by members of this place. In that inquiry, the committee subsequently found, unbeknownst to all members and the government who drafted the bill, that the legislation would actually create a new offence of discrimination against women against the commonwealth Sexual Discrimination Act that did not previously exist. No-one knew that, and the only reason that was discovered was that the committee had the power to call witnesses, ask the hard questions and get to the bottom of the legislation. In the process of doing that it uncovered that very serious issue that ultimately led to that bill not progressing any further.

We do not know what issues may be lying underneath the Firearms Bill 2024. Despite government assurances that the legislation is perfect, there are clear examples from the previous Parliament when it has not been perfect. There are clear examples from this Parliament when it has not been perfect either because we have seen government amendments to legislation on many occasions. We have even seen the government withdraw legislation because it could not get it right. It is our duty as legislators to properly consider legislation, and if community safety is the number one priority and number one consideration in the Firearms Bill 2024, I believe that as legislators we absolutely have an obligation to ensure that we properly scrutinise this legislation, and that we find out what the potential problems could be with this legislation before its passage through Parliament. The most appropriate way to do that is to refer it to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

The member moving the motion, Hon Peter Collier, has put a very reasonable timeframe of 13 August 2024 for a report. That will give the committee time to do its work and Parliament time to get on with other business until that report comes back and the bill can then be debated. I fully support the proposed referral by Hon Peter Collier, and I would encourage other members to do the same if they truly believe that community safety is our number one priority.

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [3.53 pm]: I also rise today to support the Firearms Bill 2024 referral to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I want to start today by clearing up a much-repeated phrase that has become urban folklore. Yesterday, Hon Stephen Dawson mentioned not wanting a repeat of the Port Arthur massacre. Obviously, he does not realise the circumstances under which the firearm used at Port Arthur was obtained, and a lot of other people out there do not either. The firearm had been confiscated by Victorian police due to a change in laws of which Western Australia had also been a part. Somehow that firearm found its way out of Victoria police's hands to Tasmania where it was purchased illegally by the Port Arthur shooter, who did not hold a firearms licence. This brings me back to the question that Nick Goiran asked last month and the answer is one of the most compelling reasons that this bill must be referred to the legislation committee. Nick asked —

Several members interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: It is relevant.

Hon Stephen Dawson: You should refer to him as the honourable.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Sorry. I have done it again. I keep getting in trouble for that. I am very sorry.

Hon Nick Goiran asked the minister representing the Minister for Police —

I refer to the Western Australian Firearms Act reform and the voluntary buyback scheme.

- (1) What will happen to the firearms that are surrendered?
- (2) Will the dealers be able to purchase them?
- (3) If yes to (2), with which dealers is an arrangement in place?
- (4) If no arrangement is in place, have any discussions been had with dealers regarding the purchase, re-use, disposal or destruction of such firearms?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied —

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Western Australia Police Force advises the following.

- (1) In most circumstances, the firearms surrendered will be destroyed.
- (2) No.
- (3) Not applicable.
- (4) No.

That leads me to what I was just talking about. I am sure those law-abiding firearm owners handed back their firearms during the buyback. It was not really a buyback, let us be honest, because the government never actually owned

those firearms; that is what a buyback would be. It was a voluntary surrendering of firearms based on a fear that they may not be able to keep them once this bill was passed. I am sure that the firearm owners would like to be assured that their firearms cannot or will not make their way back onto the illegal black market, which is where we know all the gun crime problems come from in Western Australia and, more broadly, Australia. That is another reason that this bill needs to go to the legislation committee.

We know that, over time, changes have been made, and I know that every law-abiding firearm owner supports safety. That is the nature of who they are. The bill does not do that. I refer to the paper that I have compiled. This is what I have been working on since the bill was introduced into the lower house in conjunction with the representatives of the 90 000 firearms owners. We are only a little way through this bill, and I have already proposed 20 amendments. That should tell members that there is an issue with this bill, and it needs to be referred to the committee. Even the government itself —

A member interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: No, it does not. It tells me that the 90 000 licensed firearm owners have a problem with this bill, and they need to be heard because it is not going to be in their best interests, the government's best interests or the police's best interests to try to manage this law going forward. On 13 March, the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, Hon Shane Love, MLA —

A member interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Sorry; I think I got that one wrong. Thank you for correcting me. Shane Love, MLA, in the other house, moved to amend the motion so that it would go to the legislation committee. The vote was lost: 44 to six. We have another opportunity to do that now, and it is imperative that we actually do this. This is one of the most important pieces of legislation that will ever come before this house. Therefore, the legislation committee is where it needs to go to be properly assessed, as Hon Colin de Grussa just mentioned, to ensure that all those people are heard and make sure that we do the best job that we can possibly do for the people who we represent.

I am the Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Legislation. We met for the first time this term of government to debate the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023, as members would already be aware, and that report was tabled on 12 March. It is the only bill that has been referred to the committee in this term of government. As mentioned by Hon Martin Aldridge, and I think also Hon Colin de Grussa, it could be argued that all bills should be referred to this committee, particularly a bill of this much importance. It is a large, complicated and, as I have found out from the consultation I have conducted, unworkable bill. Hence, I have already proposed, as I said, 20 amendments; indeed, the government itself is already submitting amendments. That in itself should be reason to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. During the consultation period, 6 681 submissions were received, which shows that there is considerable interest in this legislation. Moreover, more than 32 000 people have signed a petition to refer the bill to the legislation committee. Why are those 32 000 people not being listened to when it took only 29 000 people signing a petition for the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act to be repealed? My colleague in the other house Shane Love wrote the following statement —

... 32,000 West Australians who signed the strongest petition to the State's Parliament, sends a clear message to Labor.

We won't take your firearm reforms lying down.

The Cook Government underestimates our firearms community again and again. They failed to consult, they failed to listen, and now they will be tested.

The shambolic Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 was overturned thanks to 29,000 people who took the time to voice their concern about the ill-considered changes.

Now 32,000 people have taken a stand to say we think these firearm reforms deserve a second look. They are impractical, unreasonable and frankly do nothing to 'take guns off the streets' as the Minister for Police claims to be driven by.

I think we pointed out yesterday that one of the government's proposed changes is for that exact reason—that it would have resulted in more firearms in the community. Further on, the statement continues —

The Nationals WA were the first political party to throw their support behind the community in this ideological battle with a Police Minister determined to run down law abiding firearm license holders.

We're not going anywhere.

The Firearms Bill 2024 will be introduced to the Legislative Council this week, and the Labor Government will either listen to the 32,000 reasonable concerns, or ignore us yet again.

If this Bill proceeds with no amendment, with no consideration by the appropriate committee, and with no real opportunity for the firearms community to consider the practical elements within, The Nationals WA will oppose it.

And we have. The statement continues —

We support sensible reforms led by those who understand the subject. We believe in thorough consultation to make sure any reforms are practical and realistic. And we know license holders deserve better than this Labor Government. Your voice is one of 32,000 saying ‘enough is enough’ and together we can be heard. The Nationals WA stand shoulder to shoulder with you, and we will keep up the fight.

In support of my standing against the Firearms Bill 2024, I have received, as other members would have, thousands of emails. One of the really sad parts about this issue, and one that needs to be taken into consideration, is that many of those who wrote emails were too frightened to put in a submission for fear of persecution. That is on the back of what happened when a map was printed on the front page of *The West Australian*. That cannot be forgiven, and it cannot be forgotten. That is another reason why this bill needs to be referred. As Hon Colin de Grussa said, what else is in that bill that we do not know about? It is a massively big bill —

Hon Colin de Grussa interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Absolutely. That is what we are calling for. We want to ensure that those 32 000 people are able to use the legislation. There are so many references to regulations, which, by virtue, is very dangerous. We know that regulations can be changed with the stroke of a pen. If we are talking about safety, the people who need to understand and comply with this legislation need much clearer definitions in some of the very ambiguous clauses in the bill.

Hon Kyle McGinn: Which ones?

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: I only have 33 minutes left. I would be here for the rest of the day going through them. Several members interjected.

Point of Order

Hon BEN DAWKINS: I have not had the time to read the exact standing order, but there is a standing order in relation to honourable members interrupting Hon Louise Kingston because she is a woman. They are not showing respect to female members of Parliament.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Okay—a couple of things. Can I remind members on both sides of the chamber that whatever the consistency of the point of order, it needs to be heard in silence. I will be the one to rule on it—nobody else in this chamber. I heard the point of order raised by Hon Ben Dawkins. There is no point of order.

Debate Resumed

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Thank you, Acting President. Thank you for that support, Hon Ben Dawkins, but I did 30 years in speedway, which is a male-dominated sport, so I need no protection whatsoever!

If we do not refer the bill to the legislation committee, we run the risk of creating a situation in which law-abiding firearms owners will accidentally break the law. The bill has much tougher penalties. That is one of the most important points to make. Yesterday, we heard Hon Dr Brian Walker talk about what ended up happening to somebody who did the right thing by reporting their hemp crop. We need to ensure that these new laws are easy to navigate. Nearly every time I stand in this place, I refer to the need to make things simpler for people. People out there in regional areas are really struggling. Farmers are struggling due to the drought. They do not need things to be any harder. This bill needs to go to the legislation committee to ensure that it is the best legislation we can provide to licensed firearms owners.

The continual correspondence I have received has highlighted people’s inability to be heard. Many of them—this is another reason why the bill needs to go to the legislation committee; other members have probably received the same emails—have said that their submissions —

Hon Kyle McGinn interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Let me finish. They have said that their submissions were not received by the Western Australia Police Force even though they submitted them. There may be tens of thousands more submissions, but we do not know that. Those people must be heard.

The legislation committee must be given the chance to broaden the terms of reference, which are very narrow. The government should open the bill to proper consultation and ensure that it is fit for purpose, because it clearly is not. Another part of the bill that is woefully inaccurate—Hon Kyle McGinn asked me to reference some of them—is the categories. If members look at page 6 of the National Firearms Agreement, they will see that it categorises all firearms and states that that must be reflected in any legislation going forward passed by any of the states—Western Australia is a signatory to that agreement—but they are not categorised in the bill. The question needs to be asked: why are they not categorised? They are categorised in the act. If that is to be left to the regulations, can they be changed, and can people’s actions be unwittingly unlawful due to that change? These are questions we do not know the answers to, and the briefings did not answer any of the questions we asked.

I turn to what needs to be scrutinised, starting with the policy objectives. Will the claims by the minister be achieved? We cannot tell from this legislation because it is just too ambiguous in so many areas. What is the actual aim? Lawful licensed firearm owners have already met a genuine reason test, so why do they need to be penalised further when we know, as I think Hon Dr Brian Walker mentioned earlier, that the highest number of crimes in Western Australia now are committed using sharp objects—a knife or a screwdriver, not firearms.

Hon Pierre Yang: Do you know why that is the case?

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: As my colleague —

Hon Pierre Yang: Because John Howard and Tim Fischer put those laws in place.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: They did. That is a —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Members!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! I would just remind people that when I call you to order, you come to order immediately, not finish what you have to yell across the chamber. We will have no raised voices in this place; that is why we have standing orders and that is why I am sitting here. Nobody should be raising their voice. One person has the call, one person is being recorded by Hansard, and one person is the person I want to hear, and that is Hon Louise Kingston.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: In actual fact, that interjection totally goes against what the government is trying to say. Yes, the member is correct, and that is the exact point I was going to make.

Hon Pierre Yang: Tim Fischer would be horrified!

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: If the member would just stay silent and listen, he would hear what I am trying to say. The changes led —

Hon Pierre Yang: I hear very clearly!

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Hon Pierre Yang, you are straying very close to the boundaries of my patience. I am giving the call to Hon Louise Kingston.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Thank you, Acting President. I will try again. I was trying to say that we have the strictest firearms laws in Western Australia due to exactly that. I will point this out again, and I will keep pointing it out until I am blue in the face. When a crime is committed, it is committed through illegality. It is not committed by a licensed firearms owner —

Hon Sandra Carr: Incorrect!

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: They are actually very, very responsible, and we see that in the decline in firearms crimes over time. I just pointed out where the highest amount of crime actually happens. My colleague Hon Martin Aldridge asked during his contribution to the referral debate what evidence was used to ascertain the target number of firearms in the community. What number is deemed safe? Nobody has been able to answer that. I have already mentioned the statistics for offences causing injury or death by sharp objects. We have seen an explosion of violent crimes of this nature recently. We also know that it is not law-abiding firearms owners who are involved in these crimes, because they involve sharp objects. As has been repeated to me so many times in so much of the correspondence I have received, the \$64.3 million could have paid for a hell of a lot of resources for law enforcement. How many police officers would that have funded? The problem is not with the law-abiding, licensed firearm owners. The government has chosen an easy route because it has lost control of crime. Will it reduce firearms crime in the community? No, it will not. Will targeting law-abiding people improve public safety? No, it will not. Was the consultation conducted in good faith? I have asked that question previously. How many of those submissions could have been received had people not felt like they were going to be persecuted and had not received a message saying that their email had not been received through the mechanism provided? As I said, many chose to contact my office to raise those issues.

Yesterday I attended the launch of the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal. I listened to speakers recount stories about how many of their clients end up seeking assistance from them. It often only takes a small thing to push people into a situation of despair. As legislators, we have to continually ask ourselves: do we actually need to make things so complicated? I keep raising this issue. The average person ends up in despair because of these situations.

I remember working at the ANZ bank; if members could please indulge me while I tell them this story.

Hon Darren West: No. Where's the referral motion?

