



# Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT  
FIRST SESSION  
2022

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 18 May 2022



# Legislative Assembly

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**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** took the chair at 12 noon, acknowledged country and read prayers.

## SENATE VACANCY — ELECTION OF BENJAMIN JOHN SMALL

*Statement by Speaker*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [12.01 pm]: Members, I advise that a joint sitting of both houses was held this day and that Benjamin John Small was duly elected as a senator of the commonwealth Parliament.

## PAPERS TABLED

Papers were tabled and ordered to lie upon the table of the house.

## BENCH OF THE DISTRICT COURT — APPOINTMENT — NICHOLAS EGAN, PSM

*Statement by Premier*

**MR M. McGOWAN (Rockingham — Premier)** [12.02 pm]: I rise to inform the house of the appointment of Nicholas Egan, PSM, to the bench of the District Court. Nick Egan has faithfully served the state of Western Australia since he joined the State Solicitor's Office in 2005, rising to the position of State Solicitor. He will replace current District Court Judge and former State Solicitor, His Honour Judge Timothy Sharp, who will be retiring from the court. Having worked closely with Mr Egan since coming to government, I can testify to the hard work and diligence of Mr Egan across a wide range of complex areas, including matters that had never really been canvassed before—the Bell litigation, the Mineralogy litigation, COVID directions and the hard border, not to mention countless other matters that a State Solicitor must deal with. Mr Egan was awarded a Public Service Medal in 2021 and named on the commonwealth COVID-19 honour roll for his outstanding work during the pandemic. I am certain that his diligent work for government will continue at the bench in the interests of justice for Western Australians. On behalf of the WA government, we wish him all the best for the future.

## INDO PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL MARITIME EXPOSITION

*Statement by Minister for Defence Industry*

**MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Defence Industry)** [12.03 pm]: I stand today to share my recent travels to Sydney, New South Wales, to attend the 2022 INDO PACIFIC International Maritime Exposition from 9 to 11 May, otherwise known as INDO-PAC. INDO-PAC is the region's premier international maritime defence exposition, showcasing Australia's unique maritime-related capabilities to navies across the Indo-Pacific. As Western Australia's Minister for Defence Industry, this was the third time I have attended the exposition, and Defence West's presence has grown at each attendance.

The state government, via Defence West, met the costs of floor space at the exposition for 23 Western Australian small and medium-sized enterprises. This is a significant assistance to businesses that might not otherwise be able to afford such a platform. The state's SMEs showcased their cutting-edge innovations and new technologies to national and international attendees. These SMEs displayed why Western Australia is a world leader in a wide range of areas from developing mission-critical communications solutions, unmanned aerial vehicles, minor vessel construction and satellite imagery to navigation systems and underwater ship husbandry.

During my visit to the exposition, I also advocated for the high-profile Western Australian businesses that participated at the 2022 INDO-PAC independently of Defence West. Over the two days I spent in Sydney, I met with key stakeholders, including the Chief of the Defence Force; the Chief of Navy; the Chief of the Nuclear Powered Submarine Taskforce; the deputy secretary of the Department of Defence; and global defence prime contractors such as BAE Systems Australia, Navantia Australia, Thales Group, Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin Australia and New Zealand. I also met with international defence infrastructure providers, including Bechtel, Babcock International and KBR to gain insights on how the state can be better prepared to support the Australian government's recent announcement to build a large vessel dry berth at Henderson.

Western Australia has an increasingly important role to play in the nation's defence capabilities, most prominently in the context of AUKUS, which will be a leading theme at our upcoming 2022 Indian Ocean Defence and Security conference, scheduled to be held over two days at Optus Stadium on 26 and 27 July. I look forward to supporting Western Australia's representation at the next INDO-PAC exposition.

## MINERALS RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

*Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum*

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum)** [12.06 pm]: It is with great pleasure that I stand here today to inform the house of the McGowan government's ongoing support for a critical research

agency. In the 2022–23 state budget, the McGowan government committed a further \$6 million over the next four years to the Minerals Research Institute of Western Australia, or MRIWA. This brings the total to \$12 million, following an extra \$6 million in funding in September last year. Members of the house will be familiar with MRIWA's important research work that is addressing net zero emission mining and green steel challenges. Securing funding for MRIWA for the next four years means real momentum can be created to find technological solutions for the WA mining industry. MRIWA will progress research in key focus areas, including critical minerals to enable security of supply for international markets and increased downstream processing; precision and low-impact mining to reduce waste and the footprint of the sector; alternative uses of tailings and waste from mineral processing, leveraging the principles of a circular economy; and the uptake of clean energy technologies to support growth in minerals. Unearthing technological solutions will enable the mining industry to continue to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits to Western Australia. An ACIL Allen report found that each \$1 million invested by government for minerals research resulted in at least \$3.12 million in direct benefits to the state.

A recent breakthrough by MRIWA and Curtin University researchers was in the development of a new technology for detecting seismic energy as it passes through rocks and soil beneath the surface. Originally developed to identify locations to drill for gold, the seismic detection system can be used for any commodity using salt-tolerant fibre-optic cable. This new technology will create new exploration opportunities in Western Australia where seismic surveying was previously too expensive or challenging for companies. Essentially, the technology makes it cheaper and easier for exploration companies to detect mineralised structures beneath the surface, which could help find the next big discovery in WA, leading to new mines and new jobs. Western Australia is a world leader in innovation and technology and is often the example other countries look to for expertise in all facets of the mining sector. Our mining sector has continued its strong performance and, through MRIWA, there is an opportunity stay at the leading edge of solutions that reduce processing costs and improve environmental outcomes.

### **WOMEN IN RESOURCES AWARDS**

*Statement by Minister for Women's Interests*

**MS S.F. MCGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Women's Interests)** [12.08 pm]: I rise today to inform the house that last week I had the privilege to represent the Premier at the 2022 Women in Resources Awards finalists breakfast reception. The awards are held by the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia and celebrate the achievements of women excelling in this male-dominated field. The purpose of the finalists breakfast reception is to congratulate the 18 finalists and celebrate women working in the WA resources sector. With women under-represented in STEM occupations and the resources sector, the Women in Resources Awards highlight outstanding women working and thriving in this sector. I have attended these awards for several years now and I am always encouraged by the continuous growth and commitment to educate and advocate for change in the resources sector.

Awards like these are a positive step to increase the visibility of women in construction and challenge perceptions about traditional gender roles. Women represent 20 per cent of the mining and resources workforce in Western Australia. This is better than the national average of just 16 per cent, but it is clear we still have some way to go to achieve gender equality. The gender gap is caused by stereotypes about gender roles, unconscious bias in recruitment, lack of flexibility at work, and ongoing safety issues like sexual harassment. In order to create safer workplaces for everyone, it is crucial we increase women's representation.

The resources sector is a key driver of our economy. We need to ensure that women benefit from these job opportunities, and that Western Australia benefits from drawing upon the whole talent pool. These awards are important to support and recognise women in this industry, and to encourage more women and girls into this field. You cannot be what you cannot see. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the finalists for these awards, and I look forward to their dinner in a few weeks to find out the winners in each category.

### **NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION AGREEMENT**

*Statement by Minister for Mental Health*

**MS A. SANDERSON (Morley — Minister for Mental Health)** [12.10 pm]: The McGowan government will contribute \$26.5 million as part of the 2022–23 state budget to support the implementation of the WA bilateral schedule to the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement. The agreement will deliver a \$61.5 million joint investment into mental health and suicide prevention services in Western Australia over four years from 2022–23 to 2025–26. This new investment is centred on three new initiatives. The first is a new Head to Health kids' hub to be established in Western Australia by 2023–24. The kids' hub will improve early intervention by enabling greater access to care from multidisciplinary teams for children up to the age of 12, and their families. The kids' hub will integrate with existing state and commonwealth services. The new kids' hub is another component that will help us build a more integrated, comprehensive and sustainable system for our children.

The second initiative will address another priority for the McGowan government, which is to improve aftercare services for people following a suicide attempt or suicidal crisis. Providing a clear pathway to appropriate support

has been proven to lower the severity and duration of a suicidal crisis. A two-part approach will be implemented: the first is for individuals who have been discharged from hospital following a suicide attempt; and the second is to expand referral and entry pathways from other settings to capture those who have experienced a suicidal crisis without being admitted to hospital. The bilateral schedule will support this priority with a commitment of \$40.4 million for community-based aftercare services from 2022–23.

The third initiative will enhance the state’s commitment to eating disorder services, with an additional \$8.6 million from 2023–24 to provide for a service in the east metropolitan area of Perth. The new funding will provide an intensive day program and an outpatient clinic. This is in addition to two existing services in the south and north metropolitan areas funded by the state in the 2021–22 budget, totalling \$31.7 million over four years.

To ensure that it meets the needs of the Western Australian community, the bilateral schedule provides for the establishment of the joint service planning and governance committee. Membership will include representatives from state governments and the commonwealth government, from non-government organisations, and, importantly, from consumers and carers. The national agreement and bilateral schedule will be administered by the Western Australian Mental Health Commission on behalf of the state, with implementation planning to occur collaboratively between the state and the commonwealth. We look forward to improved collaboration with the commonwealth and the members of the new service planning and governance committee.

### **EXMOUTH GULF — MARINE PARK**

#### *Statement by Minister for Environment*

**MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment)** [12.13 pm]: Today I rise to inform the house that on Monday I was in Exmouth to announce significant progress on the McGowan government’s December 2021 announcement about historic protections to safeguard the spectacular Exmouth Gulf. The government has allocated \$3.4 million in the state budget for the implementation of our protections. The government will provide \$800 000 to the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions to begin the planning for the marine park in the southern and eastern portions of the gulf, and protections for the islands of the gulf and areas of significance at Qualing Pool and Camerons Cave. This marine park will be co-designed with the traditional owners, along with the invaluable input from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, commercial, recreational and charter fishers, and other stakeholders, including the Exmouth community. I was honoured to spend time on the water in the proposed marine park with traditional owners and hear from them about the importance of the gulf for its biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural and heritage values, and the importance of partnering together in protections and joint management over this special place.

I also announced that a further \$2.6 million will be provided to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to support the Exmouth Gulf Taskforce. The task force will provide advice to me on broader strategic issues relating to Exmouth Gulf and its surrounds, including the subterranean waterways. The task force will be ably chaired by Ms Laine Ashforth–McDonald, a former member of the other place and respected lawyer. The task force will be made up of up to 15 representatives, including from government agencies, stakeholders and the community. I look forward to announcing in coming weeks that nominations will be open for two community representatives on the task force. I am pleased to report that my visit and this announcement were well received by the community of Exmouth on Monday.

This work will be crucial in preserving the gulf’s natural beauty for the benefit of biodiversity, Aboriginal culture, and future generations of Western Australians. I would like to thank the people I met in Exmouth for the warm welcome I received, and I look forward to seeing that wonderful community up there again very soon. Thank you very much.

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — PRIVATE MEMBERS’ BUSINESS**

#### *Standing Orders Suspension — Motion*

**MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum)** [12.15 pm]: I move, on behalf of the Leader of the House —

That so much of the standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable private members’ business to have priority from 4.00 to 6.00 pm on Wednesday, 18 May 2022.