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: It is relevant.

Several members interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: It is absolutely relevant. It goes to the fact that when we introduced computers, everybody said how much easier it was going to be, but we ended up with more staff after we introduced computers.

This is my worry with this legislation, and why it needs to go to the Standing Committee on Legislation. We already have an overstressed police force. I have asked 13 questions in this place, of which 11 could not be answered on the same day due to police resources. Why are we even considering making this piece of legislation so much more complicated that people will not be able to understand it or comply with it? That is why we need to send it to the legislation committee. It could be fine; we do not even know that, but that is the problem. When there are already 20 amendments proposed by the representatives of the 90 000 law-abiding, licensed firearms owners that I have been working with, we know we have a problem. There were fewer signatures on the petition against the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill, and that whole bill was pulled. That is not what we are asking for here; we are just asking that it go to the legislation committee. Honestly, it will just make the government look better, as well. That is why we cannot understand why the government will not agree to refer it.

I will now refer to an article written by Matthew Ogilvie, PhD.

Several members interjected.

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: Absolutely; everything I say is related to it. His article states —

... the Firearms Bill's Section 368 threatens any person with a fine if they do not "answer any question asked by a police officer under this Act."

Legal opinion suggests this applies to all people, not only firearms owners, and would therefore, strip them of their right to silence.

That in itself should worry members intensely, and it is why this bill needs to go to the legislation committee. It continues —

Section 150 allows the WA police commissioner to have regard to "the person's views, opinions and attitudes."

Free speech and freedom of thought are at the bedrock of our democratic society, so it is outrageous that the Bill could challenge them.

It would be understandable if the Bill specified being a member of a dangerous terrorist organisation, or having similar harmful beliefs.

But the Bill does not specify those. Instead, it leaves the clause "view, opinions, and attitudes" vague, and open to a wide interpretation.

Section 150 also specifies that a "person's conduct and behaviour" can be taken into consideration.

Again, the Bill is vague on the exact parameters around "conduct and behaviour."

It could mean belonging to a terrorist organisation. But it could also allow the denial of a licence to a person if they have protested outside a Chinese consulate when the state is negotiating a trade deal?

The bill will allow the police to form moral judgements about a person's way of living or domestic circumstances and whether the person is of good repute. Again, these criteria are vague and there are no guidelines on their meaning. It will also allow adverse judgements about people's lifestyles and preferred living arrangements. In fact, some Indigenous people have asked about this clause and if it will affect them because they live a mobile lifestyle and hunt to feed their families. So far, the government has not provided a satisfactory answer.

In proposed sections 148, 150, 153 and 399, the bill also opens up people to medical or disability discrimination. The bill's medical standards have no objective criteria. Doctors have already complained that they are being asked to make medical judgements about legal matters. Hon Colin de Grussa raised that matter very well when he spoke before. We do not know what this means. A lot of these clauses are very ambiguous and worrying, not only to licensed firearms holders, but in terms of the bill's implementation and where it will be used next. Every person in this state should be intensely concerned about the wording in those clauses. If they are not, that is a serious problem. The only way that we can assess what is meant by that and how we can get it right for every Western Australian is to send it to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

I will go to public safety now. I will just find my next page. Please excuse me while I get myself organised. Where is the evidence that this will in fact create a better public safety situation, based on what I have already said? We know that the criminal element undertakes crime, not law-abiding licensed firearm owners. The committee could further scrutinise the claims by the minister on how this bill would improve public safety. Another point, as also mentioned by Hon Colin de Grussa, is the unwitting effect that cannot be demonstrated. As I have said, many of the clauses are ambiguous and confusing. The government does not even know how many crimes are committed with illegally possessed firearms. I will read the question that I put in on 15 November 2023. It states —

1752. Hon Louise Kingston to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the Government's proposed plan to further restrict law-abiding firearm licence holders, and I ask:

- (a) if the key objective is public safety, in the most recent data available how many firearms related offences were committed using licensed firearms;
- (b) how many firearms related offences were committed using unlicensed firearms;

- (c) is there any visible trend over recent years; and
- (d) if yes to (c), what is the trend?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

(a)–(d) As was recommended by the Review of the Firearms Act 1973 (WA) Law Reform Commission report of October 2016, the *Firearms Act 1973 (WA)* has been rewritten from the ground up with a statement as to the purpose of the Firearms Legislation that confirms:

- (a) The primary principle is the need to ensure public safety ... —

I have highlighted how that cannot be proven. It continues —

- (b) The possession and use of firearms is a privilege that is always conditional on the need to ensure public safety; and
- (c) Public safety can be improved by requiring strict controls on the possession, use, dealing and manufacturing of firearms and requiring the safe and secure storage and carriage of firearms.

In 2023, the Western Australia Police Force advise that there were 517 incidents involving firearms this represents a 14% increase on recorded incidents involving a firearm in 2022.

However, they were not able to provide details and whether the firearms were licensed or not. It does not actually matter, because the activity was legal. That is where the focus should be—not on persecuting licensed firearm owners who have already proven their genuine need. The Western Australia Police Force advised that the licence status of the firearms involved in the recorded incidents is unable to be provided because of recording limitations and that the firearms involved are not always recovered by police for every incident. Even if the gun is not always retrieved, the government should have some idea of crime committed without a firearms licence or correct registration, as is the basis of its bill.

In other words, this will not change the situation of criminal activity, as I have highlighted over and over again. Every sitting, we have asked how many firearms have been handed in through the buyback scheme. To date, zero unlicensed firearms have been taken off the street. The scheme has only received guns from law-abiding people. How is this improving public safety? If the Minister for Police was really concerned about public safety, he would welcome the referral of this bill to the legislation committee.

The government wants to reduce firearms in the community. Where is the evidence to demonstrate that this will actually reduce illegal firearms? It actually will not. We know that. Will the cap contradict the objective of reducing firearms or see people doubling up on firearms? Does this contradict the intentions of the National Firearms Agreement and the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia? We asked that during the briefing. We were told that 90 per cent of the Law Reform Commission report had been considered. That means that 10 per cent of it was not even considered. What was that 10 per cent? Why do we not send this to the legislation committee to actually have a look at what it was and why that 10 per cent was not considered?

Where is the evidence that demonstrates that this will reduce illegal firearms? Will the cap contradict the objective of reducing firearms or see people doubling up on firearms? We do not know the answer to that because we cannot break that information down. It is not available. The legislation committee can scrutinise the objectives of the bill against the Law Reform Commission's report. Recommendation 54 of the Law Reform Commission's report is that there should be no upper limit on the number of individual firearms for a licence holder. That goes back to the fact that, under the existing legislation, someone has to prove why they need to have that firearm. It should be no different to how it is now. The government will cause immeasurable problems, as has been raised by other members, in terms of vermin control and the euthanasia of animals in a timely fashion. I live on a farm. I understand how this is needed.

To contradict the Law Reform Commission's report, there has been stronger evidence made available. To date, we have not been able to extract it from the minister. Recommendation 54 of the Law Reform Commission states —

There should be no upper limit on the number of firearms a single Firearm Licence holder may possess.

Why was that recommendation not actually followed? I do not understand it. The 90 000 law-abiding licence holders do not understand it. Nobody can tell us the answer. It must go to the legislation committee to be considered.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2389.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

BANDYUP WOMEN'S PRISON — STAFF AND INMATES

518. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Corrective Services:

I refer to Bandyup Women's Prison.

- (1) What is the current allocated FTE for the prison?

- (2) What is the current actual FTE at the prison?
- (3) What is the maximum prisoner capacity at the prison?
- (4) What is the current actual prisoner capacity at the prison?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. The Department of Justice advises the following.

- (1) It is 169.
- (2) It is 164.2.
- (3) The maximum prisoner capacity is 388.
- (4) The current actual prisoner capacity is 388.

POLICE — MOTORCYCLE TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT — STAFF

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

- (1) What is the total allocated FTE of dedicated motorcycle traffic enforcement officers?
- (2) How many dedicated motorcycle traffic enforcement officers are currently employed?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the Leader of the Opposition for some notice of the question. I do have answers to the member's other questions, but unfortunately the Western Australia Police Force advises that due to operational sensitivities, specific information relating to staffing levels of individual police units is not released.

SOUTH COAST MARINE PARKS

520. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the proposed south coast marine parks.

- (1) What is the total amount that has been budgeted for advertising and promotion for the proposed marine parks for the 2023–24 financial year?
- (2) How much has been expended to date?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1) No funding was specifically allocated for advertising and promotion of the proposed marine parks in the 2023–24 financial year. Costs incurred to promote the public submission period have been funded through the department's existing operational budget.
- (2) Approximately \$55 401 has been spent to date. This cost includes newspaper, radio and social advertising, printing of maps, fact sheets and "Have your say" brochures.

SENTENCE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT (MULTIPLE MURDERERS) ACT

521. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the passage of the Sentence Administration Amendment (Multiple Murderers) Act 2018.

- (1) On how many occasions has the Attorney General made use of the provision, as stated in the Attorney's second reading speech, to direct the Prisoners Review Board of Western Australia —
that mass murderers and serial killers must not be considered for parole or a resocialisation program?
- (2) In respect of the above, will the Attorney General please advise the specific cases on which he exercised this discretion?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. The following answer has been provided to me by the Attorney General.

- (1) The Attorney General has made use of the provision under section 14C(1) of the Sentence Administration Act 2003 on five separate occasions.
- (2) The names of those persons are: Peter John Maloney; Catherine Margaret Birnie; William Patrick Mitchell; David Troy Masters; and Stephen Bernard English.

CHILD HEALTH NURSE SERVICES — STAND-BY LIST

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

I refer to stand-by lists for appointments with a child health nurse through the Child and Adolescent Health Service.

- (1) How many clients are currently on the stand-by list?
- (2) For those clients referred to on the list, will the minister provide a breakdown of the number of clients by child health region?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

- (1) There are 62 children on a stand-by list. Children may be on a stand-by list because their parent or guardian has expressed a preference for a specific clinician or clinic, or have declined alternative appointments and so wish to remain on a stand-by list.
- (2) As of 16 May 2024.

The rest of the answer is in tabular form and I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Child Health Region	Number of children
Bentley	5
Central East	12
Central West	1
City	3
Gosnells	14
Hills	1
Kwinana	2
Lower West	4
Melville Region	1
Peel	2
Swan	15
Wanneroo North	1
Wanneroo South	1

WATER SECURITY GRANTS — HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY — SOUTHERN FOREST

523. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to the minister's answer to question without notice 489, asked yesterday, on the southern forests horticulture infrastructure support scheme.

- (1) Has the funding for this scheme come from funds previously provided for the southern forests irrigation scheme?
- (2) If yes to (1) —
 - (a) what is the total budget for the southern forests horticulture infrastructure support scheme; and
 - (b) what funding has been retained in the southern forests irrigation scheme?
- (3) If no to (1), from what original funding stream has the money for the southern forests horticulture infrastructure support scheme come?

Hon KYLE McGINN replied:

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

- (1) Yes.
- (2) (a) \$10 million; and
(b) \$5.4 million.
- (3) Not applicable.

PUBLIC SECTOR — STAFF

524. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the 16 per cent growth in the public sector headcount since Labor came to power in 2017, as shown by comparing the *State of the WA government sector workforce 2022–23* report with the *State of the WA government sector workforce 2016–17* report.

- (1) What is the current headcount of the public sector today?
- (2) Does the government plan to grow the public service at numbers exceeding population growth in Western Australia, as it has to date?
- (3) How does the government reconcile the challenges facing the sector when it claimed the machinery-of-government reforms would result in the amalgamation and abolition of state agencies, reducing the state's total from 41 to 25, delivering on a pre-election vow to reduce the size of the public sector?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I am dealing with the questions to the Leader of the House today. There is an answer here. I just want to check a bit of detail, so I will provide an answer to the member at the end of question time once I have done that.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — NATIONAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP

525. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Attorney General:

I refer to the National Legal Assistance Partnership between the commonwealth and state governments.

- (1) With the program due to expire in 2025, will the state government push to see this funding renewed?
- (2) How is the government supporting WA's community legal centres, particularly for those women escaping family violence?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) Yes. The state government is working with the commonwealth and the other state and territory governments to agree to a new five-year funding agreement post-30 June 2025. The National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020–25 is a five-year national partnership agreement between the Australian government and all states and territories for commonwealth funded legal assistance.
- (2) The state government strongly supports WA's community legal centres and acknowledges the integral role they play in providing legal assistance services to people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. This state government has overseen state and commonwealth investment in the community legal sector significantly increase from approximately \$10.7 million in 2016–17 to approximately \$27 million in 2023–24. The majority of this increase has been as a result of state funding. The state government allocated additional community legal sector baseline funding of more than \$4.5 million for each of the 2023–24 and 2024–25 financial years to support the sector's capacity to deliver services.

“Women” and “people” experiencing, or at risk of, family violence are identified as priority client groups in the state government's legal assistance strategy. In addition to community legal sector baseline funding, the state government currently provides funding to community legal centres via a number of specialist programs to assist women who are experiencing, or at risk of, family violence, including: wraparound legal and social support services for women exiting prison who have experienced or are at risk of family and domestic violence; registrar-facilitated shuttle conferencing between parties contesting family violence restraining orders; and Perth metropolitan family violence prevention legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, with the commonwealth funding services in regional Western Australia.

LIVE EXPORT — SHEEP INDUSTRY

526. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

I refer to comments made in 2022 by the then Minister for Agriculture and Food, Alannah MacTiernan, that farmers should stop flogging a dead horse and accept the inevitable that the live export trade would one day be banned. Given that the live animal export industry has declined by at least 64 per cent since 2017 and the federal Labor Party's recent commitment to banning live sheep exports by 2028 —

- (1) What is WA Labor currently doing to prepare for an end to live exports and ensure a just transition?
- (2) Has the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development done any modelling on the economic benefits of a local meat processing industry for chilled meat export?
- (3) If yes to (2), will the minister table the modelling?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

- (1) The Western Australian government has been clear and consistent in its support for maintaining the live export trade. I have written to Senator Hon Murray Watt advising that the transition package will not meet the current and future needs of the WA sheep industry supply chain. We are reviewing the live exports panel's report and will consider the recommendations for a regulatory role for the WA government for the purpose of assisting the state's farming and meat processing sectors during this challenging time.
- (2)–(3) Modelling on the economic benefits of the local meat processing industry was included in the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's submission to the Australian government's independent panel on the phase-out of live sheep exports by sea, which was tabled in this place on 8 August 2023.

JUSTICE PIPELINE MODEL

527. Hon WILSON TUCKER to the minister representing the Treasurer:

I refer to the justice pipeline model announced in 2017.

- (1) What modules have been completed?
- (2) On what date was each module completed?
- (3) What reports have been produced as a result of the justice pipeline model?
- (4) What has been the total cost to date of developing the justice pipeline model?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(4) The justice pipeline model is a financial tool used to inform funding deliberations by estimating the downstream impact of policy initiatives and future trends and demands on the justice system. The model was completed in April 2019 within its original project budget and consists of a courts and corrective services module, a police module and a judicial resourcing module.

MEDICAL CANNABIS — LEGISLATION

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

I refer the minister to the tabling in the Northern Territory Parliament of a bill to amend the driving laws in that jurisdiction to create an exemption for medical cannabis patients similar to that which already exists in Tasmania.

Will the minister undertake to share that legislation with the ministerial working group when it is eventually convened as a, dare I say, tiny example of developments being considered in other Australian jurisdictions?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

Can I check with the honourable member the reference number of that question?

Hon Dr Brian Walker: It is C579.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Unfortunately, I do not have the question in my file. I will provide the answer if I receive it before the end of question time.

LIVE EXPORT — SHEEP INDUSTRY

529. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:

My question without notice of which none has been given is to the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

I refer to the upcoming meeting that the minister will have with the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Murray Watt. Can the minister assure us that she will push for a reversal or extension of the ban on live sheep exports at the meeting rather than focus on the compensation package?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I will be doing what I have always done, which is to stand up for the best interests of Western Australian farmers. I have been clear and consistent that we do not want the ban imposed and the federal government has been clear and consistent that it believes that it has a mandate. I will do what I can to support the WA farming community, as I always have done.

STATE BUDGET 2024–25 — STRATEGIC INDUSTRIAL AREAS

530. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade:

I refer to the minister's media release today titled "\$500 million fund to unlock industrial areas and create future jobs".

- (1) Can the minister please detail the methodology being used to determine the funding allocation for each strategic industrial area?

- (2) Can the minister please provide a breakdown of how the \$125 million announced for the Kwinana and Rockingham strategic industrial areas will be utilised?

The question was submitted on 9 May.

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I provide the following answer as the minister representing the Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade.

- (1) Funding allocations will be made in accordance with the activation priorities identified by industrial project proponents that have either committed to be or are prospective occupants of strategic industrial areas, and the anticipated time frames of those activations.
- (2) The \$125 million will be utilised for the purchase of land at Latitude 32.

EAST PERTH TERMINAL — *INDIAN PACIFIC*

531. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the advice given to Journey Beyond and tourism operators that a platform will no longer be available at the East Perth train terminal as of 1 January 2025 for the *Indian Pacific*.

- (1) What were the reasons given for that decision?
- (2) Which other rail services are affected?
- (3) Will this be permanent or when is it expected that the *Indian Pacific* can resume service at the East Perth train terminal?
- (4) Which alternative platform will be available for interstate passengers to board and disembark the *Indian Pacific*?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I will say at the outset that a number of the questions that came from the National Party today came in after the 11 o'clock cut-off period and were not able to be processed in time. This answer relates to that.

An answer to this question was unable to be finalised in the required time frame as it was submitted after the 11.00 am deadline. I ask the honourable member to either ask the question again on the next sitting day or place it on notice.

REGISTRY OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES — ADOPTION ACT

532. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the minister representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the supplementary information belatedly tabled on 16 May 2023 in response to my question without notice 383 asked on 29 March 2023.

- (1) Does the minister recall that the briefing note she was provided on 17 March 2023 advised that the current wait time for a standard request to access adoption records was eight to 10 months?
- (2) Is the minister aware that this delay impeded some people from making a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into past forced adoptive policies and practices?
- (3) What is the current number of requests outstanding and what is the current wait time?
- (4) Has the minister received further briefing notes on the inquiry since 17 March 2023; and, if so, will the minister table them?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

The following response has been provided by the Minister for Child Protection.

- (1)–(3) The Department of Communities advises that Communities prioritised applicants seeking information to make a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into forced adoptive policies and practices. Communities is not aware of any outstanding requests for individuals seeking information to make a submission to the inquiry and notes that the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs is accepting submissions for the length of the inquiry.

As of 17 March 2023, the wait time for a standard request for Adoption Services was eight to 10 months. As of 14 May 2024, the current wait time for a standard request for Adoption Services was four months.

- (4) The minister notes that the parliamentary inquiry remains ongoing. In order to respect the independent committee process, the minister would not want to table information that could be perceived as pre-empting or influencing the findings of the committee. The minister will endeavour to assist the honourable member following the committee publishing its final report.

FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION — FIREWOOD CONTRACTS

533. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to forestry in WA. Will the minister provide a list of the businesses that have secured interim firewood supply contracts and, with respect to each contract, the volume of firewood to be supplied?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I note that the answer to this question was correct as of Wednesday, 8 May 2024.

Twenty-three businesses that had previous firewood contracts with the Forest Products Commission have been offered an interim three-month contract with a pro rata volume based on their previous yearly contract allocation. As of 8 May 2024, 20 contracts have been fully executed.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE — COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

534. Hon PETER COLLIER to the minister representing the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:

I refer to the Labor government's commitment of \$14.7 million to build a family and domestic violence hub in Armadale and \$4.5 million for two FDV programs in the Kimberley.

- (1) How much of the \$14.7 million has been spent on the Armadale FDV hub?
- (2) Has the Armadale hub been completed; and, if so, is it operational?
- (3) How much of the \$4.5 million has been spent on the Derby Family Violence Service and the Change Em Ways Kimberley project to date?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

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

The following response has been provided by the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence.

- (1)–(2) The Armadale One Stop Hub is operated by Hope Community Services and Yorgum Healing Service with a service alliance, including community-based and legal services. The contract-for-service provision was awarded in January 2023. The annual funding level for this service agreement is \$2.485 million per annum, including GST, for a period of five years. Following a period of set-up and establishment, the Armadale One Stop Hub service providers started receiving client referrals in September 2023. It is currently operating with a full complement of staff. Part of the budget allocation for the Armadale hub is funding for the fit-out of the premises.
- (3) The \$4.5 million to help address family and domestic violence in the Kimberley is fully allocated to continue the existing programs. The Derby Family Violence Service is run by Anglicare WA in partnership with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation, with annual funding of \$314 721, excluding GST. Change Em Ways is run by Mens Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation, with funding of \$1.1 million per annum, excluding GST. Both services are funded until June 2027.

My apologies for my mispronunciation.

MID WEST PORTS AUTHORITY — ENVIRONMENTAL LICENCES — COMPLIANCE

535. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the transport, storage and out-loading of bulk mineral product at the port of Geraldton by the Mid West Ports Authority.

- (1) When was the last audit undertaken by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation of MWPA compliance with the condition of its environmental licences?
- (2) Were any breaches or noncompliance matters identified as a result of audits conducted by DWER in 2020–21, 2021–22, 2022–23 and 2023 to date?
- (3) If yes to (2), can the minister please list those breaches or noncompliance matters and the action taken by DWER?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Minister for Environment, I provide the following answer, which was current as of 14 March 2024.

- (1) It was on 24 October 2019.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) Not applicable.

POLICE — GUN OWNERSHIP MAP

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

I refer to the infamous map of gun ownership provided to *The West Australian* by the Western Australia Police Force in 2022.

- (1) Which specific WAPOL dataset was the information represented in the map drawn from?
- (2) What categories of firearm does that dataset record and were all such categories represented in that map?
- (3) Who is responsible for managing the dataset at WAPOL?
- (4) On how many occasions has the integrity of that dataset been audited either internally or externally?
- (5) With respect to (4), can the minister please provide the relevant details of this audit or these audits?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

The Western Australia Police Force advises that it is not possible to provide an answer within the required time frames. A response will be provided to the honourable member on the next sitting day, Tuesday, 28 May.

MENTAL HEALTH — PERINATAL PILOT PROGRAM

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

I refer to the answer provided to question without notice 364 asked on 7 May 2024, regarding funding for perinatal mental health services provided through Fremantle Women's Health Centre. It states —

Fremantle Women's Health Centre will continue to receive funding for perinatal services until 30 June 2027.

Can the minister advise the total amount of funding that has been allocated to the centre for perinatal mental health services in the following financial years —

- (a) 2024–25;
- (b) 2025–26; and
- (c) 2026–27?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

The answer to the first part of the question, (a) to (c), is provided in tabular form. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

Funding GST Exclusive			
2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
\$139,498	\$144,381	\$148,568	\$432,447

Funding is subject to indexation based on the *Western Australian government indexation policy for the non-government human services sector: December 2015*. Indexation is applied to funding annually on 1 July as published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

GRIFFIN COAL — FUNDING STREAM

538. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for State and Industry Development, Jobs and Trade:

I refer to my question without notice 77 asked on 29 February 2024, requesting the financial rationale of the additional and extraordinary figure of a \$220 million funding stream to the insolvent and foreign-owned Griffin Coal Mining Company.

- (1) What was the “range of factors and inputs” that the Department of Treasury and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet took into account when arriving at the figure of \$220 million?
- (2) In allocating the extraordinary amount of \$220 million dollars to the insolvent and foreign-owned Griffin Coal, will the minister table to the house the range of factors and inputs that were assessed and modelled to arrive at the figure?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The range of factors included forecasts of production costs and revenue from coal sales to 30 June 2026. This information is commercially sensitive. The support provided is critical to support continued operations at Griffin Coal, secure the electricity system and protect Collie jobs.

ENVIRONMENT — FEDERAL POLICY

539. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

I refer to the secretive so-called nature positive changes being considered by the federal government.

- (1) Does the Premier support these so-called reforms?
 (2) Does the Premier consider the consultation process adequate?
 (3) Has the government undertaken any economic modelling on the possible negative economic impacts on the Western Australia's economy and state budget?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. On behalf of the Leader of the House, I provide this answer.

- (1)–(3) The state government has already welcomed the commonwealth's decision to split its proposed reforms into two tranches and its commitment to greater consultation with impacted parties. The state government's focus is on ensuring Western Australia continues to be the engine room of the nation's economy while maintaining strong environmental protections. The commonwealth's additional commitments on this important matter shows it is listening to WA industry and the needs of Western Australians.

PERTH HILLS GROUNDWATER EXTRACTION — COCA-COLA

540. Hon SOPHIA MOERMOND to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to my question without notice 459.

- (1) Other than Coca-Cola, how many bores is the minister aware of that are operating in unproclaimed groundwater areas and are being used to supply bottled water companies?
 (2) Following his meeting with Coca-Cola on 6 May, can the minister share the outcome of that conversation?
 (3) Is the minister considering proclaiming the land used by Coca-Cola to extract groundwater?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

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

- (1) There are three sites.
 (2) Following the minister's meeting with Coca-Cola, arrangements were made for scientists from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to meet with Coca-Cola to discuss its operations.
 (3) The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is considering a range of options on this matter and will advise the minister accordingly.

PRESCRIBED BURNING — SOUTH WEST

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

I refer the record-shattering summer of heat in Western Australia and the drought and dry conditions in the south of WA.

- (1) Does the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions intend to delay any planned burns during this autumn?
 (2) If yes to (1), what burns have been and/or will be delayed?
 (3) If no to (1), why not?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

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

- (1)–(3) Lower than average rainfall across the south west during the last six months has produced some areas of unusually dry forest and increased underlying soil dryness. The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has worked closely with the Bureau of Meteorology to identify when sufficient rainfall

may allow prescribed burning to commence this autumn under the right conditions. Recent rainfall across the south west has seen the soil dryness index fall within DBCA's guidelines for autumn prescribed burning in some locations. However, given the prolonged dry period that has been experienced across the south west, DBCA is taking a measured approach to undertaking autumn burning under the right conditions.

Given these factors, it is likely that the scale of DBCA's burn options program for autumn will be considerably reduced in comparison with a typical autumn season. Consistent with DBCA procedures, a prescribed burn will be approved to proceed only where the prevailing environmental conditions satisfy those within the approved prescribed burn plan.

CANNABIS — DRIVER IMPAIRMENT

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

I refer the minister to the announcement last week that the Treasurer in Victoria had committed \$5.2 million to a cannabis driving trial in the recent state budget. I acknowledge that here in WA, the government has opted to convene a ministerial working group across several ministries.