In doing so, I make the point that this is a regular feature of budget week and will allow for the budget to be dealt with properly by the house and passed by Thursday to enable the estimates debate to occur next week.

Question put and passed.

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE — DINNER SUSPENSION**

#### *Statement by Acting Speaker*

**THE ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife)** [12.16 pm]: Consequent upon the motion just passed, there will be a dinner break between 6.00 and 7.00 pm this evening.

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2022–23) BILL 2022**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2022–23) BILL 2022**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from 17 May.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [12.17 pm]: I rise to contribute to the cognate debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. My overall reaction to the Treasurer's budget was one of disappointment—disappointment for the lost opportunities, and the fact that public moneys are now being used inefficiently to deal with predictable problems. It is too little, too late.

This Labor government has again failed to adequately address the high cost of living. It has again failed our health system and everyone who relies on it, with record levels of ambulance ramping. Last month, ambulance ramping again soared to near record levels. So far this year, patients have spent more than 21 992 hours waiting to be transferred to a hospital bed for emergency treatment. An average of seven patients have now been ramped every hour of every day of this year for emergency admissions because of hospital access block under this Labor government. That is all because under Labor, despite our state's huge budget surpluses, despite the COVID health spend of billions of dollars, despite the emergency control powers, which Labor keeps extending, and despite the massive majority of Labor in both houses, which means that it can fix what it wants when it wants, Labor has not provided enough beds in our state-run hospitals to prevent this massive ongoing crisis of hospital access block and consequential ambulance ramping.

The government has unveiled a budget that shows a bigger than expected \$5.7 billion operating surplus for the current 2021–22 financial year, and significant surpluses budgeted for the forthcoming years. Even with these massive windfall surpluses, Labor's net public sector debt is forecast to grow from \$29.9 billion in the current 2021–22 financial year and onwards to \$33.9 billion in 2025–26.

I congratulate Western Australians and all the businesses in our state for delivering the surpluses our state is enjoying. They, not Labor, and not this government, have done the hard work to deliver these surpluses. We must also thank the federal Morrison government for contributing to these results. Its fairer GST treatment of Western Australia, delivered by Scott Morrison when he was Treasurer, now Prime Minister, set a minimum floor of 70¢ in the dollar with the possibility of 75¢ for all states and territories, up from the 30.3¢ in the dollar that Western Australia dropped to in the previous mineral boom. It means we are now getting \$3.54 billion more in GST revenue than we did in 2016–17. This is over half Labor's claimed surplus for 2021–22, and this windfall increased revenue is more than the predicted surpluses under Labor going forward. Labor is not doing the hard job of budget management nor forward structural budget management.

We should also be well aware of the massive contribution to our state's finances from mining royalties, particularly iron ore. Commodity prices and export volumes have boomed since 2017 when Labor first was elected, especially iron ore, resulting in royalties rising from \$4.708 billion at the start of this Labor government to \$11.354 billion, an increase of 141 per cent and delivering an extra \$6.646 billion in state revenue in this year above the 2016–17 level. This windfall increase in state revenue accounts for all and more of the just declared surplus. All this should have been delivered by a good state government as a surplus and as significant debt reduction. Under the McGowan Labor government, it was not. It is not good government and it is not good budget management. From adding higher electricity and water charges and other fees and charges of over \$1 billion under this Labor government and higher dividends and taxes from the Water Corporation, Synergy and Horizon Power, there is nearly a \$15 billion in extra revenue than there was in Labor's first year in 2017. That is a 56 per cent increase in government revenue in these two terms of the Labor government.

We can see how the Western Australian budget has self-corrected to record levels. Let me be very clear: this Labor government does not deserve any plaudits for the state's finances turning around. It happened due to windfall factors such as the federal Morrison Liberal Party's GST guarantees, booming iron ore and commodity prices and the unnecessary massive increases in fees and charges as a cost to all Western Australians under the McGowan Labor in Western Australia. Rather than action and real productive effort for the future of all Western Australians, McGowan Labor has just produced lots of talk, lots of spin and PR, but little of substance and nothing that can be attributed to Labor's budget management or good government.

On the contrary, with such massive revenue growth, this government did not need to impose its pernicious increases, such as the 55 per cent increase in water charges for larger families who need more water than Labor's arbitrary figure of 500 kilolitres per annum. This Labor government certainly could and should have coped with a modest annual contribution of about \$1 million to keep an important scientific and human health research institution going—that is, the Animal Resources Centre—instead of closing it and seeking to sell off the land. In addition to the windfall factors that have turned around our state's finances, Labor was bequeathed a well-run and well-resourced public sector when it was elected in 2017. Nevertheless, government expenditure has grown under Labor by a headline 25.3 per cent, a true 32.6 per cent when accounting for Labor's budget presentation changes, and a whopping

20 per cent in real terms above CPI inflation in the terms of the Labor government. Despite the significant revenue bonanza and consequent turnaround in our state's finances, Labor's poor management has been further displayed by its mismanagement in key areas such as health, housing, law and order, energy, transport, serious crime and its failure to cultivate our state's future development. Instead, with the significant turnaround in our state's financial position, this government has chosen to spend money on its political causes and pet projects. The damage this is doing to future Western Australia has been hidden to date by the current windfall surpluses. There is no notable dividend for Western Australians and nothing that will go towards building a future for their kids and the generations after that. They deserve better. Nor is there a dividend to current and future Western Australians through clearly improved services and infrastructure development beyond Metronet.

COVID and the more recent terror of the Ukraine war is causing chaos in the local supply of goods and services everywhere throughout the world. This has pushed up commodity prices, especially energy, as well as adding to the already rising prices for food and other consumer staples. The result is a significant inflationary impact on household and business budgets and worldwide increasing interest rates. These cost-of-living pressures being experienced demand a significant response from this Labor government, not a vote-buying power play for Albanese Labor via a one-off \$400 electricity credit delivered just in time for the federal election, but for only this year, and despite this Labor government's proposed 2.5 per cent increase this year and every year of the forward estimates.

In the context of repeated windfall budget surpluses, this Labor government has the financial capacity, the moral obligation and a mutual responsibility to provide financial relief for households, other families and small businesses while they face this inflationary surge. As a starting point, this Labor government could have, and should have, enacted a one-year freeze on all government imposts. This would provide ongoing relief from further increases in the cost of living and business costs, especially for all those small businesses that have endured such a tough time through the COVID era. Instead, the Treasurer's \$400 electricity credit sleight of hand trickery is hiding a \$156 increase in household fees and charges this year on Labor's budgeted representative household. We know it is more than that for real family households. It should have been properly targeted, as implored by Anglicare and other community agencies that are already doing the hard work of helping those most in need. I have already donated my \$400 to St Patrick's Community Support Centre in Freo to help out those people who are doing it tough, but a real and genuine Labor government could have done this at the outset, rather than this cynical electioneering ploy. On this side of the house, we know the average energy bill debt for hardship customers of state-owned utilities Synergy and Horizon Power leapt from \$772 in 2019–20 to \$1 195 last financial year. Properly targeted, and as an example, this \$445 million energy credit could have helped those most in need. The failure to deliver such immediate and significant relief from current cost-of-living pressures for Western Australian households, other families and small businesses shows that politics and electioneering headlines are the government's main and overriding consideration when it makes decisions.

Infrastructure and public works investment under Labor is just as badly treated. Here, too, we see from this Labor government the same old pattern of behaviour—spin attached to a bucket of money with subsequent failure to deliver on the photo-op. Comparing this Labor government's planned capital spending, its PR propaganda announcements, with its actual spend, there is a \$5.24 billion credibility gulf on infrastructure investment since 2017–18. That is an average failure and underdelivery by Labor of more than \$1.3 billion year after year. We were informed in last year's budget that the government was —

- reviewing the State Government's record infrastructure program with a view to smoothing the pipeline of work to help ease workforce pressures across the economy ...

Yet, despite claiming to be smoothing capital projects, instead of owning up and acknowledging its inability to deliver its programs, Labor proceeded to announce an even bigger investment budget of \$8 billion for 2021–22. We now know that the estimated forecast is that that will fall at least a billion dollars short and we await the updated end-of-year numbers. This really highlights the inherently dishonest nature and lack of transparency of this Labor government. Labor indirectly acknowledged its failure to deliver what it has previously announced, then it doubled down on its dishonesty by promising more of what it knows on its own track record that it cannot and will not deliver. Despite its embarrassing track record, the McGowan Labor government has announced an increased capital spend this year. This Labor government's record shows it is incapable of delivering its \$8.9 billion capital works budgeted plans, and that will be the case again in the coming year and the forward years. We and all the Western Australian community can confidently assume that a large amount of the capital investment will not happen; rather, a large portion of Labor's cynical attitude to future-building is actually more misleading rhetoric on what Labor plans to achieve in the coming year and in the forward estimates.

All the problems that the state faces are compounded by our state's workforce challenge. Unemployment is now down to 3.4 per cent, below what many economists consider to be full employment. Even New Zealand, without a massive mining industry, has reached an even lower unemployed rate of 3.2 per cent. We on this side are all very pleased to have such a strong labour market that gives Western Australians more opportunities to get work and find better opportunities, especially those seeking their first jobs and those wishing to work longer. However, this also brings significant challenges to the rest of the community. It is a worker challenge that was made worse by the actions of this Labor Party. As we said it would, Labor's union-endorsed slashing of the skilled occupation list

for migrants in its first year exacerbated the problem of many sectors finding skilled or experienced workers from interstate, international migration and short-term visitors to fill the jobs. The labour shortages are being acutely felt right now in the construction, housing, hospitality and tourism sectors and almost every other industry sector. We have heard of multiple builders collapsing this year. Builders are buckling under the financial pressure of paying more for their workers and even higher prices for building materials but also not being able to complete builds to meet cash-flow staged payments. Labor Minister Kelly's close-down of the local hardwood timber industry for building, roofs and furniture will make this problem much worse into the future.

Some small business sectors have suffered more than others, like the tourism and hospitality sectors that missed the workforce supply that is normally topped-up with foreign students, temporary visitors with working visas, backpackers and other travellers. The mining sector arguably managed better than most due to its ability to pay higher wages to entice workers from other sectors. Family, small and medium-sized businesses do not have that capacity. The most significant but delayed government measure was a plan for 5 000 extra places under the state nominated migration scheme. We know very clearly that Western Australia needs many thousands more workers than those who have been allowed for by Labor in our state so far. There are many important questions: Did we get 5 000 workers coming here? Can we get more? Are there any other plans to entice interstate or foreign workers on temporary visas, as well as backpackers and other travellers? Has anything much changed since the skills summit last year? Did the 130 businesses that attended the summit propose ideas that Labor has ignored as part of its unionised workforce demand? Does the government expect workers to come, given its continued state of emergency? What has been the uptake of the way-too-late incentives for foreign health workers to be enticed to Western Australia? Has the government considered shortening TAFE courses and further reducing costs to entice new workers into a faster transition or to a different career path?