- (1) What funds have been allocated to the ministerial working group in this year's WA state budget to ensure that it is adequately provisioned to undertake the necessary research?
- (2) Can the minister assure both the house and ordinary Western Australians that WA is not falling behind other states due to a lack of government resourcing?

Hon PIERRE YANG replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The ministerial working group will be funded through existing budgets.

WESTERN POWER — GEOMAGNETIC SOLAR STORMS

543. Hon BEN DAWKINS to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to Western Power's contingency planning for severe geomagnetic solar storms.

- (1) Will the minister table any documents that outline what understanding Western Power has of geomagnetic solar storms and what impact they can have on the south west interconnected system?
- (2) Has the minister been briefed about what impact a Carrington Event-level solar storm would have on the south west interconnected system?
- (3) What steps can be taken to protect south west interconnected system infrastructure from geomagnetic solar storms?

Hon DARREN WEST replied:

I thank the honourable member for his out-of-this-world question. On behalf of the Minister for Energy, I provide the following answer.

- (1) No specific Western Power document exists. Western Power monitors the effects of geomagnetic induced currents on its infrastructure and receives briefings on solar activity from the Bureau of Meteorology. Additionally, Western Power is participating in the National Emergency Management Agency's Exercise Aurora, which will focus on the impacts of space weather.
- (2) The minister has not received a briefing on the impact of a Carrington Event-level solar storm on the south west interconnected system.
- (3) The Australian Energy Market Operator maintains the required levels of essential system services to maintain power system security according to the wholesale electricity market rules. If any disturbances occur on the system whether from a space weather event or other vector, AEMO will work with Western Power and other participants to resecure the power system, if required, and continue the safe and secure operation of the WEM and SWIS.

CONSOLIDATED EMERGENCY SERVICE ACTS PROJECT

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

I refer to budget paper No 2, page 450 and a reference in the spending changes table to the consolidated emergency service acts.

- (1) Noting the amounts in the table, what are the total costs associated with the project?
- (2) For what purpose will the funding be used to support the creation or implementation of the new act?
- (3) When will the government finally release the much-delayed exposure draft of the bill?
- (4) Does the government remain committed to passing the bill in the forty-first Parliament?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advises the following.

- (1) The consolidated emergency service acts project has been ongoing since 2012. The total costs associated with the project are not easily identifiable.
- (2) The 2024–25 budget predominantly funds five FTEs who will be dedicated to coordinating the review and drafting of the legislation, plus their associated costs.
- (3)–(4) The CES act will be released for consultation once drafting has been completed.

WANNEROO RACEWAY — SUPERCARS CHAMPIONSHIP

545. Hon LOUISE KINGSTON to the minister representing the Minister for Tourism:

I refer to this weekend's round of the Supercars Championship held at Wanneroo Raceway and the WA government's partnership with the event.

- (1) When does the current partnership end?
- (2) Is the WA government committed to continuing this partnership and ensuring Wanneroo Raceway remains on the Supercars calendar?

Hon STEPHEN DAWSON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. An answer to this question was unable to be finalised in the required time frame, as it was submitted after the 11.00 am deadline. I ask that the member re-ask this question on the next sitting day, or place it on notice.

WORKCOVER WA — IMPLEMENTATION CONSULTATION PAPER 10: DUST DISEASE

546. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Industrial Relations:

I refer to the *Implementation consultation paper 10: Dust disease*, dated October 2023 in which it was stated —

All submissions will be publicly accessible unless confidentiality is requested.

- (1) How many submissions were received?
- (2) How many requested confidentiality?
- (3) Will the minister table the balance of submissions in fulfilment of the commitment made last year?

Hon MATTHEW SWINBOURN replied:

I thank the member for some notice of the question. I thank him for finally asking it, because it has been clogging up the file for some time.

- (1) A total of eight.
- (2)–(3) This information is publicly available on the WorkCover WA website. For the member's benefit, I table the requested information.

[See paper [3158](#).]

FOREST PRODUCTS COMMISSION — SAWLOGS

547. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the Minister for Forestry:

I refer to sawlogs being produced from mine site clearing operations and the Forest Products Commission's advice that initial sawlogs would likely be sold by auction while we await completion of the request for proposals process.

- (1) What is the date or dates for the auctions?
- (2) Will sales by auction be restricted to businesses that held an FPC supply contract under the previous forest management plan?
- (3) If no to (2), why not?

Hon JACKIE JARVIS replied:

Can I just check the question, because mine has only two questions.

Hon Steve Martin: I have three, but if you give me the two, that will be fine for now.

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question, which is correct as of Wednesday, 8 May 2024.

- (1)–(2) A decision on the timing and type of auction will be dependent on the outcome of the request for proposals process.

PUBLIC SECTOR — STAFF*Question without Notice 524 — Answer*

HON STEPHEN DAWSON (Mining and Pastoral — Minister for Emergency Services) [5.05 pm]: I have an answer for Hon Neil Thomson's question 524, asked earlier. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

-
- (1) Workforce information for 2023-24 will be provided in the State of the WA Government Sector Workforce 2023-24 Report, which will be tabled in Parliament.
- (2)–(3) Over 80 per cent of public servants employed in the public sector since 2017 are frontline workers in health and education.
- The Labor Government is proud to be delivering above population growth increases in critical services, such as WA's public health workforce, which has increased by more than 30 per cent since 2017—well above WA's population growth of 9 per cent during the same period.
- More than 4,000 additional nurses and 1,600 additional doctors have been employed in WA's public health system since WA Labor came to government in 2017. This is in strike contrast to when the Liberals and Nationals were last in government, where the number of nurses and midwives employed decreased by more than 700 between 2015 and 2016.
- It is disappointing that the Liberal Party are still advocating for the decimation of our public service.
-

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 1987 AND 2008*Papers Tabled*

Papers relating to answers to questions on notice were tabled by **Hon Stephen Dawson (Minister for Emergency Services)** and **Hon Matthew Swinbourn (Parliamentary Secretary)**.

MEDICAL CANNABIS — LEGISLATION*Question without Notice 528 — Answer*

HON PIERRE YANG (North Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 pm]: I now have the answer to Hon Dr Brian Walker's question without notice 528. I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I seek leave to have the response incorporated into *Hansard*.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! There is a question before the house.

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

-
- (1) The Medicinal Cannabis and Safe Driving Working Group will review all relevant current legislation including undertaking a jurisdictional scan of relevant legislation.
-

FIREARMS BILL 2024*Discharge of Order and Referral to Standing Committee on Legislation — Motion*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

HON LOUISE KINGSTON (South West) [5.06 pm]: Before we broke for question time, we were talking about the unintended consequences of the Firearms Bill 2024. I will give members an example of why this bill needs to be referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. One of the unintended consequences that has been raised is that no films will be able to be made in Western Australia using a category D firearm under a theatrical licence, despite the requirements that under this licence, live rounds cannot be used. I want members to think about that in terms of the amount of money, tourism and visitation that these films bring to Western Australia. That is a huge unintended consequence.

Let us go to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review report that identifies the Henry VIII clauses.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon LOUISE KINGSTON: It identifies 113 direct regulation-making powers, which I raised earlier. It erodes the sovereignty of the WA Parliament. We need to scrutinise all 113 regulation-making powers and other general regulation-making powers. On a number of occasions, the minister was asked why the bill needed to delegate powers to regulation. On practically every occasion, the minister failed to justify why, but instead provided examples, clearly demonstrating that although the minister may be aware of the contents of the regulations, the Parliament and the community are not, which I have raised over and over again. Simplicity needs to be put into this legislation.

I turn to the government's consultation on the Firearms Bill 2024. Did the government consult in good faith with members of the firearms community? I would argue that it did not because the people who contacted our offices

said that they were frightened in some respects to put in a submission for fear of persecution. Indeed, many of them received a notice saying that their submission had not been received by the Western Australia Police Force. On 8 November 2023, I asked a question of the minister representing the Minister for Police, which reads —

I refer to the government's plan to further restrict firearms licence holders and to the short consultation period given to them to have their say on the government's proposed firearms reforms.

- (1) What methods of communication were used to communicate with all firearms licence holders that the consultation process was underway?
- (2) If one method was by post, when were these letters lodged?
- (3) Were any licence holders uncontactable?
- (4) If so, how many?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied —

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Police. The Western Australia Police Force advises as follows.

- (1) Communication was through engagement with the Western Australian Firearms Community Alliance, which represents individual firearms licence holders, clubs, dealers, collectors and the broader firearms community; media briefings and ministerial statements; the Western Australia Police Force website; the state government website; and media advertisements, including in newspapers and on radio and television.
- (2)–(4) Not applicable.

Considering that most licensed firearm holders, if not all of them, have received numerous communications by post and text over the last three or four months, why were they not told about the submission time? That is another reason why the bill needs to go to the Standing Committee on Legislation.

As I have said, my office, and the offices of everyone on this side of the house, received hundreds and hundreds of emails requesting that this bill be sent to the legislation committee. Information has been drip-fed through the briefings and many questions have not been answered.

I want to refer to three people today, one of whom is a champion sporting shooter who suffers from a condition that requires medication. She is extremely concerned that changes to the law will impede her ability to represent Western Australia. Members opposite might say no, that will not be the case but, in actual fact, they cannot say that because the bill does not clearly define how that will be managed. An incredible number of people who contacted my office suffer from a disability. As Hon Colin de Grussa said earlier, when the legislation went to committee in the last term of government, the committee identified that it would discriminate against people who are disabled. This is a serious issue, because many of the people who hold lawful firearm licences have a disability. What level of disability will render them unable to hold a firearms licence? These people use firearms as a hobby, and they are connected through that hobby. We always talk about looking after people in regional areas and in the city. It is quite amazing because the majority of licensed firearm owners are in the city. If this is a consequence intended for regional people—another attack on regional people—it will not work. In fact, it will backfire because the majority of those people live in the city. They enjoy coming out to the regions to have lawful firearms experiences in myriad ways.

Unfortunately, I will not have enough time to read the email from the second person who contacted me. Basically, he said that his guns are worth around \$5 000 to \$6 000, so he will not relinquish them. He asked why he should, considering he had met all the requirements under the existing legislation to be able to have them and use them in the way that he chooses to use them under the licence that he holds. He is a member of a local shooting club and holds executive roles at a district level. He said that it is not possible for children under the age of 18 to have a firearms licence, so, historically, adults have purchased additional guns for their children to compete with at a local and state level. How is that going to be managed under this legislation? It will be another unintended consequence of this bill and is another reason that it needs to go to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Children are taught by their parents how to use firearms, which can lead to them becoming Australian champions. This legislation will significantly affect that. He also pointed out that these clubs operate on the goodwill of volunteers. Another unintended consequence of this bill is that the impost on volunteers is going to be unmanageable. That is just not fair. All of us who are involved in voluntary organisations know the amount of work involved in running them. At the very least, this bill needs to go to the legislation committee to ensure that we do not impede the ability of people to connect, affect people who suffer from mental illness or impact people who run these clubs by them having to continually fill out more and more paperwork.

In summary—I will be very quick—the government has created the need for this referral. It has failed to provide evidence on request and has continually demonstrated a lack of evidence. The minister refuses to justify the regulatory powers that will be enshrined in the legislation. There are so many questions, many of which cannot be answered in a timely manner due to operational priorities. If that is the case, it is clear that we need more time to scrutinise

the minister and the Western Australia Police Force. Clearly, we need to get the minister back in, as he is the only person who seems to know what will be in the regulations, which are referred to in the bill more than 113 times. I implore the government to consider sending this bill to the legislation committee so that it can be right.

HON WILSON TUCKER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.18 pm]: In the couple of minutes that remain, I rise to support the motion to refer the Firearms Bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation. Given that I have only a couple of minutes left and there is a second reading contribution still to go, I will not get into the weeds, but I think there has to be a really comprehensive reason from the government as to why this bill should not go to the legislation committee. We have seen an e-petition with 32 000 signatures, which I think is a WA record. I am happy to be proven wrong on that point. For any petition, 32 000 signatures is a compelling number. I know that a number does not mean anything, but a substantial number of people took the time to express their view that this bill should be referred to the committee for it to have a comprehensive look at it. I have not heard any compelling reasons why this should not happen. At a later stage, I will go into some of the reasons why the government has not previously referred bills.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA, INTERSEXISM AND TRANSPHOBIA

Statement

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [5.19 pm]: I rise tonight to speak about the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia, which is tomorrow, 17 May. It marks the anniversary of the day the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from the international classification of diseases in 1990.

IDAHOBIT raises awareness about discrimination and violence faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people around the world. It seeks to challenge discrimination and prejudice based on sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex variations, and calls for an end to discrimination in all its forms.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their continuing support of their LGBTIQ+ constituents, and I am very proud to see a number of them wearing rainbow ribbons. Everyone deserves to be their true self and to live openly without fear of violence or discrimination. Unfortunately, as I have said before, we still have a long, long way to go before everyone feels safe to live their lives openly. I will not run through the statistics, but we all know that LGBTIQ+ Australians are still subject to homophobia, biphobia, intersexism and transphobia, and the figures are very dire.

Last year when I rose to speak about IDAHOBIT, I said that apparently the biggest problem facing our kids at the time was drag queen story time—not insecure work, not cost-of-living pressures, not climate action.

This year, things have moved on, and now puberty blockers are being targeted. I note that the Member for Vasse and her Liberal Party released a policy, which might be its first health policy, to block puberty blockers. The WA Liberals website says —

A Western Australian Liberal Government will ban the use of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormone treatments and surgical intervention for children under the age of 16 for the purpose of gender transition.