We have a Labor government bound by its union bosses and preference for short-term fixes and talkfests. Labor is not focused on long-term solutions. Within a short time of being elected in 2017, Labor moved to limit the number of pathways for foreign workers and instituted changes to remove the regional migration status of Perth. With this policy, Premier McGowan also destroyed the intake of international students before COVID-19, those international students who contribute such a large amount of revenue and workers to our state economy. In 2019–20, the Western Australian share of national export income for education related services was 5.6 per cent—a decline on the 8.1 per cent share recorded 10 years prior. The Premier must think of ways to entice international students back to Western Australia. Instead, during the early days of the pandemic, Premier McGowan described India as “the epicentre of death and destruction”. International students from India make up the second-highest source market for our state, yet we have a Premier whose comments only hinder and helped to harm this relationship. State development is needed for a future beyond iron ore in Western Australia.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Last year, I identified what a good government should do to diversify our state but it clearly fell on deaf ears. This government has been lucky but lazy. The result is that Western Australia's future reliance on iron ore has reached an unprecedented level under Labor. When we look at the revenue created by the mining sector, for every US dollar that the iron ore price rises, the Western Australian government receives \$82 million more. The current average iron ore price per tonne was sitting at US\$138 for the year. That is well above this government's forecast iron ore price of \$US77.5, creating potentially just over \$5 billion in additional unbudgeted revenue for our state.

We need to look at opening other areas, grasping and creating new opportunities. This is something that the Liberal–National alliance has been urging for some time. The Labor Party made an election pledge to diversify our state's economy but, in government for a second term, Labor is not making a sufficient effort to support alternative industries. I want our mining sector to grow and prosper. I am not saying to diversify our economy at the expense of mining. However, if we do not expand our economy, we are setting ourselves up for severe and sudden mining shock when commodity prices retreat. This Labor government has been happy to enjoy the fruits of Western Australian workers but what about the future? Even with the most optimistic forecast for battery minerals, our state's contribution will not replicate the level of investment in jobs that have accompanied growth in the iron ore and energy sectors—growth, I emphasise, that was initiated against Labor criticism of Sir Charles Court and David Brand in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

The federal Liberal Party has promised considerable support—many hundreds of millions of dollars—for Western Australia for renewable energy in this state. Where is the support from federal Labor, supporting other states but not Western Australia? What is the government's sacked Minister for Health doing? Western Australia needs to be laying the roots for future growth in new industries, relying on the natural advantages we have: abundant sunshine and wind to provide cheaper renewable energy to link with our abundant resources and energy sector, and processing to higher value refined products, rather than just raw or bulk materials. But what of this government? The government has been largely asleep at the wheel for four years at a standstill and was woken up to the ideas such as hydrogen energy and the potential for our state's midwest by our party's policies at the last election. After the state election and when the opposition already had a shadow minister for hydrogen, the state government announced a Minister for Hydrogen Industry—again, too little, too late. Other states leapt forward and now have

a massive head start on Western Australia because this McGowan Labor government squandered its first term in this important area. The fact that the Minister for Hydrogen Industry is not also the Minister for Energy does not reflect well on him or his ability to get behind new industries; those comments are in relation to the Minister for Energy.

Again, the federal Morrison Liberal government has come to Labor's rescue for our state and nation by announcing its willingness to invest in infrastructure and support Australian businesses and creative industries to invest in new energy opportunities. Other states and the Northern Territory are already well on their way along this path, yet Western Australia, the state most readily associated with mining and energy, has been the laggard under Labor. Western Australia's own companies and industry leaders are looking at other states and internationally to invest in these new industries because they cannot wait another four years for this Labor government to deliver substantive announcements. Where is the plan for infrastructure to facilitate a new port development at Oakajee port in the midwest? Why is your Labor member for Geraldton not advocating for this? Why will this Labor government not support her? The midwest should be given higher priority, including for workers who are more likely to move there with their families because of the liveability of the area. Seize the opportunity to grow the population of Geraldton and other towns to create its own economic momentum. My colleague in the National Party the member for North West Central has been advocating strongly for development in Carnarvon, Exmouth, Onslow, out of Gascoyne and in those regions that he represents so well. By this Labor government's own words and records, we can say it has done so little and so late that it is losing the opportunity offered by the midwest and Geraldton's natural advantages.

As I started out with in my presentation, the Western Australian health system is another budget and mismanagement morass under Labor. Labor's incompetence is exposed starkly with its mismanagement of the Western Australian public health system under the efforts of two Labor health ministers, who have only been able to blunder from crisis levels of emergency ambulance ramping due to inefficient hospital beds to code yellows and code black state-run hospital failures. The first Labor Minister for Health was an immediate failure. He once described 1 030 hours of ambulance ramping in a month as evidence of a system in crisis, so he could not defend himself when, under his management, ambulance ramping leapt to 5 000 hours a month. He departed the job only to be rewarded as Labor's Minister for Tourism and, despite his failure, he was retained by the government as the Deputy Premier.

Again, we got more PR and spin from Labor when it attempted to deal with its political problems and failures in the health portfolio in last year's budget when it tried to spin a necessary increase in health funding as representing growth funding. Last year, we demonstrated that Labor had done little more than increase funding in future years to meet the higher base level of funding to catch up on its health spending cuts in its first term—a reduction in the rate of increased funding. We calculated that the state's health system needed about \$1.5 billion more than the previous budget stated just to accommodate the general growth rate of demand in health. By December, in his midyear review, the Premier; Treasurer confirmed our estimate of Labor's budget health shortfall and validated our calculation of additional funding needed by allocating an extra \$1.3 billion for state-run hospitals to simply cope with the normal growth in health demand. Although we welcomed the eventual recognition of the need for additional funding by this Labor government, we are yet to witness significant improvements in the management of state-run hospitals.

The replacement Minister for Health—the anointed next leader of the state Labor Party—has not managed any improvement, despite being ladled with billions of dollars to spend on health. We see little evidence of substantive follow-up and ministerial engagement to ensure that extra public funding is going to the right areas to deliver improved services and infrastructure for the community. We await the resumption of reduced waiting list surgeries and the resumption of other services that have been restricted or completely curtailed since the onset of the COVID pandemic. We will closely watch for the delivery of all additional promised and funded staffing resources and increased bed capacity, which should be reflected in better system-wide performance. I see no mention of the much-needed and important WA Comprehensive Cancer Centre being funded in this budget—just a feasibility study about whether joint funding of around 300 critically required additional hospital beds should be accepted at half-cost from the Morrison government.

I come to Metronet, the biggest ever budget blowout in Western Australia. Of course, Labor does not have a problem allocating millions of dollars to Metronet projects, which suffer yet another Labor minister who announces projects on which she underdelivers and overspends and which are overdue. Although the budget is in surplus, there are a number of concerning factors, especially around the specific costing of Metronet. In 2017, Metronet projects were costed at just under \$3 billion. Because of the COVID crisis, many Western Australians will be unaware that the cost of Metronet has more than doubled to \$7.5 billion with relatively limited scope changes. This Labor Premier, who trusts no-one in his team to be the Treasurer, has presided over the single-largest capital blowout of any state government project in the history of Western Australia. What have we got for our \$7.5 billion, an amount which is still increasing? Nothing. Commuters cannot catch a Metronet train let alone use a new Metronet station. This Labor Minister for Transport has bungled her signature project. To add to this chaos, we have the proposed 18-month closure of the Armadale line, which was decided with little to no community consultation.

Housing is another key area that Labor has mishandled. Since the Labor government was elected, the housing squeeze has increasingly plagued the state. Again, the new Labor Minister for Housing, who was appointed after the most recent state election, has made no difference. Labor still underdelivers. People renting and living on modest means

experience the cost-of-living squeeze earlier than most as the Perth rental market experiences significant increases. As a result, our public housing waitlist has soared by 43 per cent. Recent figures show that there are 18 738 applicants on the public housing waitlist, representing 32 873 people who need affordable accommodation. Before the pandemic, there were just 14 000 applications with a waiting list representing 23 000 people. Rather than being embarrassed about its lack of achievement in this area, Labor resorted to its standard *modus operandi* and repackaged previous announcements into an even bigger \$2.1 billion promise to build 3 000 more public houses. We are extremely doubtful about the government's capacity to deliver those houses within even a few years. To quote Hon Alison Xamon, a former Greens member of the Legislative Council, when she spoke about Labor's record on homelessness —

It is a serious and vitally important topic and is an area on which I think, frankly, the WA Labor government's performance to date has been very poor. It has displayed a great commitment to spin over substance.

There is more evidence of Labor's failure in its management of charges for utilities. Western Australian electricity consumers have suffered massive cost increases due to the disaster that was Labor's pricing reform in the mid-2000s. It is a fact that Western Australian families and other households and businesses would be paying significantly lower electricity bills without Labor's so-called energy reforms. Of course, this Labor government has said nothing about efficiency in that sector; instead, all we hear about are rising prices. Electricity prices have risen well above the inflation rate under this government and Labor is proposing 2.5 per cent increases in the forward years. While electricity consumption charges increased at about one and a half times the inflation rate, the cost of electricity has been rising more due to the massive rise in connection fees on the daily supply charge—an increase of about 95 per cent to \$384 in rounded terms, which is an increase of 116 per cent or \$200 a year for households, a fee that they cannot avoid. We see the same with water charges. Charges for larger houses increased by 55 per cent under the pretext of forcing lower water usage—this from a utility that is now making around \$1 billion cash profit.

This Labor government has been gifted a massive, once-in-a-lifetime revenue windfall. Instead of investing for the future and setting up our economy to withstand the inevitable economic downturns in the future, the government is wasting this unique opportunity. The government claims windfall revenue as its own but fails to prepare properly for the future.

**DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands)** [12.47 pm]: It gives me great pleasure to rise today in support of the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and share with this chamber the McGowan Labor government's ongoing infrastructure and health investment in the seat of Nedlands. I am proud to speak about the Nedlands electorate being the home to some of the state's most iconic and essential hospitals—our only dedicated maternity hospital and our only dedicated paediatric hospital—as well as world-leading medical research institutes and mental health facilities. We are also home to many people who work in this vital healthcare sector; indeed, nearly eight per cent of the electorate works in hospitals, with many more working in medical research, allied health, private practice, diagnostics and so forth. This state budget continues to invest in the best care for our community members within the Nedlands electorate, but it also draws people from all over Western Australia for specialist diagnoses, treatment and care and invites a welcome crossover with other electorates and communities.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, which is located a five-minute walk from my office, is the leading public tertiary and teaching hospital, providing a diverse, wide and complex array of clinical specialties. It houses the state's only comprehensive cancer treatment centre and is the state's principal hospital for both neurosurgery and organ transplant. The hospital is closely associated with the nearby University of Western Australia, as well as Curtin University, the University of Notre Dame and Edith Cowan University. It handles more than 76 000 admissions every year, with 600 beds treating approximately 420 000 patients every year and it employs some 5 500 staff.