Further down the page it says —

“Appropriate, compassionate, comprehensive and accessible psychotherapeutic support must be our first priority for them,” ...

This particular phrase greatly concerns me, as we know that some members of our community believe that the best way to deal with same-sex attraction, gender diversity or transgenderism is to pray. I sincerely hope that is not the direction of that policy. This same website also references *The Cass review: Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people* as a justification for the policy. I strongly encourage the member for Vasse to read the review in its entirety. The review was undertaken over a four-year period in the United Kingdom, and we know that the health delivery under National Health System in the UK is very different from the standard of health care delivered in WA. Although the Cass review cautioned against the use of puberty blockers, they are not banned in the UK as the Liberals claim, and clinicians must exercise caution when administering them.

I support the Minister for Health, who said —

“The decision to use puberty blockers is rare and not made lightly. The decision is made between clinicians and families, after a comprehensive mental health and multidisciplinary team assessment,” ...

“It is not appropriate for politicians to interfere in clinical decisions.”

In a speech to the house earlier today, Hon Neil Thomson talked about the influence of extremists in political parties. Later in the day, we heard from the Hon Tjorn Sibma on the motion on the International Day of Living Together

in Peace. He said that we “should embrace community in all its diversity”. I agree, but those in glass houses should not throw stones. We know that a growing number of individuals have been preselected to run for the Liberal Party for 2025 who hold harmful views of the LGBTQIA+ community. I do not need to remind members that the LGBTQIA+ community are voters too.

I have spoken in this house before on the comments made by councillor Thomas Brough, who tried to connect minor-attracted people to the plus in the LGBTQIA+ community. At the time, the member for Vasse called those comments bizarre and not appropriate, and I agree. However, we now find that he is the Liberal Party’s candidate for Albany at the 2025 state election. This is of great concern to the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly in Albany. Yesterday he apologised by saying that he acknowledged the way he had approached this issue had caused distress for some people; those “some people”—the LGBTQIA+ community—who he failed to even mention in his apology, which was, quite frankly, limited and weak.

We know that he is not the only member of the Liberals 2025 team who holds harmful views. There is also the Liberal candidate for Dawesville, Owen Mulder, who claimed that same-sex couples are a direct violation of “God’s law”, and he is just one of many former Christian Democrats and Australian Christians running for the Liberal party in 2025. Do they hold those views now? How many preselected Liberal candidates share those views? We deserve to know.

We also know that Hon Nick Goiran holds deeply conservative religious views, and that many preselected candidates are aligned with him. Again I ask: do they share those views? We deserve to know. I know that not everyone of faith shares those views, such as the good people from Equal Voices, who describe themselves as, according to my notes —

... LGBTQIA+ people with our allies connecting, collaborating, and advocating across Australia on matters of inclusion. We are supporting Australian churches and society in becoming fully affirming which means we acknowledge, respect, utilise, and celebrate the gifts of all people, regardless of sexuality, gender identity or intersex status.

I agree with them; we should respect and celebrate all people. I hope that the Member for Vasse will accept the invitation from the Busselton Pride Alliance, and listen to the stories of both trans people and families with trans children in her own electorate, because there is genuine fear for the review that she has proposed.

As I said, today is IDAHOBIT Day—the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism, and Transphobia. I will always call out homophobia, biphobia, intersexism and transphobia, and I hope that all members in this place will join me in doing so.

RANFORD ROAD BRIDGE

Statement

HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan) [5.26 pm]: One of the most important things we do as members of Parliament is engage with the communities and people we represent. Tonight I rise to make a statement on the Ranford Road Bridge development in Canning Vale. It has recently come to my attention, as a representative of the South Metropolitan Region, that in areas like Canning Vale, Leeming and Jandakot there is a fair amount of frustration about works being completed on the Ranford Road Bridge. This development is a vital piece of infrastructure that will unlock the area to all the opportunities that will come with a brand new train station, as part of the Thornlie–Cockburn Link. This is a huge investment for the area that will transform the way people get around. It will unlock business and housing opportunities, and faster commute times for people travelling into the city and across the south metropolitan corridor.

But building this critical piece of infrastructure is taking some time, and has required some disruption to normal driving speeds and patterns. Over the last few months, I have heard people’s frustrations with this. I have had constituents contact my office to raise concerns; I have had people drawing my attention to this issue online; and I know that my colleagues Terry Healy, MLA, and Yaz Mubarakai, MLA, have had similar inquiries. It is important for us to reflect those voices here. People have raised concerns about speed limits, lane changes and markings, signage, and traffic delays. However, it is one thing to hear the concerns of our constituents, it is another thing to do something about them.

I am pleased to update the house that, following these inquiries, I have been able to raise these matters in meetings with the City of Canning to make sure that appropriate signage is in place; I have contacted the local Metronet team to pass on these concerns and seek advice on the best way to respond; and I have also raised this matter directly with the Minister for Transport’s office.

I drove through the intersection recently, and it was pleasing to see that changes have been made and that the infrastructure is nearing completion. I am even more pleased to say that the latest advice from the minister’s office is that the bridge is expected to open in a matter of weeks. I know that this will not fix all the issues in the area, and there is still important work to be done, but I hope that this important update will provide people in the area with some level of assurance that their concerns are being heard and acted upon, and that the long-term benefit to the community in the decades to come will be worth it in the long run.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE FORCE*Statement*

HON DAN CADDY (North Metropolitan) [5.29 pm]: Earlier today during debate, we heard very dangerous and disturbing rhetoric from One Nation that questioned or called into question the integrity of the Western Australia Police Force. That is simply appalling and not acceptable. These comments are similar to comments that were heard before the horrible scenes witnessed after the last presidential election in the United States.

I rise tonight to assure all serving police officers, from Col Blanch down to the newest recruits, that we—most of us—in this chamber both support and respect police and thank them for the very difficult job that they do. I distance myself from the appalling comments of Hon Ben Dawkins, whose rhetoric, as I said, was incredibly disturbing.

FUTURE GAS STRATEGY*Statement*

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.30 pm]: I rise tonight to speak briefly about an issue that has been big at both federal and state levels in the last week, and that is the question of gas and our economy. On the very day that Western Australia brought down its budget, the federal Minister for Resources, Madeleine King, who is, of course, also from WA, announced federal Labor's future gas strategy. It was certainly described by some in the media as a strategy very much aligned with the gas strategy of WA Labor. In fact, I think some went so far as to say that it could have been very much written by WA Labor. Perhaps damningly, others described it as being spookily reminiscent of Scott Morrison's gas-fired recovery.

I raise this issue on the basis of trying to cut through what has been an increasingly polarised debate about gas. I will point to what I hope can be seen as a sensible, evidence-based way forward to talk about gas in our economy. Last week, we saw documents launched, and rhetoric and policy announcements coming out of the government. I point to a recent announcement about opening up the Kimberley, encouraging fracking and gas development in the Kimberley. Instead of these kinds of approaches, I hope that there is an evidence-based, sensible middle road, which can only be seen as backing in what we need to do from an energy security and climate perspective and acknowledges that this cannot be a way forward if we are serious about addressing climate change.

I want to start with something really important. I am not saying “no gas” and I am not saying “turn off the taps tomorrow”; that is often where this debate quickly degenerates to. I think no-one is sensibly saying that. People need to be talking about gas in a way that is about bringing gas down. There are two key parts of that. The first part of that is domestic emissions. We have approaches that see gas growing. In fact, proposals like the “use it or lose it” proposal that demand gas expansion to 2050—or, if Woodside has its way, to 2070 and beyond—are entirely inconsistent with any climate modelling and any sense of a safe climate, unless people believe in some strange fantasy world in which we can offset it using carbon capture and storage and manage it that way. There is no sense of reality in that being a credible or even economically affordable way forward. Given the reality we have now, which is that carbon capture and storage is still unproven and in many places unworkable, and given that offsets are not really offsetting—in fact, they should be used only sparingly when nothing else can be done—surely the rational thing we should do is acknowledge that, although some gas will remain in hard to abate sectors, gas overwhelmingly needs to come down in our domestic economy.

Of course, the places to start that are not radical and they are not hard. They are about getting gas out of our homes, electrifying everything we possibly can and running it off renewable energy. Fundamentally, we should be moving our electricity grid as quickly as we can to one that is 80 or 90 per cent based on renewables—as close as we can get to 100 per cent. Again, it still acknowledges that there will be some small amounts of gas peaking that we need for days that are cloudy, but they are not common and small amounts of gas while we increase our storage level and battery storage is important. Domestically we can do that. I appreciate that there will be some gas used in processing and some used for small amounts of electricity and in other parts of the sector, but it will be a diminishing amount. We are not talking about expanding it.

The elephant in the room is how we respond to gas in terms of exports. Australia, and WA especially, is in many ways caught between the demands of Asia and the Pacific in this regard. Our Pacific partners desperately want the world, including Australia, to bring down emissions. Some—not all—of our Asian neighbours have been slow to decarbonise. I will call out countries like Japan that, frankly, we should be calling out and saying, “You need to get on and get your own decarbonisation in place rather than relying on gas.” As the CSIRO report states, gas in Asia is displacing renewables and is slowing down the transition. It is not part of the transition; it is slowing it down. Although we should be a reliable export partner, as a state and a nation we have an important role to play in demanding that our gas partners match the Paris obligations to which they have committed and that they bring down their emissions and are seriously and properly transitioning—not putting their foot on the brake and walking away from climate transition, relying largely on Western Australian gas. We can do that while being a credible trading partner and, one would hope and expect, providing gas in smaller and smaller amounts over time—not growing amounts. Frankly, that is at the heart of both Minister King's and the WA government's approach to gas.

Both of those are entirely incompatible, but there is a responsible way forward. That responsible way forward is not around growing gas between now and 2050 and beyond; it is around reducing gas while still acknowledging that it has a place.

For me, this is the missing sensible conversation that we need to be having in this state and essentially around speeding up the transition, because we have not seen it. We are not seeing that transition taken seriously. We are not seeing that transition happening in our homes. We are not seeing that transition happening quickly enough in our transport or in our electricity feed, and we are certainly not seeing it happening with our trading partners. It is time that we as a country and as a state showed some leadership. We punch above our weight on climate and energy globally. As a state, we are one of the biggest gas exporters on the planet. If we were a country, we would be the third biggest exporter. We matter. We often think we are a small one-percenter, but if we take our exports into consideration, we matter; five to six per cent of global emissions can be associated with Australia.

I hope that by putting this forward as an acknowledgement of the troubling rhetoric that came out of Canberra, rhetoric that is often said had its home here in WA, it is clear that we need to do better, because I do not want our home to be the place that slows down and is the anchor on the transition that needs to happen. We need to pivot that and get serious about the rhetoric we hear around us being a renewable energy superpower and pivot to that quickly, because that really is the sustainable future for Western Australia.

BIOLOGICAL SEX AND GENDER IDENTITY

Statement

HON BEN DAWKINS (South West) [5.39 pm]: I want to reflect this evening on a quote from Walter Scott from the late 1700s, would you believe.

Hon Dan Caddy: It's Sir Walter Scott.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: Is it? Thank you, Hon Dan Caddy. One particularly famous quote was "O, what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive". This government is setting out to deceive and mislead our children into thinking it is possible to change their biological sex by a 20-minute visit to the GP. This government is abusing our children by misleading them and setting in place a chain of events that those children may later regret. I have spoken to doctors about that. Of course, I am referring to the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Sex or Gender Changes) Bill 2024. It is disgusting for a government to repeatedly lie to children and tell them it is possible to change their sex. I am as well qualified as anybody, being a parent of two teenage children. I have three nieces at the moment. Within that group, there are a couple of people questioning their sexuality and so on, and they are very vulnerable. We know children are vulnerable at this stage so we should not be misleading them. We should be honest and factual. We are putting in place a chain of events that we know people will end up regretting.

The niece of a friend of mine had a hysterectomy the other day at the age of 20 years because of the perception that she could change her biological sex, and this government is perpetuating that myth. There is a need for treatment for people with genuine gender dysphoria, and that is in place at Perth Children's Hospital. We certainly do not need the government weighing into this by changing legislation in the way that it is with the birth certificate changes, abolishing the Gender Reassignment Board and making so-called gender change possible with a 20-minute trip to the GP. It is a little like when people talk about a gateway drug. If a 16-year-old knows that she can ask her parents for permission to change her biological sex, not gender, on the birth certificate, what will she be asking her parents for in a couple of years or when she becomes an adult? Will she be looking for a hysterectomy because she has been misled down that path? Surely honesty is always the best policy, I would have thought.

We know how vulnerable young people are and we know how much regret —

Hon Peter Foster: It's fewer than one per cent.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: It is about to get a lot worse with the government putting in place this disgraceful legislation. Several members interjected.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt: Have you ever spoken to members of this community? Have you ever sat down and spoken to them?

Hon BEN DAWKINS: There is no issue with the trans community. Genuine gender dysphoria is already treated within our existing system and there is the Gender Reassignment Board for that purpose. We are setting about here to deny biology and lie to people, including vulnerable children. That is who I am interested in—children. I have spoken to people who support people with gender reassignment regret, if you like, or whatever that is called—transition regret—so I know it exists out there. There is a lot more to come in this space. Obviously, with women's rights, the LG —

Hon Jackie Jarvis: Women's rights—that's a crazy idea!

Hon Peter Foster: How did you vote on the abortion reforms again? Against it. You don't support the right of women to choose so why are you talking about —

Hon BEN DAWKINS: The change from 20 to 23 weeks' gestation is nothing to do with women's rights. There was already abortion available before the government changed it from 20 to 23 weeks. There was already abortion available and there still is now.