We all know that WA Health is facing the significant challenges of demand and capacity pressures due to COVID-19, and a key measure to address some of these challenges is targeting emergency department access. Reducing pressure on emergency departments, such as the large one at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, is a priority for WA Health. The emergency department package contained in this budget—a commitment of over \$250 million—will incorporate both strategic and operational solutions to streamline patient flow and pathways and address some of the root causes of ambulance ramping. A significant part of this plan and investment will be emergency department waiting room nurses, with \$55.8 million to expand emergency care into the waiting area to improve patient monitoring and assessment and ensure the most appropriate and timely pathway to hospital care, if that is required. The package also includes the use of shared real-time data to monitor emergency presentations, patient transfers and bed occupancy, as well as measures to reduce avoidable presentation and admissions for people with complex needs. This means implementing alternative models of care to support treatment of patients in the most appropriate health settings. That model includes expanding options for discharging patients who are in hospital for longer than is clinically required, often for social reasons or inaccessibility of services outside of the hospital setting. These measures address some of those core issues by increasing the number of transition care places in community aged-care centres, discharge to transitional facilities for people who are awaiting National Disability Insurance Scheme funding, and additional transitional accommodation programs for people with complex care needs.

For Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, this builds on last year's commitment of a \$90 million upgrade to the emergency department as part of WA's recovery plan and the new eight-bed behavioural assessment urgent care centre. All these measures firmly put patients first, with an enhanced patient experience to improve pathways and care, as well as safety for staff within the emergency department. In addition, the McGowan Labor government has committed to an expansion of the intensive care unit at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, with an upgrade to 10 additional beds, increasing the capacity of the ICU to 40 beds. Two neurological units at Sir Charles Gairdner will also be refurbished, with a \$7.6 million upgrade, to accommodate more patients, and two biplanar imaging units will be installed at a cost of \$24.3 million.

There are many other exciting developments on the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre site, with \$2.5 million for a business case to inform the options for the proposed WA comprehensive cancer centre, while planning for the new women's and babies' hospital is scheduled for completion this year, with enabling works to commence in 2023. This state-of-the-art hospital will ensure modern and comprehensive care for women and their babies while co-location with Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Perth Children's Hospital will mean ready and timely access to specialist services when required.

The seat of Nedlands is also home to the University of Western Australia, the state's first university, established in 1911. As the first free university in the British Empire, UWA also has a strong history of ensuring that a tertiary education is in the reach of people from diverse backgrounds, including international students. As I have said before in this chamber, I was working at Curtin University as a social work academic when the global pandemic first hit. I saw and experienced firsthand the devastating impact on the sector, and the people, of course, who live in that sector—the staff, domestic students and international students. As we all know, when the global pandemic hit, international students returned home in their thousands; indeed, they were told to go home by our Prime Minister. Despite the contribution of international education to Australia's economy—\$28 billion in the 2016–17 financial year, which itself was a 16 per cent increase on the previous financial year, and international education being Australia's largest service export and one of our greatest exports behind iron ore and coal—the federal Liberal government did not at any time actively or positively respond to the crisis that was occurring in tertiary education or international student education.

Although international students of course contribute much to our economy, they also contribute much to the learning experience at university and in other educational settings, bringing different perspectives, cultural understandings and diversity to discussion and learning outcomes. Of course, educational institutions have a responsibility to international students too, to ensure that they have a positive educational, cultural and social experience in our state. It means a lot to me, both personally and professionally, to stand here now as part of the McGowan Labor government, which has long recognised the value of the tertiary education sector in this difficult time with ongoing investment into the recovery and, just as importantly, the longer growth in sustainability of that sector. I am delighted to see a \$41.2 million package to accelerate WA's international education sector, with a range of initiatives, including increased marketing, building on the Reconnect WA package and student incentives to attract, retain and grow the pipeline of international students into universities, schools and TAFE settings. This includes a new \$2.4 million initiative to attract international students to live, work and study in regional Western Australia to alleviate critical shortages being experienced by regional businesses in targeted areas such as aged and disability care, child care and hospitality. The strategy and investment means continuing to work with industry, including education providers such as UWA, StudyPerth and Perth Airport, to ensure that international students are welcomed and supported and for the sector to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic in a position of strength.

Many members of my community are deeply concerned about climate change and work in several ways to contribute to positive climate action, from our very proactive and progressive Nedlands Tree Canopy Advocates to those who care for our bushland through groups such as the Friends of Underwood Avenue Bushland and the Friends of Hollywood Reserve, and those who actively lobby and advocate for action to address climate change in our policies and practices. Many constituents have reached out to let me know that they are reassured by and celebrate the McGowan Labor government's commitment to responding to climate change and, in particular, bold decisions to end native logging in 2024.

This budget sees the McGowan Labor government set us up for a prosperous low-carbon future, supporting our transition to net zero by 2050 while investing in sustainable jobs and industry innovation. I think it is pretty fair to say that if we do not find the people of the western suburbs in Dunsborough over summer, we will find them on Rottneest Island. So the \$62 million to power Rottneest Island with 75 per cent renewables and upgrade water assets will be welcome for its impact by visitors from my electorate. I do not know the statistics but observation tells that members of my electorate also own a fairly high proportion of the electric vehicles in Western Australia. They will celebrate too then the \$36.5 million to provide 10 000 rebates of \$3 500 to Western Australians who buy a new electric or hydrogen fuel cell vehicle, and \$22.6 million for new charging infrastructure to expand WA's electric vehicle recharging network, which will become the longest recharging network in the world.

Lest what I have said reinforces stereotypes about my electorate, it is a community of diversity too, with several large social housing complexes and many older residents who are asset rich, living in the old family home, but cash

poor, and many essential health and hospitality workers who have borne the cost of going to work with COVID, with multiple rapid antigen tests and personal protective equipment. The provision of free RATs has been meaningful to all in my community, but had a particular impact on those workers and groups. Similarly, the \$400 credit on electricity bills will make a difference to many in my electorate. We have heard from many older residents this week in particular who are very grateful for this measure as it will make a difference to not just their budget, but also the choices they will make this winter.

Finally, I would like to mention a number of budget commitments that are very close to my social work heart. At the beginning of my social work career, I worked in child protection, in the Armadale district office. It was and is complex and difficult work. It is work that I think it is fair to say many outside the system do not understand or do not particularly want to understand or particularly appreciate. In child protection, you often work at the intersection of domestic violence, certainly poverty, mental health, substance use, housing and homelessness, and other complex social factors and entrenched systemic issues, including racism. Working across such complex issues requires working across complex systems, multiple service systems, multiple legal systems, with lots of different professionals and teams and, in the middle of all that complexity, a vulnerable child—a child in need of care and protection and the family and the community that are working to look after them safely. The work is often confronting and challenging. The decisions are always difficult. A child's future depends on them. There are, of course, lots of structures in place for those decisions to be made, implemented and supported, but it remains difficult, emotional labour. Despite having been out of the department for a long time, there are children and families whose stories stay with me. Their stories shaped me as a social worker and a human being. Despite having been out of the department for a long time, many of the colleagues whom I worked with still remain in the department, loyal, committed and dedicated to this very difficult work.

I am proud to stand here as part of the McGowan Labor government that will invest heavily in this work to protect vulnerable children, support their families and help at-risk youth. This includes \$36.7 million to help deliver and enhance child protection services, with 36 new child protection workers to boost capacity on the front line, and a new chief practitioner to be appointed to oversee the specialist child protection unit at the Department of Communities. This means that this important work and the children who are at its centre will receive professional expertise, supervision and oversight. The package also includes \$23.9 million for early intervention and family support services, building on existing initiatives to keep children safe at home and prevent their entry into the out-of-home care system. These programs work closely with families to build capacity and in-home support to build parenting skills and to help keep children safe at home and with their families. There is a particular focus on addressing the gross over-representation of Aboriginal children in our out-of-home care system. This investment builds on the additional resourcing already committed to the child protection system such as the \$6.1 million commitment to support children in care through the creation of a new Midland care team. The new care team will be the ninth in the district and comprise 14 additional staff.

In the last reporting year and for the first time since 1997, the total number of children in care in Western Australia dropped, by 2.8 per cent. These are, of course, far more than numbers. These are the lives of children and their families and their communities. The greatest indicator that a person will be in out-of-home-care is that they had a parent who was in out-of-home care. One of the most significant risk factors for homelessness, apart from being an older woman, is that the person has been in out-of-home care themselves. When we keep a child out of the care system, we not only restore their safety and wellbeing at home in the here and now, but also prevent a number of significant long-term and even intergenerational poor social outcomes.

Similarly, there is an \$11.1 million expansion of the highly successful Target 120 program to nine additional locations across the state, aimed to prevent at-risk children and young people from entering the justice system. Since its inception in 2018, the program has been linked to better outcomes for participants, with about half having no further contact with the police. The McGowan government is also continuing to deliver on its commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with \$2.7 million for a pilot harmful sexual behaviours intervention program. Again, this builds on other initiatives the McGowan government has led based on the recommendations of the royal commission, including the number of professions that are now mandatory reporters and the new reportable conduct scheme, requiring organisations to report allegations of, and convictions for, child abuse. This scheme will allow the Ombudsman to examine how organisations handle complaints of child abuse by their staff, making the organisations that work with children safe for them to engage with.

Family and domestic violence is often a factor for those families involved in the child protection system. Similar to child protection, family and domestic violence involves multiple complex issues and impacts, involving engagement with multiple systems and services such as health, police, the justice and legal system, mental health services and so forth. The McGowan government developed and continues to implement a 10-year statewide strategy to reduce family and domestic violence called Path to Safety. The government has invested funding into the FDV sector in new services and programs. In 2022–23, WA's third one-stop family and domestic violence hub will be established in Armadale, building on the successful outcomes experienced in Mirrabooka and Kalgoorlie since the establishment of those hubs in late 2020. A fourth hub is also being committed to for the Kimberley. The department is continuing

to improve the safety of our children and young people through the implementation of the \$29.5 million Safe Home Safe Family package, which is an expansion of the successful respectful relationships teaching support program, with an additional commitment of \$3 million over five years from 2021–22 to 2025–26.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr K. STRATTON:** As a parent, I am appreciative that my children can participate in this primary prevention program, respectful relationships, which focuses on building relationships and gender equality from an early age that are marked by respect. It aims to develop in students, children and young people, the skills and capacity to develop and build relationships marked by nonviolence, equality, mutual respect and trust. The whole school community is partnering and championing intervention and prevention, with schools providing safe spaces for students to learn, explore and disclose without fear of judgement or fear of being silenced. Norms, cultures and attitudes that support, condone and excuse family and domestic and gender-based violence are developed, challenged and embedded at the school community level. Can I take a moment to use my puffer, please? The cold weather is running a lot of interference with my asthma. I have not got much more to go.

I want to finish with a realised infrastructure investment in my community, the purple CAT bus. The new purple CAT bus route has 46 stops and services Kings Park, the University of Western Australia, Perth Children's Hospital and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. It builds on a key 2021–22 budget commitment by the McGowan government to help return vibrancy to the CBD by making it easier for people to access key tourist, business, health and education destinations within the city and its immediate boundaries. Those 46 stops add an additional 47 000 kilometres each year to Perth's extensive CAT bus network. The stops at UWA make it easier for students and staff and the stops at the Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre precinct makes the area more accessible for patients, families and staff as well as their visitors, and reduces the demands for parking at both of these sites. Tens of thousands of people used the purple CAT bus in its first few weeks, particularly UWA students and at least one MP who uses it as a connection between her office and Parliament House, and who avoids having to walk to meetings at the QEII site when I have not planned particularly well and have worn my usual beloved heels instead of flats. On the importance of the right shoe choice, it is my pleasure to commend the two appropriation bills to the house, and I thank you for the support.

**MS D.G. D'ANNA (Kimberley)** [1.07 pm]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. The McGowan Labor government's budget is delivering for our regions like the Kimberley, which I am proud to represent. This budget is investing millions of dollars to improve our region, create local jobs and support families and young people. This budget will provide critical support to our remote communities, with millions more to be invested in schools, local training and health. I am motivated by this recent budget. It is a good Labor budget that delivers for people in regional WA.

As I have said many times in this place, I am passionate about making sure that my constituents, the people of the Kimberley, are afforded the same access to quality care and opportunities that are afforded to the people of Perth. We have a lot of exciting initiatives in the budget for the Kimberley. Sometimes I think the smaller initiatives get overlooked by the big-ticket items, so I will try to cover both. Key parts of the budget include a massive \$1.3 billion to further strengthen and diversify our economy and to support a range of local industries while creating WA jobs. It also provides the biggest ever \$2.5 billion investment in health and mental health, with a package of targeted measures to address emergency department pressures.

I am also pleased to see that the budget supports Western Australians with the cost of living by using the strong surplus to deliver a \$400 household electricity credit to every WA household, reducing household fees and charges by 3.8 per cent. I know a lot of people in my electorate, including my family members, will welcome that.

Housing is an issue for everyone at the moment. I hear about the housing pressures from renters in the towns in the Kimberley, from businesses trying to retain staff and from people living in remote Aboriginal communities. I am extremely happy to see a massive \$350 million investment into the remote communities fund. This fund will support improved water, electricity and municipal services and housing in remote Aboriginal communities. Last year I had the pleasure to take the Minister for Housing out to the Mowanjumb community to meet with the mob out there and have a chat about the state of some of their houses. He also got to witness the houses that our mobs are living in in these communities. If members visit a remote Aboriginal community, they will see firsthand the issues with services and housing that our people are facing. It was not always this way. We remember when the federal government walked away from funding these communities properly. Let us not forget what those on the other side of the house did when they were in government—they tried to close our communities. And when there were protests across the world against Colin Barnett's push to close our communities, the dying coalition government tried to close remote Aboriginal communities by stealth. I used to live in a few of these remote communities.

As a child, I grew up in the Beagle Bay community. As a young mother, I moved to the Woolah Aboriginal Corporation community, which is also known as Doon Doon. In my older years when my grandfather got sick, I grew up in Chile Creek outside of Djarindjin. I remember the pride that the community and the children felt when I was growing up. People on communities loved being in their communities. They took pride in and ownership of their communities, developing their work plans and visions for their communities. They had ownership of what went on in their communities. People went into town only for events such as the local football game or for the big

shopping trip to stock up for the week. As support for remote communities was cut, opportunities were taken away, and basic services limited our mobs, who were slowly forced to leave their communities as they were not sustainable. Our remote Aboriginal communities deserve so much better, and I want to thank the Minister for Housing for his hard work in this space. I also look forward to working with the Minister for Housing and this Labor government to maximise Aboriginal employment and contracting outcomes through this fund. I also note that there was a call by the minister this morning for the federal government, whoever it may be after Saturday, to match our state's funding.

It is critical that we make sure that, where possible, the refurbishment of housing generates local economic activity. There is also \$15.8 million in additional funding to upgrade water and wastewater services in Ardyaloon, Djarindjin, Lombadina and Beagle Bay. I look forward to following this project closely and visiting those Dampier Peninsula communities.

The budget includes \$2 million to expand the solar incentive scheme, which will deliver community-owned rooftop solar to remote Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley. This is a great initiative, as we have so much sun and it is important that we support communities to have community-owned infrastructure such as this. Further, a topic that I have heard discussed across the Kimberley many times is Government Regional Officers' Housing. It is great to see that this budget has \$99.4 million to spot purchase and build new Government Regional Officers' Housing across regional WA. I look forward to continuing to work hard with the Minister for Housing until everyone in the Kimberley has a good and safe home and housing options.

This budget also has \$5.5 million to extend the driving access and equity program, empowering members of regional communities to improve their driving skills. I know what a difference a driver's licence makes for a young person, especially in the Kimberley. I remember when I was 17 years old and got my licence. I knew how to drive; I learnt from one of the classes at Nulungu school and practised on the back bush roads. I could handle a car, but learning the road rules was hard! I practised every day in the bush, but when it came to the roads, I had a few structured lessons from an instructor in their car, as my parents had no car. Not everyone has access to vehicles or mentors to learn how to drive safely and complete the necessary hours to obtain a licence. Recently, the Minister for Transport came up to the Kimberley to announce this funding and we met with the Nirrumbuk Aboriginal Corporation and some of the mentors who are teaching under this program. It was awesome to have a chat to Daniel and Errol and to see how they also get the chance to be positive role models to the young people they are training. This will make a huge difference for many people and open up a lot more opportunities.

The McGowan Labor government is also committed to transforming our regional road and transport networks. As I travel around the Kimberley, I understand how important it is to have safe roads. An additional \$159 million has been allocated to the regional road safety program, bringing the total cost of the program to \$828 million. This program has already delivered upgraded shoulders and installed audible edges on more than 2 238 kilometres of Kimberley roads. This kind of investment comes only from this side of the house—the Labor government that truly cares about the regions. There is an additional \$146 million for the safer roads and bridges program in regional WA. I am excited to see how this will change our roads throughout the Kimberley. I would like to mention that my colleague the member for Warren–Blackwood recently drove along the roads from Kununurra to Broome and I remember this message popping up: “Why do you have so many single-lane bridges?” My response was: “Rita's fixing that!”

There is \$200 million for a resealing program in regional WA. I am sure that the people of Halls Creek and the surrounding communities of Billiluna, Mulan and Kutjungka–Balgo will welcome the \$500 million to seal Tanami Road to the WA border. It will not only create local job opportunities, but also ensure that access into and out of the communities is safe and improved. I had the pleasure of being out there early last year after the big flood and talking to some of the community members. I was privileged to arrive there by charter. I understand the frustrations of people out there when they try to come into town because their food supply has been cut off or they have been cut off from people on the other side of the river because the dirt road gets washed out every year. Our remote Aboriginal communities deserve to have this access afforded to them, just like everyone else.

We have all struggled with our mobile coverage in black spots not just on the roads across the Kimberley, but also, unfortunately, in our towns. Members should try doing some remote videoconferencing up there! I have heard from some schools in remote Aboriginal communities that they have had trouble getting the internet connected for the young ones to continue their learning. This is just one example of how important it is to have good mobile and broadband connection across the Kimberley, whether it is for education purposes or otherwise. I know that this issue is a big passion of the federal Labor candidate for the seat of Durack, Jeremiah Riley. Jeremiah has been travelling up and down WA and throughout the massive electorate of Durack, and he constantly hears from community members that black spots are such a barrier. I know that Jeremiah will fight hard for more federal funding in this space if he is elected on Saturday.

This budget has a big investment of \$48.6 million to improve mobile and internet coverage across regional areas around the state, to make sure that we are bridging this digital divide in the regions. This funding will go to things like new mobile base stations and fixed wireless infrastructure; upgrading the capacity and performance of existing communications assets; trialling new technologies; and improving connectivity for disadvantaged communities. I look forward to seeing this project in the region and working with the Minister for Regional Development to ensure that more people are connected across the Kimberley.

The McGowan government is investing \$349.2 million in regional primary and secondary schools over the next four years for refurbishments, upgrades and new builds. I am proud to see that this budget commits significant resources to new and expanding initiatives to support students with disabilities and additional learning needs—a really important investment into our education system.

A further \$11.7 million allocation will continue the Kimberley Schools Project, which is working to keep young people engaged in the education system. I have heard from many schools across the Kimberley about how well this program is going in terms of engaging students and producing better results. The Kimberley Schools Project commenced in 2017, and focused on targeted teaching, better early years learning, improving attendance, and increased student and community engagement. The program has fostered improvements in educational outcomes for Kimberley students. Just recently, I had the pleasure of hosting an online forum with schools in the Kimberley. There were very positive comments about the program, and I saw the teaching techniques and results for myself when I visited Wyndham District High School and Holy Rosary School in Derby, and also when my six-year-old granddaughter, Ellie, who attends Broome Primary School, proudly gave me a demonstration on how she can spell.

One of my biggest passions and drivers is making sure that our little ones are in the best position possible to take over from us; they are our future. One of the issues that has come up often in my electorate of Kimberley is the youth challenges that face our towns and communities. I have continuously advocated that we need a holistic approach that makes sure we are supporting families and creating capacity for our communities. As we all know, the reasons for the problems we are seeing in the Kimberley now are many and complex, but the McGowan government will continue to put a major effort into a comprehensive response.

We have seen multiple reports, such as *Kimberley juvenile justice* by my predecessor, Ms Josie Farrer, in 2014; *Fitzroy Valley youth engagement strategy* by Fitzroy Valley Futures in 2019; *Kimberley juvenile justice strategy: consultation report* by the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre in 2020; and many more. They all have similar themes, such as an on-country facility and supporting our children and families. I will always be there making sure that our voices are heard in the McGowan government to ensure that we have Aboriginal-led, place-based solutions to these challenges.

This budget outlines investment in tackling youth offending in the Kimberley, including \$15 million towards an on-country residential facility for young offenders, to give the justice system a genuine alternative to detention and the opportunity to engage young people in structured work and learning and support. There is \$11.1 million to expand Target 120 with nine additional sites across the state; in the Kimberley, that will be in Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing and Derby. Additionally, a \$2 million Kimberley community action fund has been established to provide small grants for community safety and security over the next two years. This is an opportunity for initiatives from local place-based bodies to see what they can do for their communities. I would also like to note that this is all in addition to the current long-term commitments to the Kimberley juvenile justice strategy and diversionary programs.

I am passionate about making sure that our families are strong and that women and children are safe at home. I have been pleased to see the McGowan Labor government investing more into family and domestic violence initiatives, including community-run programs.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms D.G. D'ANNA:** This year there will be \$4.5 million allocated to the Kimberley to help address family violence by extending the Derby Family Violence Service and the Change Em Ways Kimberley project. These are two programs aimed at tackling family violence in the Kimberley, and now they will be extended for a further four years. The Derby Family Violence Service, run by Anglicare WA in partnership with the Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation, will respond to family violence in Derby and the Mowanjum Aboriginal Community. The Change Em Ways Kimberley project, an Aboriginal men's behaviour change program run by the Men's Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation, will continue to operate in the remote communities of Bidyadanga, Fitzroy Crossing and Balgo-Kutjungka. These are just some of the good examples of how this government is supporting local organisations to run programs that suit local people.