In the last few weeks, a number of interest groups have been in touch with my office regarding the intrusion of biological men into women's spaces, as well as the LGB lobby groups —

Hon Peter Foster: Who are anti-trans—from the UK. They are anti-trans. I know them very well.

Hon BEN DAWKINS: They are here in Australia, as well, and they have a few things to say about the TQI, Hon Peter Foster. I do not know why everyone seems to think that there is a uniform group of people, the LBTQI, when actually the LBGs have some serious problems with what the Ts are up to in terms of trying to intrude into women's spaces and the like. I will have more to say about that in the coming weeks.

House adjourned at 5.45 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

FINANCE — HEAD CONTRACTOR FINANCIAL RELIEF

1987. Hon Steve Martin to the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the Head Contractor Relief Scheme announced in May 2022, and I ask:

- (a) how many applications have been received under the scheme;
- (b) how many applications have been successful;
- (c) what is the total amount of relief paid out under the scheme; and
- (d) will the Minister please table a list of the projects assisted by the scheme?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) 177.
- (b) 171.
- (c) As at 1 May 2024, approximately \$22.4 million had been paid out under the Scheme.
- (d) [See tabled paper no [3159](#).]

ENERGY — KING ROCKS WIND FARM

1988. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the King Rocks Wind Farm, and I ask:

- (a) has construction begun:
 - (i) if yes to (a), when did construction begin; and
 - (ii) if no to (a), why not;
- (b) has there been any changes to the timeline for completion of this project;
- (c) when is construction expected to be finished; and
- (d) when is the King Rocks Wind Farm expected to commence operation on the South West Interconnected System?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (a)–(d) Construction of the Kings Rock Wind Farm is due to commence in 2025 and is expected to be operational in 2026.

EMERGENCY SERVICES — WATER TANKS

1989. Hon Martin Aldridge to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the State Government’s \$5.8 billion WA Recovery Plan, of which \$15 million was set aside for emergency services initiatives, and in relation to the \$2 million two-year funding initiative announced in December 2020 to build 117 new water tanks to support Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, I ask:

- (a) how many of the 117 water tanks have been constructed;
- (b) if not all, which ones are yet to be constructed; and
- (c) if not all, what is the reason for the delay?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) advises:

- (a) 106 water tanks have been constructed.

(b)	(c)
Shire of East Pilbara – Nullagine BFB x1	Grant withdrawn (post approval) as Shire determined not required.
Shire of Esperance – Condingup BFB x1	Local government yet to commence due to staffing issues.
Shire of Esperance – Mt Beaumont BFB x1	Local government yet to commence due to staffing issues

Shire of Mundaring – Wooroloo BFB x1	Grant withdrawn (post approval) as proposed location of the water tank interfered with other future works, including access.
Shire of Northam – Wundowie x 2	Local government is exploring additional strategic sites.
Shire of Toodyay – Morangup BFB x1	Local government is yet to commence.

A total 113 water tanks received approval under the WA Recovery Plan. The figure of 117 includes several incorrectly duplicated projects.

TREASURY AND FINANCE — GOVERNMENT SECTOR — HYPOTHECATED ACCOUNTS

1990. Hon Neil Thomson to the minister representing the Treasurer:

I refer to hypothecated accounts within the General Government Sector (not including Government utilities) that are neither funded by the Consolidated Account, or are classified as a Special Purpose Account, and I ask:

- (a) will the Treasurer please table a full list of those accounts and their account balance as at mid-year review?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

- (a) Treasury does not maintain records of hypothecated accounts held by agencies that are neither funded by the Consolidated Account or classified as a Special Purpose Account.

The main hypothecated accounts are classified as Special Purpose Accounts, which are outlined in Appendix 5 of the 2023–24 Mid-Year Review.

POLICE — STAFF — GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT

1991. Hon Peter Collier to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer the Minister to the response to question without notice 183, on Thursday 14 March 2024, and I ask:

- (a) what is the status and role of each of the additional 19 staff; and
 (b) what is the breakdown of the \$2.9 million spent so far to ‘support WA police’s 950 additional officers’?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

The Western Australia Police Force advise:

- (a) The employment status of all 19 positions are permanent full-time

	Role of Positions
1.	Employee Claims Officer
2.	Payroll Processing Officer
3.	Senior Personnel & Payroll Officer
4.	Claims Management Officer
5.	Insurance Governance
6.	Procurement Officer
7.	Finance Partner
8.	Travel/Purchasing Card
9.	Senior Project Leader
10.	Senior Project Leader
11..	Senior Technical Officer
12.	Clinical/Forensic Psychologist
13.	Senior Contract Performance Manager
14.	Contract Manager
15.	Contract Manager
16.	Contract Manager
17.	Contract Manager
18.	Contract Manager
19.	Senior Business Analyst

- (b) \$2.9 million comprises of:

Salaries	\$1.8 million
Superannuation	\$0.2 million
Operating costs	\$0.9 million
Total	\$2.9 million

SYNERGY — SOLAR PANELS — CREDITS

1992. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the energy credits received by customers of Synergy with solar panels who sell energy back into the grid, and I ask:

- (a) if the customer's account is in credit, what options are available to them to access their \$400 cost of living energy rebate;
- (b) if the customer's account is likely to remain in credit, how can they access their rebate;
- (c) can the credits in one electricity account be used to pay a different account; and
- (d) if no to (c), why not?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

This question should be directed to the Minister for Energy.

SYNERGY — SOLAR PANELS — CREDITS

1993. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the energy credits received by customers of Synergy with solar panels who sell energy back into the grid, and I ask:

- (a) if the customer's account is in credit, what options are available to them to access their \$400 cost of living energy rebate;
- (b) if the customer's account is likely to remain in credit, how can they access their rebate;
- (c) can the credits in one electricity account be used to pay a different account; and
- (d) if no to (c), why not?

Hon Darren West replied:

It is assumed that the question refers to Synergy residential customers who are registered for the Distributed Energy Buyback Scheme (DEBS).

- (a) Since 2020, Synergy has delivered three Household Electricity offsets on behalf of the State Government. DEBS customers have been eligible for all these payments in the same manner as non-DEBS customers. If a residential DEBS customer's account credit exceeds \$100, the customer may request that Synergy pay out the balance, in accordance with the DEBS Terms and Conditions. Household Electricity offsets are not eligible to be paid out in this manner. It should be noted that the Household Electricity offsets will be used for billing purposes prior to any credit from DEBS.
- (b) As above.
- (c) DEBS and Household Electricity credits can be transferred to a new account under the same name.
- (d) Nil.

FINANCE — SEPTIC AND LIQUID MANAGEMENT CONTRACT — SOUTHERN REGIONS

1994. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the contract to provide septic and liquid management in Government assets in the Great Southern, Upper Great Southern and South West, that expired in June 2022, but was extended until October 2023, and to question on notice 1738, and I ask:

- (a) is the tender listed anywhere on Tenders WA;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) was having Aboriginal directors of the tendering company a requirement for successful tender;
- (d) if yes to (c), why and under what policy;
- (e) would a company having Aboriginal directors have had a cost advantage in the tender process, and if so, what was that advantage;

- (f) can all three regions be awarded to a single contractor; and
- (g) if yes to (f), has this always been the case?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) No.
- (d) Not applicable.
- (e) The Department of Finance includes an Aboriginal business and employment tendering preference in its works contracts which provides for a price preference for evaluation purposes. This is applied at 10 per cent and capped at a maximum of \$250,000.
- (f) Yes.
- (g) Yes.

TENDERS WA — CONTRACTS

1995. Hon Peter Collier to the Minister for Finance:

- (1) Since 1 January 2021, has Eastside Concrete, Eastside Haulage or Abandoned Art received any Western Australian Government contracts through Tenders WA or any other means?
- (2) If yes to (1), what was the nature of the contract?
- (3) If yes to (1), when was it awarded?
- (4) If yes to (1), what was the total value of the contract?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (1) The Department of Finance has not awarded a contract of any value to the companies in question during the specified period. A broader search of Tenders WA has not identified any other contracts across government, valued at over \$50,000, which is the threshold at which contract award information must be published.
- (2)–(4) Not applicable.

SCHOOLS — SOLAR PANELS — SOUTHERN REGIONS

1996. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Education:

I refer to solar panels on Government schools in the South West and Great Southern, and I ask:

- (a) are school solar panels cleaned;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) what contracts exist for the cleaning of school solar panels, and how are they referenced;
- (d) are any contracts for the cleaning of solar panels conducted through Tenders WA;
- (e) how are school solar panels assessed for dirt and debris:
 - (i) who does this assessment;
- (f) is the output of school solar panels monitored and recorded;
- (g) if yes to (f), has there been any decline over time; and
- (h) please quantify any such decline?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) Solar panels installed by the Department of Education are included in the routine maintenance schedule for cleaning. Schools that have installed their own solar systems, or are not included in the current routine maintenance schedule, can request to have their system included.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) There are currently three routine maintenance contracts for solar panel cleaning and related services, published on the Tenders WA website as follows:
 1. FINW0163922 – routine maintenance for residual current devices (RCDs) exit and emergency lights testing and tagging of portable electrical appliances and solar systems – various government sites – Mid-West region – awarded to Elite Electrical Contracting

2. FINW0572523 – provision of routine maintenance for solar photovoltaic (PV) systems – various government sites – Wheatbelt region – awarded to Essential Energy Services
 3. FINW0719022 – provision of routine maintenance for solar PV systems – Finance – awarded to Infinity Electrical and Solar (registered Aboriginal business).
- (d) Yes, as above.
- (e) By visual inspection.
- (i) A suitably qualified contractor
- (f) No.
- (g) Not applicable.
- (h) Not applicable.

GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS — SOLAR PANELS

1997. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Minister for Finance:

I refer to the maintenance of solar panels on Government buildings, and I ask:

- (a) are the solar panels on Government buildings cleaned;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) if yes to (a), by whom;
- (d) what contracts exist for the cleaning of solar panels on Government buildings;
- (e) are such contracts managed through a Tenders WA process;
- (f) if yes to (e), please identify which specific tenders and contracts are involved;
- (g) is the performance of solar panels on Government buildings monitored and recorded;
- (h) if yes to (g), by whom; and
- (i) if yes to (g), is the output of the panels declining as time goes by?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a)–(i) In the majority of cases, individual government agencies are responsible for the management and performance of the buildings they occupy either directly as the asset owner, or indirectly as the party to a lease agreement. As such the performance of their solar panels and/or the related contractual arrangements and performance testing are best directed to the relevant portfolio.

Where a government agency has requested Finance to arrange for its solar panels to be cleaned, Finance may use a range of contractual frameworks to facilitate the service. For example, for metropolitan sites, Finance may procure the services via its outsourced maintenance services arrangement with Programmed Facility Management (PFM).

For regional sites, where the service is arranged directly by Finance with its trade contractors, Finance will procure the services in accordance with the requirements of the WA Procurement Rules. In such instances where the contract award value exceeds \$50,000, the details of the procurement, including the contract award value and identity of the successful supplier, will be uploaded to the Tenders WA website.

There are currently three routine maintenance contracts for solar panel cleaning and related services published on the Tenders WA website. They are as follows:

FINW0163922 – routine maintenance for residual current devices (RCDs) exit and emergency lights testing and tagging of portable electrical appliances and solar systems – various government sites – Mid-West region – awarded to Elite Electrical Contracting;

FINW0572523 – provision of routine maintenance for solar photovoltaic (PV) systems – various government sites – Wheatbelt region – awarded to Essential Energy Services;

FINW0719022 – provision of routine maintenance for solar PV systems – Finance – awarded to Infinity Electrical and Solar (registered Aboriginal business).

HEALTH — LEGAL AID WA — GRANTS OF AID

1998. Hon Nick Goiran to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General:

How many individual children, who attended the Gender Diversity Service (Children and Adolescent Health Service), were provided an independent children's lawyer by Legal Aid WA in situations where one or more of the child's parents or guardians did not consent to them undergoing gender affirmation treatment, for each of the following calendar years:

- (a) 2018;

- (b) 2019;
- (c) 2020;
- (d) 2021;
- (e) 2022; and
- (f) 2023?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn replied:

- (a)–(f) Between 2017/2018 and 2022/2023 Financial Years, Legal Aid WA provided 72 grants of legal assistance for an Independent Children’s Lawyer to represent a child in relation to a special medical procedure.

Further information is unable to provided due to confidentiality requirements under the Legal Aid Commission Act 1976 (WA).

ENVIRONMENT — VOGEL–McFERREREN REVIEW

1999. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the *Independent Review of Western Australian Environmental Approvals Processes and Procedures* (Independent Review), and I ask:

- (a) in regard to recommendation 36 of the Independent Review, what justification is provided for the possible removal of the appeal rights under part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act* (EPA);
- (b) is the Minister aware that the current appeals process is very effective in identifying and correcting errors in EPA reports and recommendations;
- (c) is the Minister concerned that recommendations 6, 12 and 14, if implemented, could compromise the independence of the EPA and lead to the public perception that EPA recommendations are based on political considerations rather than on science; and
- (d) why did the Government fail to seek public input on the Independent Review before announcing that it supported all 39 recommendations?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (a)–(b) The State Government is committed to ensuring WA’s environmental approvals process contains an independent review mechanism that is fit for purpose and delivers on the objectives of the EPA. Careful policy consideration of this matter is ongoing.
- (c) The EPA’s function is to provide independent environmental advice to Government. The State Government’s reforms will not impact upon this function.
- (d) The State Government has not announced support for all of the report’s 39 recommendations. The State Government continues to consult with stakeholders as part of its work to implement measures to improve the efficiency of the approvals process while maintaining the highest environmental standards.