We also saw \$920 000 in the budget to allow the WA Country Health Service to commence the design process for a new dialysis service in Halls Creek. The Halls Creek community has been calling for a long time for a renal dialysis centre and renal hostel to be built locally. This will result in equitable access to renal services, and people will no longer be unfairly disadvantaged by having to dialyse in towns far away from their families and support networks. According to the Aboriginal medical services, all existing patients from Halls Creek and surrounding areas are currently having to be treated away from their home communities and they have, at times, expressed their wish to withdraw from treatment, as they are unable to continue to be away from country and their family. The impact of elders being away from family are highlighted when significant cultural events take place. There are growing incidents of missed dialysis treatments due to patients returning to Halls Creek, which in turn is leading to poorer health outcomes. Other silent impacts of not having services close to home include increased hospital admissions within the region; additional pressure on existing services; and increased numbers of patients becoming ill and requiring transfer to Royal Perth Hospital for acute medical care.

The Halls Creek Elders Group has identified this as one of its top priorities to help bring family members back home to where they have support, where some patients have significant cultural and family responsibilities, and where patients can manage their end of life on country and around family. It is important that the design process is robust to ensure that the new dialysis service is culturally safe and meets the needs of people in Halls Creek and surrounds. The WA Country Health Service will engage with the Aboriginal medical services sector and the community on this initiative. It is great to see this election commitment getting underway, and I look forward to working with the Minister for Health on ensuring that it is a successful project that reflects the needs of the local community. Once completed, more patients will be able to stay in the Kimberley for renal treatment and enjoy the support and company of their families.

All the investments I have outlined show what people in the regions all know: this Labor government is the government for people living in the regions. We know the importance of supporting people, and that is what I will continue to focus on. The Kimberley is a vast electorate, with a beautiful diversity of country and people, and I will continue to stand up for all Kimberley people and advocate for these important investments and others. I commend the bills to the house.

**MR K.J.J. MICHEL (Pilbara)** [1.30 pm]: I rise today to support the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and to say what this means for the Pilbara economy and local communities. I would also like to thank all members for their contributions and in particular my friend the member for Kimberley, because our electorates are pretty much the same in all the needs and facilities that we look after. I commend the Premier on delivering his second state budget as Treasurer and for his continued strong leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to be part of a McGowan Labor government that has demonstrated responsible financial management, and I congratulate the Treasurer on delivering a strong and fair budget. I would like to thank the Minister for Emergency Services; Innovation and ICT; Medical Research; Volunteering, Hon Stephen Dawson, MLC, and the Minister for Mines and Petroleum; Energy; Corrective Services; Industrial Relations, Hon Bill Johnston, for coming to Port Hedland last week. They presented the budget for 2022–23 in Port Hedland and Karratha respectively.

The Pilbara is the economic powerhouse of Western Australia and the nation, and has helped carry the nation through the pandemic. I am proud that the McGowan government recognises this with record investment in jobs, health, education, training, infrastructure and other services across the Pilbara in this budget. It is evident in this budget that the McGowan government is setting up the Pilbara for long-term diversification—creating jobs, boosting regional health and mental health, transforming our regional roads and transport networks, and delivering stronger and safer communities.

I thank the McGowan government for providing important cost-of-living relief for local households. The McGowan government's \$400 household electricity credit will be a welcome relief to Pilbara residents to help keep household fees and charges below inflation. This is on top of more than \$2 billion invested to ensure people in the region pay the same for water and electricity as that paid by metropolitan users.

Another policy that is hugely welcomed by Pilbara residents is the McGowan government's first cap on regional airfares, which begins on 1 July this year. I thank the Minister for Transport and the McGowan government for delivering on a major election commitment to make airfares more affordable for regional residents. Regular airfares will be capped at \$299 one way for regional residents living over 1 000 kilometres' driving distance from Perth, including travel from Karratha, Port Hedland and Newman. This is great news for Pilbara residents. It comes at a time when the cost of living is going up. The McGowan government is the only government in the history of any government to introduce reduced, capped airfares in the Pilbara.

In 2017, I advocated for the development of Lumsden Point, as it was something that the business community in Hedland wanted to see happen. I am proud and happy that the McGowan government has included this project in this budget. The Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, and I went onto the Lumsden Point site to visit it and view the plans. I am pleased that the McGowan government has committed \$78.1 million towards the new cargo facilities at Lumsden Point in Port Hedland and \$15 million to undertake dredging facilities for additional capacity for the port of Port Hedland. This will expand the capacity of the port in Port Hedland. This is a critical economic infrastructure project for Port Hedland and the Pilbara. Lumsden Point will enable the growth of the renewable energy sector and is projected to create 460 jobs a year. This project will also add value to the present direct shipping from Singapore to Port Hedland and help to diversify Port Hedland.

Other investments that will assist to boost the Pilbara economy and local jobs are \$25 million for the Western Australian agricultural collaboration to grow agricultural research and development in WA, \$12 million for the WA-Array seismic survey to unlock new mineral deposits and job-creating opportunities, and \$6 million to the Minerals Research Institute of Western Australia to pursue strategic research opportunities, including critical minerals and clean energy technologies. The Pilbara region has a lot of potential. I am pleased to be part of a McGowan government that is working hard to support and grow established sectors while providing important investment so that the Pilbara can capitalise on new economic opportunities.

The Pilbara boasts some of the world's most ancient and extraordinary natural landscapes. The Pilbara's environmental and cultural assets represent unrealised potential for the regional tourism sector. I am pleased that this budget sees

an increase in tourism investment in the Pilbara, including a \$21.1 million boost to Tourism WA destination marketing; \$17.7 million to Tourism WA to develop new tourism experiences in WA national parks; \$9.3 million for an access bridge at Murujuga National Park, plus a further \$1.6 million for the Murujuga rock art strategy, including two Aboriginal rangers; and \$30.7 million to secure tourism events. All this is on top of the \$195 million Reconnect WA package. Investing in the Pilbara's tourism industry has the potential to grow vitalisation, increase expenditure in the region and create employment, training and business opportunities.

The McGowan government's significant investment in regional health and mental health continues with \$30.1 million for 18 additional paramedics and six ambulances across regional WA, delivering on a key election commitment. I know, Acting Speaker (Mrs L.A. Munday), that this is also a priority for you. Our volunteers do an amazing job every day to service our community, and this announcement of additional paramedics and ambulances is a massive boost to the work they do. As it is National Volunteer Week this week, I would like to personally thank all the volunteers for their service in WA.

These are issues that the people in the Pilbara have been asking me about for a long time. I am once again happy that the McGowan government is investing \$10 million to deliver a specialist paediatric cancer haematology, stroke and neurology service at the Karratha Health Campus and surrounding sites. I am proud that the McGowan government is delivering on this election commitment. I work closely with Reach Us Pilbara Inc, which provides cancer support services in the Pilbara, and this will be welcome news, as statistics sadly show that, on average, a cancer patient is diagnosed every three days in the Pilbara. This funding will ensure that Pilbara residents continue to receive quality care where it is needed most.

Other initiatives in the 2022–23 state budget for the Pilbara include \$11 million to ensure there is a nurse 24/7 at emergency departments, \$5.1 million to continue mental health emergency telehealth services, and a \$6.1 million funding boost to the preventing foetal alcohol spectrum disorder project. These investments are important to ensure people in the Pilbara have access to quality health and mental health services. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our dedicated healthcare workers, especially in the Pilbara, who continue to provide first-class patient care every single day throughout the challenge of the pandemic and being remote. Being on the front line is not easy, but it is very appreciated and I thank you.

The state budget also includes important investment in education and training for young people in the Pilbara, including \$113.1 million of fee reductions through the successful Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative. Since 2020, TAFE enrolments in the Pilbara have increased by 31 per cent. This shows the government's continued commitment to preferencing and promoting local jobs for local residents over FIFO workers. I am pleased that \$5.5 million will be invested to extend the driving access and equity program that assists young people in the Pilbara to obtain a driver's licence. Without a driver's licence, opportunities and access to essential services in the regions is challenging. This will also boost people's job prospects. Many Aboriginal youth and people in the Pilbara find it difficult to get a job or drive a truck because they do not have a licence. I have spoken to many adults, youth and kids who are finishing years 11 and 12 who access this program or who got their licence because of this program and have gone on to secure a job in the mining and resources industry or with road contractors.

Other investments that will assist in upskilling the Pilbara community is \$2.4 million to attract international students to live and study in regional WA; addressing skills needs in aged care, disability services, childcare and hospitality; and \$5.1 million for a wage gap program to support the building and construction sector. All these investments have been developed to meet skills shortages and are informed by ideas and outcomes from the regional skills summit. I thank the Minister for Education and Training for holding the regional skills summit in Karratha and Port Hedland in November 2021.

I would also like to thank all the Pilbara business owners and industry leaders for participating in this summit. These conversations helped generate ideas and actions to form a local action plan to meet the Pilbara's workforce needs. I am pleased that the McGowan government will continue to improve education outcomes for Pilbara students, including an increase of \$54.6 million in support for students with disabilities and additional learning needs. Our schools have done a wonderful job navigating the challenging times during the pandemic and I am pleased that the McGowan government has committed \$42.5 million in funding to ensure that schools can respond to the ongoing pandemic and remain open and safe.

An additional \$33.8 million in funding will go towards maintenance upgrades to improve public schools. I am excited to see the McGowan government delivering major school upgrades in my electorate, including \$31.7 million to Karratha Senior High School and \$42 million to Roebourne District High School, which I am told will be a new school. These are two initiatives that I advocated for. Last Friday, I had the opportunity to represent the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, MLC, and turn the sod at the Karratha high school project. The teachers and community are very happy that this is happening and construction is underway.

I am proud to be part of the McGowan government that is committed to ensuring that students across the Pilbara receive a quality education. These upgrades will not only enhance the learning experiences of the students, but also create jobs for locals. I would like to thank all school staff and families for facing these challenging circumstances and keeping students learning in the safest environment possible.

The 2022–23 state budget also brings continued investment in regional roads and transport projects. Last year, I tabled a petition in Parliament on behalf of residents and workers of the Pilbara to place additional safety measures on Great Northern Highway. I am pleased this budget includes \$50 million for more overtaking lanes on Great Northern Highway between Newman and Port Hedland. I would also like to thank the Minister for Transport, Hon Rita Saffioti, for listening to the concerns about road safety in the Pilbara.

I am proud that the McGowan government is delivering \$120 million to continue the Marble Bar Road upgrade. This road is the only link for a number of communities in the east Pilbara for food, supplies and essential services. In the wet season this road can be closed for up to three months and communities can be isolated. This upgrade will improve safety and connectivity for tourism, industry and the inland Pilbara community.

The McGowan government is continuing to deliver \$380 million to the Manuwarra Red Dog Highway and further investments include an additional \$159 million to the regional road safety program, bringing the total cost of the program to \$828 million. This program has already delivered by upgrading shoulders and installing audible edges to more than 752 kilometres of Pilbara roads. I was excited to hear recently that the Pilbara's 3 000 km Warlu Way has been added to the top 100 Australian road trips. It follows the path of the Dreamtime Warlu serpent that emerged from the ocean and travelled through the region. This showcases Murujuga National Park and the inland route exploring the red rock gorges, pastoral station stays and Karijini National Park. These investments will improve the safety of our Pilbara roads, reduce travel times and increase freight efficiency as well as boost tourism. I am proud that the McGowan government is committed to bringing regional road maintenance projects in-house to Main Roads, with 490 jobs based in regional WA, including establishing a new depot in Karratha and upgrading the Port Hedland depot.

Crime has been a massive issue in the Pilbara. I have seen the destruction that has taken place. I have talked to businesses and the community and I have advocated with ministers. Once again, I am pleased that the McGowan government has included funds in the 2022–23 state budget to ensure that Pilbara communities are kept safe and strong, particularly with a \$2.5 million investment towards Operation Regional Shield to tackle youth crime. Operational Regional Shield enables additional police capability to be deployed to the Pilbara as necessary to tackle juvenile offending. This is a welcomed initiative as it gives our local police more resources to respond to criminal activity and keep our community safe. I take this opportunity to thank our police officers for doing an excellent job to keep our Pilbara community safe.

The budget will also deliver \$2.5 million to expand the successful Target 120 program to Karratha and Newman. Target 120 is already operational in Port Hedland so I am very pleased to see it expand further into the Pilbara to address the issues resulting from youth crime. This investment will bring the successful McGowan government program to Karratha and Newman, giving authorities more resources to work with young people and their families to address these issues. I am pleased this budget has committed an additional \$408 million towards housing and homelessness measures. Since my election to this place in 2017, I have travelled to many Aboriginal communities in my electorate, especially the Western Desert communities, and I have spoken in this house about the adverse conditions and the run-down houses those people live in.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mrs L.A. Munday):** Member for Pilbara, would you like a short extension?

**Mr K.J.J. MICHEL:** Yes, I would like an extension please, Madam Acting Speaker; thank you. I am caught up on this topic because it is very close to my heart.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr K.J.J. MICHEL:** The federal Liberal–National government turned its back on them. Its members should hang their heads in shame. The federal Liberal–National government said that it was closing the gap. It moved people out of communities and shut communities down. It did not build or maintain houses. I am very grateful that the McGowan government has come to the rescue. It will assist our Aboriginal communities to become strong by providing a \$350 million remote communities fund to support improved water, electricity and municipal services, and housing, in remote Aboriginal communities. There is \$2 million to expand the solar incentive scheme, including to health services in Aboriginal communities in the Pilbara.

The budget will deliver \$19.1 million for the development of new residential land in two regional locations, including new residential lots in Karratha's Madigan estate. This investment will boost housing and land supply by releasing 62 new residential lots in Karratha's Madigan estate.

In addition to the new investment, the McGowan government has announced a range of new tax reform measures that will promote greater housing diversity and affordability. This includes an increased Keystart property price limit in the Pilbara, from \$650 000 to \$750 000, which will assist households to gain access to finance. Keystart plays an essential role in the Pilbara housing market by making home ownership affordable, achievable and sustainable for low and moderate income-earning Pilbara residents.

There are many other commitments in this budget that will keep our regional economy growing while delivering on election commitments for the local community. When we came into office in 2017, the previous Liberal–National government had debt on a path towards \$43.7 billion in 2019–20 and interest costs of \$1.7 billion and rising. Since then, the McGowan government has been paying off debt because of its good financial management. At the same

time, it has been delivering on its election promises and addressing issues that it has come across, all the while delivering massive surpluses. I would like to congratulate the Premier, Treasurer and ministers for delivering a budget that will keep the Pilbara strong and vibrant, as well as continue to set up our region for the future. On behalf of the Pilbara community, I commend the bills to the house.

**MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach)** [1.52 pm]: I rise to respond to the state budget through the debate on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022, but before I do, I wish to be a little indulgent. Last week, a dear member of my community, John Falco, passed. In this time in which the Falco family is grieving, I would like to recognise the efforts of his partner, my dear friend, fantastic community member and great Labor Party supporter Shirley Falco. Shirley is a true believer. At this time, where I would be home grieving, Shirley has been out on the hustings handing out how-to-vote cards for outstanding local candidates like Tom French and Tracey Roberts. She has even been out doorknocking—bearing in mind, Shirley is in her mid-80s—to encourage junior supporters in an attempt to change this federal government to one that she feels really passionate about. Yesterday, I had the privilege of attending the Catholic service for John’s passing. I would just like to recognise Shirley in this time of need following John’s passing. Thank you, Shirley.

Before I go on any further, I would like to put on the record my personal thanks to the Premier and our wonderful Minister for Health, the member for Morley, and to the previous health minister, the Deputy Premier and member for Kwinana. Over the past two years, I have had several sleepless nights worrying about the vulnerable in my constituency, including my father and my father-in-law, but also myself, given my own susceptibilities. I thank them for the great efforts to which they have gone to protect my community throughout this period, by maintaining a strong economy and an effective health system while under great pressure. I am certain that if it were not for their great leadership, hundreds, if not thousands, would be dead. I look opposite—and see no-one! Say no more! But I look opposite and see that they are obsessed with power. They do not listen to their communities or remember that people must come first, before power and profit.

Western Australia is expected to generate 63 per cent of its revenue from direct state sources over the next 12 months. These state sources include payroll tax, mining royalties, and fees and charges. This means that only 37 per cent of our income will come from the commonwealth government. This is the lowest proportion of funding from the commonwealth for any state in the country. Western Australia provides the largest net revenue contribution to the Federation of any state in this country. It is WA that has kept this country afloat throughout this pandemic, and it is WA that will keep the Federation on its feet. I have listened to recent commentary from the New South Wales government. There is a reason that we call New South Welshmen cockroaches: it is because they are unwelcome pests who come across and spoil our food! The New South Wales Premier wants to get his hands on our GST. It is on the public record. He wants to take most of what is not rightfully theirs, just because they have sold off all their profit-making state-owned enterprises. They want this money to pork barrel in their own state and, they claim, to reduce debt, rather than reducing their own expenses. All I am going to say is: where is a thong when you need it? That is the best way to get rid of a cockroach, I believe.

Returning to the issue at hand, I wish to commend the Premier, the member for Rockingham and our Treasurer, on a fiscally responsible budget that will drive thriving communities, create economic diversification and generate transport infrastructure across Western Australia. It will also protect the health of my community and ensure the sovereign security of our great state. I note that the repayment of over \$1.2 billion of debt has saved over \$130 million in interest alone, ensuring that this state maintains its AAA credit rating with Standard and Poor’s and other credit-rating organisations. That was lost by the Liberal–Nationals alliance, due to its incompetent mismanagement of our finances. This is not me making it up. I remember the Langoulang inquiry during the last Parliament. Members know the one. It unveiled and unravelled pork barrelling of a size that this state had never seen before. The alliance leaders of the National Party disguised it in a program called royalties for regions. Hundreds of millions of dollars was siphoned off to small unwanted infrastructure programs, rather than used to fix the things that the community really needed, like better roads and better hospitals. Who can forget Moora Residential College, which could have been fixed years ago? I note that the college still had a fall in numbers even after the investment. Who could forget the swimming pools that were built but were left empty, because the related local government could not afford the water to put in them or, more importantly, the staff to man them? Here is the one that I really find a deadset kicker. How about the underground power project at Port Hedland? It cost \$430 000 per home for a connection! The project was much needed. I understand that protecting the towns —

Several members interjected.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Let me finish, members. You were not here earlier on when I started, so you can muzzle it now! It cost \$430 000 per home per connection. I understand this was a very much needed project in a town that is definitely at risk from cyclones, but \$430 000 per house—really? Remember, if you do not learn from your mistakes, member, you are doomed to repeat them.

Several members interjected.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 2491.]

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

### MEDI-HOTELS

#### 312. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I refer to the 2017 election commitment to introduce medi-hotels in Western Australia, which promised to free up 54 tertiary beds every day and allow 5 262 more patients to be treated in our hospitals each year. Does the minister concede that had the government kept this promise, bed block in our hospitals would be considerably lower and ambulances would not have spent thousands of hours parked up outside hospitals each day?

#### Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

Deputy Speaker, there are two —

**The SPEAKER:** Speaker!

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** Madam Speaker, not deputy; apologies!

There are two medi-hotels operating, and they are operating as we intended them to do. They are taking lower acuity patients who need intravenous antibiotics, for example, but are not in a position to do that at home. So, we have delivered on that election commitment. The member may have seen from the freeway the incredible medi-hotel that is being built in Murdoch. The state government, working with Aegis Health, will provide an incredible healthcare centre that will provide a multitude of services, including supporting Fiona Stanley Hospital with its lower acuity patients and freeing up beds there.

I totally disagree with the member and the underlying premise of the question that somehow we have not delivered on these commitments when we absolutely have. There is one operating at Royal Perth, one is operating at Bentley and one is being built at Murdoch, so we are delivering these medi-hotels, along with record investment in our health system. The health budget under this government has increased every single year. Since we were elected in 2017, the health budget has increased by more than 30 per cent. That is testament to the incredible work and discipline of this government and the former Minister for Health. On top of that, we have been managing a pandemic for two years and preparing the system for a pandemic. That is the context in which we are delivering on our commitments. We are delivering record funding and we are having the best health and economic outcomes in the world in the most difficult time.

### MEDI-HOTELS

#### 313. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Health:

I have a supplementary question. How does the minister reconcile the fact that in the last two budgets there have been \$11.5 billion in surpluses, but ambulance ramping has increased to a peak of over 6 500 hours under this government's watch?

#### Ms A. SANDERSON replied:

The supplementary question did not relate at all to the first question, although the first question was hard to understand; I will acknowledge that.

**Ms L. Mettam:** Undelivered beds.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, member for Vasse!

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** Under the last two budgets, the health spend has gone from \$8.6 billion to more than \$11 billion. The Liberal–National government was borrowing to pay the bills. It was borrowing to pay nurses and borrowing to pay the doctors. If we had continued down that track, there is no way that we could have managed the pandemic the way we have—to recruit 1 400 nurses and more than 500 doctors and to put more than 300 beds online since the last budget, which was only in September, by the way. By the end of this year, more than 580 beds will be online.

**Ms L. Mettam:** But don't ring 000.

**Ms A. SANDERSON:** You clearly do not want to hear the answer. All I can hear is muffled muttering on the other side.

This government has injected record investment in our health system at the time it was needed. Our budget in health has gone up every single year.

### STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION

#### 314. Ms S.E. WINTON to the Treasurer:

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's responsible financial management that has delivered a strong surplus and a significant reduction in the \$44 billion of Liberal and National debt. Can the Premier outline to the house how this government's strong financial management is helping to deliver significant investment in diversifying the economy and growing new industries in WA?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

Obviously, we are committed to diversifying the Western Australian economy. Prior to the pandemic, two and a bit years ago, we were having record tourism growth. We had attracted direct flights and major events. We were investing in international education and attracting very significant business investment. Obviously when the pandemic hit, we had to take some pretty extraordinary measures to protect the state and the state's economy. However, in the budget we announced \$1.3 billion in investment in a wide range of industries across the state to further diversify the economy and support some of our strong industries in Western Australia.