ENVIRONMENT — REGIONAL PARKS — GNANGARA AND EAST WANNEROO

2000. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of recommendation M81 of the *System Six Report (1983)*, which recommended the establishment of a regional park covering the Eastern Chain of the Wanneroo Wetlands?
- (2) Is the Minister aware that the State Government committed to establishing the Gngangara Regional Park in November 1996, and released a draft concept plan for this park in May 1999?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that the Gngangara Mound is a vital water resource for the Metropolitan Area, and is also a major habitat for the priority-listed Carnaby’s black cockatoo?
- (4) Why has the Government not honoured this commitment to establish the Gngangara Regional Park?
- (5) What plans does the Government have to establish a regional park to protect the groundwater and biodiversity of the Gngangara Mound?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The draft concept plan released by Government at that time was for a proposed Gngangara Park. Regional Park has a specific meaning in a planning context. The Gngangara Park draft concept plan is a different proposal to the early planning concept for a Lakes of East Wanneroo Regional Park.
- (3) Yes. In 2022, the State Government introduced new measures to protect our groundwater resources in the context of climate change that will help ensure they remain a long-term sustainable source of water and that they continue to support wetlands and other groundwater-dependant ecosystems. Measures included

the release of the 2022 Gngangara groundwater allocation plan to rebalance groundwater use from the Gngangara groundwater system, and changes to the domestic garden bore sprinkler roster. In addition, in 2023, the Government announced that pine harvesting in Gngangara State Forest will come to an end to preserve habitat for the threatened black cockatoo.

- (4) The Gngangara Park was a commitment by a previous State Government made in the late 1990's and there has been significant changes since that time associated with groundwater, land planning and management. There is no Government commitment to establish a Gngangara Regional Park.
- (5) In regard to the planning concept for a Lakes of East Wanneroo Regional Park, wetlands within the Western Australian Planning Commission's East Wanneroo District Structure Plan area are being considered for inclusion into public open space as part of future structure planning processes. This is in addition to many of the wetlands that are already within Parks and Recreation Reserves.

ENVIRONMENT — REGIONAL PARK — PEEL INLET AND HARVEY ESTUARY

2001. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment:

- (1) Is the Minister aware that the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) recommended in the *System Six Report (1983)* that a regional park be established to protect the foreshores of the Peel Inlet and Harvey Estuary (recommendations C50 and C51)?
- (2) If no to (1), why not?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that the State Government accepted these recommendations in principle in May 1984?
- (4) If no to (3), why not?
- (5) Is the Minister aware that planning commenced for the Peel Regional Park in 1993?
- (6) If no to (5), why not?
- (7) Is the Minister aware that the Gallop Government committed to establishing the Peel Regional Park?
- (8) If no to (7), why not?
- (9) Why has the Peel Regional Park not been established more than 40 years after it was proposed by the EPA and endorsed by the Government?
- (10) Can the Minister provide a timeline for the establishment of the Peel Regional Park?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (1)–(2) Yes.
- (3)–(4) Yes.
- (5)–(6) Yes. Planning for the proposed Peel Regional Park progressed through the report *Peel Regional Park – Proposal for Establishment, Administration and Use* (former Department of Planning and Urban Development, 1993), and was further detailed in the *Inner Peel Region Structure Plan* in 1997.
- (7)–(8) Yes.
- (9)–(10) The current and previous governments have continued to implement strategic elements of the Peel Regional Park – Proposal for Establishment, Administration and Use report. Most of the areas identified by the EPA in 1983 under recommendations C50 and C51 of the *System Six Report* are now lands being managed as nature reserves by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions or are reserved freehold State of WA lands managed by other government agencies for future addition to the nature reserves. The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has a role through the land tenure assembly process, however any decision to establish a regional park is a matter for Government consideration.

ENVIRONMENT — STATE PLANNING POLICY 2.9 PLANNING FOR WATER

2002. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the draft *State Planning Policy 2.9 Planning for Water* (SPP 2.9), that was released for public comment in August 2021, and I ask:

- (a) has the Western Australian Planning Commission completed its review of the public comments on SPP 2.9;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) has the Minister received the final version of SPP 2.9;
- (d) if no to (c), why not;
- (e) will the Minister release the final version of SPP 2.9 to the public;
- (f) if yes to (e), when; and
- (g) if no to (e), why not?

Hon Darren West replied:

Please refer to Legislative Council Question on Notice 2003.

ENVIRONMENT — STATE PLANNING POLICY 2.9 PLANNING FOR WATER

2003. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Planning:

I refer to the draft *State Planning Policy 2.9 Planning for Water* (SPP 2.9), that was released for public comment in August 2021 and ask:

- (a) has the Western Australian Planning Commission completed its review of the public comments on SPP 2.9;
- (b) if no to (a), why not;
- (c) has the Minister received the final version of SPP 2.9;
- (d) if no to (c), why not;
- (e) will the Minister release the final version of SPP 2.9 to the public;
- (f) if yes to (e), when; and
- (g) if no to (e), why not?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (a)–(g) The Western Australian Planning Commission has considered the submissions received following advertising and has provided a recommendation to the Minister for Planning. The recommendation is under consideration by Government.

ENVIRONMENT — WETLAND BUFFERS

2004. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Planning:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the *Wetlands Conservation Policy for Western Australia* which was published by the State Government in 1997?
- (2) Is the Minister aware of initiative 1.9 of this policy which states, “the Government will develop guidelines based on ecological grounds for provision of buffers between proposed developments and wetlands”?
- (3) Is the Minister aware that the Western Australian Planning Commission released for public comment, in December 2005, a document entitled, *Guideline for the Determination of Wetland Buffer Requirements*?
- (4) Given the Government’s recently expressed desire to expedite urban development and streamline environmental approvals, why has this guideline remained unfinished and unpublished for more than 18 years?
- (5) What plans does the Minister have to finalise this important planning document?
- (6) If none, in reference to (5), why not?
- (7) When will the final guidelines for wetland buffers be published and made publicly available?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (1)–(3) Yes.
- (4)–(7) The draft *Guideline for Determination of Wetland Buffer Requirements* and a range of other policy and guidance documents across the Government guide the determination of wetland buffers in land use planning decision making.

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, on behalf of the Western Australian Planning Commission, is leading the development of a ‘Position Statement: Wetlands’ and ‘Wetlands Guidelines’, which are being prepared in collaboration with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

Public consultation drafts will be released in due course.

KEYSTART — LOANS

2005. Hon Steve Martin to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to Keystart, and I ask:

- (a) for each of the following years, how many Keystart loans have been applied for, per each loan type:
 - (i) 2019–20;
 - (ii) 2020–21;
 - (iii) 2021–22;

- (iv) 2022–23; and
- (v) 2023–24 (to date);
- (b) for each of the years in (a), how many Keystart loans were approved, per each loan type;
- (c) for each of the years in (a), how many requests for hardship were received, per loan type;
- (d) for each of the years in (a), how many customers were 30 days or more in arrears, per each loan type;
- (e) for each of the years in (a), how many customers were 90 days or more in arrears, per each loan type;
- (f) for each of the years in (a), how many repossessions occurred, per each loan type;
- (g) for each of the years in (a), what was the average monthly repayment as of 30 June, per each loan type;
- (h) for each of the years in (a), how many loans were active, per each loan type;
- (i) for each of the years in (a), what was the total value of loans, per each loan type;
- (j) for each of the years in (a), how many loans transitioned to other lenders, per each loan type; and
- (k) for each of the years in (a), what percentage of total Keystart loans transitioned to other lenders that year?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (a) (i)–(v) Keystart has supported more than 120,000 Western Australians to achieve their home ownership goals since it was established in 1989.

As a transitional lender, Keystart exists to enable more Western Australians to get into the housing market and provides options to flexibly transition out of Keystart or make other arrangements.

The size of the loan portfolio expands and contracts in line with the market, that is when property prices are rising, customers transition sooner. Over the last two years due to significant increases in equity, more customers have successfully transitioned to a traditional lender than ever before.

New loans to first home buyers have been affected by an unprecedented 13 increases in the Official Cash Rate by the Reserve Bank of Australia in 18 months.

The table below represents total number of Keystart loans across the loan types of ‘Low Deposit’, ‘Shared Ownership’, ‘Access’, ‘Aboriginal Home Loans’, ‘Rural’, and ‘Urban Connect’ for the years requested.

As at date	Total
30/06/2019	3,459
30/06/2020	4,532
30/06/2021	5,680
30/06/2022	3,315
30/04/2024	611

- (b) The below table represents the total loans approved across the loan types outlined in ‘Part a’ for the years requested.

As at date	Total
30/06/2019	2,294
30/06/2020	2,819
30/06/2021	3,981
30/06/2022	2,520
30/06/2023	949
30/04/2024	363

- (c) The below table represents the total number of hardship requests received across the loan types outlined in ‘Part a’ for the years requested.

As at date	Total*
30/06/2019	691
30/06/2020	3,592
30/06/2021	1,911
30/06/2022	1,627

30/06/2023	1,719
30/04/2024	1,388

Includes withdrawn and declined requests, and multiple requests from the same customers.

- (d) The below table represents the total number of accounts that were 30 days or more in arrears across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Total
30/06/2019	218
30/06/2020	221
30/06/2021	522
30/06/2022	399
30/06/2023	941
31/03/2024	748

Keystart is required to comply with the terms of the National Credit Code in relation to customers who are experiencing financial difficulty.

Keystart additionally offers a range of support services for customers experiencing hardship including case management, free financial tools and guides, financial coaching services, free counselling services, individual case management, as well as implementing a hardship assistance policy to allow further time for customers to adjust their finances and get back on track with payments.

Additionally, Keystart can discuss a range of options, tailored for each customer's unique situation that may include a temporary reduction in repayments and extending the loan term.

- (e) The below table represents the total number of accounts that were 90 days or more in arrears across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Total
30/06/2019	93
30/06/2020	115
30/06/2021	221
30/06/2022	199
30/06/2023	567
31/03/2024	492

Keystart is required to comply with the terms of the National Credit Code in relation to customers who are experiencing financial difficulty.

Keystart additionally offers a range of support services for customers experiencing hardship including case management, free financial tools and guides, financial coaching services, free counselling services, individual case management, as well as implementing a hardship assistance policy to allow further time for customers to adjust their finances and get back on track with payments.

Additionally, Keystart can discuss a range of options, tailored for each customer's unique situation that may include a temporary reduction in repayments and extending the loan term.

- (f) The below table represents the total number of accounts that were classified as mortgagee in possession across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Total
30/06/2019	147
30/06/2020	122
30/06/2021	69
30/06/2022	33
30/06/2023	21
31/03/2024	12

Includes customer-initiated mortgagee in possessions.

Keystart is required to comply with the terms of the National Credit Code in relation to customers who are experiencing financial difficulty.

Keystart additionally offers a range of support services for customers experiencing hardship including case management, free financial tools and guides, financial coaching services, free counselling services, individual case management, as well as implementing a hardship assistance policy to allow further time for customers to adjust their finances and get back on track with payments.

Additionally, Keystart can discuss a range of options, tailored for each customer's unique situation that may include a temporary reduction in repayments and extending the loan term.

- (g) The below table represents the average minimum monthly repayment across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Low Deposit A\$	Shared Ownership A\$	Access A\$	Aboriginal Home Loans A\$	Rural A\$	Urban Connect A\$
30/06/2019	1,873	1,007	677	1,185	2,796	0
30/06/2020	1,731	942	653	1,140	2,670	0
30/06/2021	1,711	961	668	1,138	2,761	0
30/06/2022	1,486	956	687	1,161	2,816	0
30/06/2023	1,921	1,221	910	1,456	3,383	3,038
31/03/2024	1,892	1,188	904	1,420	3,390	2,646

- (h) The below table represents the number of active loans across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Total
30/06/2019	15,548
30/06/2020	17,100
30/06/2021	18,555
30/06/2022	16,212
30/06/2023	11,582
31/03/2024	9,702

- (i) The below table represents the balance of active loans across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested. The values are in \$million.

As At Date	Total \$m
30/06/2019	4,490
30/06/2020	4,974
30/06/2021	5,272
30/06/2022	4,044
30/06/2023	2,762
31/03/2024	2,276

- (j) The below table represents the number of loans that transitioned to other lenders across the loan types outlined in 'Part a' for the years requested.

As At Date	Total
30/06/2019	600
30/06/2020	679
30/06/2021	1,748
30/06/2022	5,431
30/06/2023	4,936
31/03/2024	1,779

- (k) The below table represents the percentage of total Keystart loans that transitioned to other lenders for the years requested.

As At Date	Total % of Keystart loan
30/6/2019	4.19%
30/06/2020	4.37%
30/06/2021	10.22%
30/06/2022	29.27%
30/06/2023	30.45%
31/03/2024	15.36%

The total percentage of Keystart loans is calculated based on the total Keystart loans transitioned to other lenders divided by total number of active accounts at the end of prior financial year.

ENVIRONMENT — LIMESTONE EXTRACTION APPLICATION — PRESTON BEACH

2006. Hon Dr Steve Thomas to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment:

I refer to the application to extract limestone and sand at Lot 1002 Preston Beach Road North, Preston Beach which has come under Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) assessment No. 2095, and I ask:

- (a) can you confirm that this proposal was first referred to the EPA in 2016;
- (b) can you confirm that the decision to assess this proposal as a Public Environmental Review (PER) was released on the 3 October 2016;
- (c) has the proponent worked with the EPA since 2016 to address issues examined in the PER;
- (d) why has it taken seven years to get to the point of the EPA continuing to ask for new or additional information;
- (e) is the Minister aware of the shortage of lime in Western Australia; and
- (f) if yes to (e), why has this project not been prioritised by the Government and the EPA?

Hon Darren West replied:

- (a) The original limestone extraction proposal for Lots 1001 and 1002 Preston Beach Road North was referred to the EPA in August 2013. The EPA Chair at the time determined that the proposal did not warrant formal assessment. After appeals, in September 2015 the then Minister for Environment, the Hon Albert Jacob MLA determined to remit the proposal to the EPA for 'detailed assessment'. This proposal is a revision of the former proposal and was referred to the EPA for Lot 1002 Preston Beach Road North in 2016.
- (b) Yes. The EPA Chair at the time determined to undertake a detailed assessment.
- (c) I have been advised that the assessment has been inactive while the EPA was awaiting further information. This includes the EPA awaiting advice on whether a referral was to be made under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The proposal was also subject to pauses between May 2019 and March 2022 while the EPA was awaiting the proponent to develop the Environmental Review Document for public comment.
- (d) I have been advised that the proponent has not addressed concerns raised by the local government authority and key government departments adequately following comments during the public review.
- (e)–(f) Under the Cook Labor Government's commitment to streamline WA's environmental approvals framework, additional resourcing and new processes are being implemented to ensure assessments can be progressed in a more timely manner

PUBLIC HOUSING — DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR COMPLAINTS

2007. Hon Steve Martin to the minister representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to disruptive behaviour in public housing, and I ask:

- (a) for the year 2022–23:
 - (i) how many voluntary vacates occurred following the issuing of a termination notice as a result of disruptive behaviour;
 - (ii) how many voluntary vacates occurred following the issuing of a court order as a result of disruptive behaviour; and
 - (iii) how many bailiff evictions occurred as a result of disruptive behaviour;

- (b) for each of the following years, how many strikes were issued, per each category of severity (dangerous, serious, or disruptive):
- (i) 2017–18;
 - (ii) 2018–19;
 - (iii) 2019–20;
 - (iv) 2020–21;
 - (v) 2021–22;
 - (vi) 2022–23; and
 - (vii) 2023–24 (to date);
- (c) for each of the years listed in (b), how many strikes were issued for:
- (i) dangerous behaviour;
 - (ii) serious behaviour; and
 - (iii) minor behaviour;
- (d) for each of the years listed in (b), how many public housing tenants had one or more strikes for dangerous behaviour;
- (e) for each of the years listed in (b), how many public housing tenants had two or more strikes for serious behaviour within a 12-month period;
- (f) for each of the years listed in (b), how many public housing tenants had two strikes for minor behaviour within a 12-month period;
- (g) for each of the years listed in (b), how many public housing tenants had three or more strikes for minor behaviour within a 12-month period;
- (h) I refer to the *Disruptive Behaviour Management* policy, page 3, which notes that “the number of strikes to be issued before proceeding with legal action will depend upon the severity of the incident”. How many strikes can be accrued at each level of severity before legal action is triggered; and
- (i) will the Minister please provide any relevant documents which outline the number of strikes, per incident severity, referred to in (h)?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (a)

Public Housing State-wide Terminated Tenancies for Disruptive Behaviour for 2022–23 Financial Year (as at 30 June 2023)			
Voluntary vacates following Termination Notice/Final Strike	Voluntary vacates following Court Order	Bailiff Eviction	Total
1	20	13	34

- (b)–(g) The Department of Communities’ (Communities) does not capture data in the format requested. Communities reports disruptive behaviour strike data by strike type: First Strike, Second Strike and Third Strike – as indicated in the table below.

Public Housing Statewide Disruptive Behaviour Strikes by Strike Type and Financial Year				
Financial Year	First Strike	Second Strike	Third Strike	Total Strikes
2017–18	909	304	95	1,308
2018–19	871	310	96	1,277
2019–20	902	313	99	1,314
2020–21	813	311	93	1,217
2021–22	588	217	57	862
2022–23	590	206	70	866
2023–24 FYTD	489	173	48	710

- (h)–(i) Communities investigates all disruptive behaviour complaints in accordance with its obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (RTA). Communities' disruptive behaviour management strategy is designed to address and manage incidents of disruptive behaviour at public housing properties that may impact on neighbouring properties. The publicly available Disruptive Behaviour Management Policy ensures the response applied is proportionate to the severity of the behaviour and encompassing circumstances. Action taken depends upon the severity of the incident.

Communities works to investigate complaints received against public housing tenancies in a consistent and timely manner in line with the RTA. It is important to note that Communities is not a law enforcement agency and does not have the power to investigate suspected illegal activities. This should be reported to the WA Police Force.

Not all complaints constitute disruptive behaviour, such as children playing around the property.

Multiple complaints may be received for a single incident, and by the same complainant or they may prove to be spurious complaints.

Complaints need to be substantiated with corroborating evidence to prove an ongoing or unreasonable nuisance or disruption has occurred.

The decision to terminate a public housing tenancy agreement sits with the Magistrate who will only grant an order for vacant possession if satisfied that there has been a breach of the tenancy agreement and that the tenant has been given every opportunity to rectify the breach and has failed to do so.

Communities seeks to support tenants to sustain their tenancy. Where a tenant is at risk of eviction, Communities will increase their contact with the client and link them with relevant support services to help address the issues impacting their tenancy and, in most cases, tenants remedy these issues. Communities works with tenants to ensure they are given every opportunity to rectify the issues impacting on their tenancy.

Communities continues to focus on sustaining tenancies. This is consistent with recommendation 13 of the Inquiry Into the Financial Administration of Homelessness Services in Western Australia – to increase the focus on prevention and early intervention of homelessness, which was supported by the majority of members on the committee.

FISHERIES — SAWFISH — LIVERINGA STATION

2008. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Water:

I refer to critically endangered sawfish at Liveringa pastoral lease, owned by Gina Rinehart, and I ask:

- (a) is the Minister aware that the sawfish are critically endangered internationally;
- (b) is the Minister aware that the Fitzroy River is one of the last major strongholds of the species;
- (c) is the Minister aware that the Freshwater Sawfish is listed as a threatened species under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*;
- (d) is the Minister aware of recent mass sawfish deaths at Liveringa pastoral lease;
- (e) if yes to (d), when did the Minister become aware of this;
- (f) if yes to (d), how many sawfish died;
- (g) if yes to (d), were any sawfish saved;
- (h) in reference to (d), at which coordinates did the sawfish die;
- (i) in reference to (h), will the Minister table a map of the location in which the sawfish died;
- (j) was the site, in (h), downstream of any dams, weirs or any type of obstruction that impeded water flow;
- (k) if yes to (j), what was the obstruction;
- (l) has any water been extracted from the same freshwater system as the one the sawfish died in;
- (m) if yes to (l), how much water has been extracted;
- (n) if yes to (l), why was it extracted;
- (o) if yes to (l), by whom was it extracted;
- (p) on what date were the sawfish found;
- (q) when, and by whom, was the incident reported to the Department and the Minister;
- (r) will the Minister table the briefing paper from the Department on any recent fishkills;
- (s) will the Minister table any reports, and/or other forms of written communication, on the deaths of sawfish;

- (t) if no to (s), why not;
- (u) has the Department and the Minister received photos of the mass sawfish deaths;
- (v) if yes to (u), will the Minister table the photos;
- (w) if no to (u), why not;
- (x) has any recent deaths of sawfish been reported to the Commonwealth Government;
- (y) if no to (x), why not;
- (z) has the Ministerial Council on the Fitzroy River been briefed on the mass sawfish deaths;
- (aa) if no to (z), why not;
- (bb) if yes to (z), will the Minister table the briefing papers; and
- (cc) if no to (bb), why not?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn replied:

- (a)–(c) The Minister is aware this species is listed as Critically Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List, that the Fitzroy catchment is a key habitat for this species and that this species is listed as Vulnerable under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.
- (d) Yes.
- (e) The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) notified the Minister’s office on Friday 1 December 2023.
- (f) 17.
- (g) 34.
- (h) X635217.72721, Y8013396.16890 or 17.96343S, 124.6795E.
- (i) [See tabled paper no [3160](#).]
- (j) No.
- (k) Not applicable.
- (l) Yes.
- (m) 834 megalitres in the 2023 calendar year.
- (n) Irrigation of pasture.
- (o) Northern Australian Pastoral Properties Pty Ltd.
- (p) 21 November 2023.
- (q) Dr. Bruce Butcher, a representative from Hancock Prospecting Pty Ltd, on Thursday, 30 November 2023.
- (r)–(t) Information regarding this event relates to the licence operating strategy. Such information is not publicly available under the RIWI Act.
- (u)–(w) DWER received photos within the Murdoch University report that was provided on Monday, December 4, 2023. The Minister has received photos of the location in which the event occurred. The photos concerned are contained in the Murdoch University report and as noted at (r)–(t), this has been compiled as part of the operating strategy by the licensee.
- (x) No.
- (y) The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions has been advised and has primary responsibility for threatened species listing and management in Western Australia.
- (z)–(aa) The Fitzroy River Ministerial Council has not convened since the event.
- (bb) Not applicable.
- (cc) Not applicable.

LEGAL AFFAIRS — CRIMINAL CODE — OFFENCES AGAINST LIBERTY

2009. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General:

I refer to prosecutions of offences against section 336 of *The Criminal Code*, and I ask:

- (a) will the Minister table the following information for the period since section 336 first came into effect (or as close to that date as is reasonably practicable) to now, broken down by year;

- (b) the number of prosecutions commenced; and
- (c) of those prosecutions in (b), the number that were successful?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b) There have been two charges under section 336 of The Criminal Code, both in 2002.
- (c) There have been no convictions.

PLANNING — COSSACK REVIVAL

2010. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the minister representing the Minister for Planning; Lands; Housing; Homelessness:

Ngarluma–Yindjibarndi Foundation has been overseeing the revival of Cossack, a heritage town in Western Australia’s north west. Recent media reports say it could become a “ghost town” again due to the State Government “losing interest” in, and no longer funding, the project, and I ask:

- (a) is it correct that the Cook Government is no longer offering Ngarluma–Yindjibarndi Foundation legal permissions or a contract to keep managing the town;
- (b) is it correct that Cossack’s museum, cafe, art gallery, and campgrounds have all been closed and can no longer be accessed by tourists;
- (c) what consideration has been given to the 10 trainees working with the Ngarluma–Yindjibarndi Foundation who will no longer have employment or training;
- (d) what will the Government be doing to resolve the closure as quickly as possible;
- (e) how quickly does the Government expect this situation to be resolved; and
- (f) what actions will be taken to protect the built and cultural heritage while this situation is resolved?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (a)–(f) The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is continuing to negotiate with Ngarluma–Yindjibarndi Foundation Limited for maintenance and management services at Cossack.

PUBLIC HOUSING — WAITLIST

2011. Hon Steve Martin to the Minister for Agriculture and Food representing the Minister for Housing:

I refer to the public housing waitlist, and I ask:

- (a) for each of the following years, how many applications, and representing how many people, were added to the public housing waitlist:
 - (i) 2017–18;
 - (ii) 2018–19;
 - (iii) 2019–20;
 - (iv) 2020–21;
 - (v) 2021–22;
 - (vi) 2022–23; and
 - (vii) 2023–24 (to date);
- (b) for each of the years in (a), how many applications, and representing how many people, were removed from the waitlist for any reason other than having been provided with a public or community home;
- (c) for the year 2022–23, for what reasons were applications removed from the public housing waitlist; and
- (d) in reference to (c), how many were removed for each reason?

Hon Jackie Jarvis replied:

- (a)–(d) The Department of Communities (Communities) provides multiple pathways, including public rental housing, bond assistance loans, and other supports to those unable to obtain housing through the private sector. It should be noted that the majority of applicants for public housing have access to some form of accommodation while awaiting allocation.

Public Housing State-wide New Applications Added and Applications Withdrawn by Financial Year

Financial Year	Wait Turn	
	Number of New Applications Added	Applications Withdrawn
2017–18	6,495	6,559
2018–19	6,593	5,064
2019–20	6,831	4,895
2020–21	7,310	4,398
2021–22	6,099	3,487
2022–23	6,567	4,615
2023–24 (as at 31 March 2024)	5,563	3,147

The data above includes instances where ‘wait turn’ applications were withdrawn.

Applications may be withdrawn for a range of reasons such as finding alternative housing arrangements, moving inter-state or overseas, or at the request of the client. A number of applications are withdrawn where people exceed income and/or asset eligibility limits or do not provide information to prove eligibility.

MINES AND PETROLEUM — BURRUP TEMPORARY RESERVE 70/6697

2012. Hon Dr Brad Pettitt to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the media statement *Significant milestone for protection of Murujuga country*, on 29 February 2024, and I ask:

- (a) will the temporary reserve number 70/6697 and its industrial purpose over the Burrup land area still exist if World Heritage is granted over this area;
- (b) was the Minister aware of the existence of temporary reserve number 70/6697 prior to issuing their press release on 29 February 2024; and
- (c) if no to (b), why not?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) Yes.
- (b)–(c) The Minister did not issue a media statement on this matter on 29 February 2024.