I turn to tourism. We are back to attracting blockbuster events. We have secured four English Premier League teams to Western Australia to play round ball football. The NRL State of Origin is coming to Western Australia. We have the Wallabies playing England in the other rugby code, which will be terrific for rugby fans who have secured direct flights between Perth and Rome. The direct flights are recommencing to London, and this budget will invest another \$70 million in tourism, including marketing major events and business events—which, I might add, they are very happy about—and major marketing campaigns across the east coast and internationally.

In international education, we have the first Minister for International Education, Hon David Templeman, member for Mandurah. Yes, he is doing a terrific job as the Minister for International Education. There is no better evidence of that than the \$41.2 million in the budget, which is the biggest spend ever on international students to include scholarships, familiarisation programs and commissions and the like to get more international students back into our universities, TAFEs, schools and private colleges in Western Australia.

On top of that, we are investing in supporting and attracting businesses. The \$80 million investment attraction fund now totals \$180 million. The \$50 million for the industrial land development fund is now growing to \$100 million. There is \$25 million for the agricultural collaboration, which is in partnership with the CSIRO and Western Australian universities to leverage commonwealth funding. There is \$17 million to open up new international trade offices in Chennai, Ho Chi Minh City, Frankfurt and one other location. There is \$10 million of funding to attract call centres and back-office processing to WA. There is the medical lifestyle sciences industry funding—it goes on and on. Where is the member for Geraldton? There will be a massive investment in Geraldton port of \$320 million to expand its capacity. Therefore, we are taking unprecedented efforts to diversify the state's economy. Obviously, we can do that when we manage the finances well, and we ensure that we have the best outcomes from the pandemic of anywhere in the world. Our strong financial management is paying dividends for future generations of Western Australians.

#### AMBULANCE RAMPING

**315. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I refer to the litany of excuses this government has used over the past two years to explain the record ambulance ramping figures, including respiratory issues, extra cleaning, a severe flu season and, at first, outright denial that there was a problem. Given that ramping is a result of a hospital system at capacity with no beds available, why has it taken a crisis and so long for the government to admit it is failing to manage our crumbling health system and offer support to St John Ambulance?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

One thing I do know is that Labor will always manage health better than the Liberals and Nationals. We will always manage it better. The Liberals' and Nationals' DNA is that ordinary people do not deserve decent health care.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** That is where they start from. The Liberals' and Nationals' DNA is that it should depend on the amount of money someone has in their bank account, rather than their need. That is where they start.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** The member does not know the history. The Liberals and Nationals know nothing about history. They know nothing about the history of this country or the history of these issues.

I have been here a long time and I have seen it all. I can tell members that we always get better health outcomes and better investment under Labor governments than we do under Liberal governments because we want to make sure that ordinary people get decent health care.

The Leader of the Opposition said that one of the so-called excuses was respiratory issues. I do not know whether she has noticed, but we have been through a worldwide pandemic that is based on respiratory issues—that is what it is—and we have had to deal with that. I recently had some experience in a hospital with a family member. I can tell members that when staff have to deal with a patient, the changing of personal protective equipment and the protocols around that are quite extraordinary—it is quite extraordinary what has to happen—which obviously puts

huge delay into the system. Every time someone comes into a room, they change their PPE every time they leave the room. It is quite extraordinary. If someone comes in six times, they have to change their PPE six times—that is just with one patient. That sort of thing is quite extraordinary. They are the protocols. We do not control those; they are the protocols that Health puts in place. Those sorts of things do put delays into the system and they are unavoidable. It happens in ambulances as well. Then at any given point in time, there are literally thousands of staff not at work because they are COVID positive or they are a close contact. As we know with our health workforce, a lot of nurses in particular, but allied staff and doctors also, have children at school who become COVID positive and they either have to look after them or they become positive themselves.

These are hard issues to deal with; they should not be glibly dismissed as though we can somehow magic androids out of the air to fill the role of trained professionals. We cannot magic androids out of the air—we cannot! The Leader of the Opposition said, “Why couldn’t you plan for this?” In terms of the St John Ambulance situation, recently, on Sunday evening, I was advised that the absenteeism rate was 40 per cent—40 per cent!—because of COVID issues. They are not easy issues to deal with. What have we done? The Leader of the Opposition talked about beds. We have committed to 530-plus additional beds since October last year, of which 340 or so have already been rolled out. An additional 1 500 or so nurses have been employed over the course of the last two years, plus 512 additional doctors.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Honestly!

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** Honestly, the Liberals are so unfit for office.

**Ms L. Mettam** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There we are; there it goes. I remember when Colin Barnett was standing there—he got to stand there, but I have to stand here!

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As an act of sympathy!

At least the Liberal Party had people of substance amongst them at that point in time.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** There we go; there we go.

Those are the sorts of things that we are dealing with. As I said, there are 530-plus additional beds, 1 500 nurses, 512 additional doctors, \$5.2 billion in additional spend and a massive new emergency department regime put in place.

I read the national press and I know what is happening in other states. They are dealing with exactly the same issues, but they have dealt with them for years over COVID because they had massive outbreaks in Sydney and Melbourne, which we did not have. They had thousands of people die, which we did not have. We avoided the worst of that. We have achieved our soft landing out of COVID with incredibly high vaccination rates. Our situation is one that is difficult at this point in time. In many ways, it was unavoidable because of the fact that at some point in time, COVID was going to get here, despite our best efforts. We have prepared ourselves with our vaccination rates and additional investment as best we can to cope with a difficult situation.

#### AMBULANCE RAMPING

#### 316. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. What responsibility does the Premier take as Premier and Treasurer, with a record budget surplus two years in a row, for record ramping figures at our hospitals and health failures that constitute a crisis that we have never seen before after five years of him being the Premier?

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

As Premier and Treasurer, I always take responsibility for everything that happens in government, and that is why we have in place the strongest spend in health per capita of any government in Australia. What happens is that the Productivity Commission puts out a report, I think it is once a year, and it analyses —

**Ms M.J. Davies** interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** You do not listen! The Nationals and Liberals do not listen and they do not know anything—that is the truth of it. They do not listen and they do not know anything. No wonder the federal colleagues of both parties have nothing to do with you!

The truth of it is that we have put more into health per capita than any other government in Australia, except, perhaps, the ACT, but we cannot really count it. We have put more into it than any other government in Australia.

The Productivity Commission does a report. It looks at the global spend on population. We have put in 13 per cent above the national average. One would assume that Melbourne, Sydney and Victoria are around the national average and other states are below the national average. We are above the national average by 13 per cent per capita. When the Leader of the Opposition asks, “Why aren’t you spending enough?”, we are spending more than any other state in Australia. But, we do confront a range of situations that are unprecedented going back to 1919. They are unprecedented in anyone’s memory—I put it that way. No-one can remember the Spanish flu. It was obviously a bad situation—I would not want to downplay that one—but no-one has been through anything like this since 1919, yet our health professionals, our health system and the people who work in it have been doing a terrific job in difficult circumstances.

#### ACTIV FOUNDATION — LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIAL WORKSITE CLOSURES

##### 317. Mr H.T. JONES to the Minister for Disability Services:

Welcome back, minister. I refer to Activ Foundation’s recent decision to close its large-scale sites for supported employees in Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house on what the state government’s position is on this decision?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this situation should be resolved in the interests of participants and families who rely on this valuable service, including what role the commonwealth government should play?

##### Mr D.T. PUNCH replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I would first like to acknowledge the anguish of supported employees and their families as a result of Activ’s announcement this week to close its large-scale sites in Western Australia. I also acknowledge the member’s personal connection to the program and the upheaval that this has caused his family, amongst the hundreds of WA families adversely affected by this decision. It has come as a huge shock to those involved, many of whom have been supported by Activ for decades. I also point out my disappointment that just eight weeks’ notice has been allowed for those families to absorb and adapt to this devastating news. Having a job expands social networks, raises living standards, increases financial independence and promotes a sense of self-worth and confidence.

But we need to be clear about what has led to this point, and I must reiterate that the commonwealth has always had responsibility for supported employment. The state will continue to play its role and uphold all its obligations to Western Australians with disability, as we always have, contributing nearly \$1 billion annually to the scheme as detailed in last week’s budget. Indeed, what has occurred in the last 18 months is that the commonwealth has transitioned supported employment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme pricing framework for supports and employment from the previous federal disability employment assistance program.

I have been working closely with Activ and the NDIS minister, Minister Reynolds, to try to encourage a positive outcome for Activ to sustainably transition. Although there was a strong undertaking from Minister Reynolds to try to resolve the issues, it has clearly been to no avail. I ask: where is the leadership that Western Australians expect from the National Disability Insurance Scheme minister, who is a Western Australian senator, no less? Minister Reynolds’ only advice to Activ was that the NDIS could not hand out grants to the organisation. Activ is not looking for a handout; it is looking for the continuation of a funding model that was previously in place with the commonwealth government and served the disability community well. Activ and other Australian disability enterprises could at least be assisted to transition their business models to the new system; in fact, members—this is the rub—the federal government has been sitting on a \$67 million support package for Australian disability enterprises, such as Activ’s supported employment workshops, designed to help with the transition to new wage structures following a final decision by the Fair Work Commission. The federal government has been sitting on that money for months. Not one dollar from this fund has been allocated to any industrial disability enterprise to date. The Activ Foundation has repeatedly called on the federal government to allocate that funding in order to prepare for the transition, again to no avail. The commonwealth continues to sit on an unspent \$67 million transition fund. It is doing nothing with it—nothing. All the while, organisations such as Activ are now thinking about closing supported employment services and seeing hundreds of people with disability—our most vulnerable—across WA without jobs, many of whom have held those jobs for decades.

The McGowan government now calls on the federal government and Activ to immediately suspend that decision to close the supported employment workshops. All concerned parties need to keep the participants and their families in mind—they are central—as they continue to work through every possible option to keep these workshops functioning. I note that the federal opposition leader, Anthony Albanese, has this week confirmed that if elected Prime Minister, he will work to save the Activ workshops from closing, and I urge the Morrison government to make the same commitment and alleviate the anguish being experienced by the supported employees and their families.

## GERALDTON HEALTH CAMPUS — ONCOLOGY UNIT

**318. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the federal coalition government's \$9 million investment towards an oncology unit in Geraldton, which is a critical service for the communities in the midwest.

- (1) Why, with the \$5 700 million surplus, has the government failed to invest the \$10 million in funding necessary to deliver this critical project?
- (2) Noting the delays to the Geraldton Health Campus project as a result of the government's previous underfunding, why can this service not be incorporated into the current redevelopment?

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for his question. It is pertinent timing. I want to make the point that the government is committing \$122 million to the Geraldton Health Campus redevelopment. We are committing the entirety of the cost of that redevelopment. Actually, what would have been helpful from the federal government when it knew the entire cost of the oncology services was for it to have committed to the entire amount. The federal government committed half of it. It is an absolute joke, frankly, that the member asks that question when we have committed \$122 million for that redevelopment. I understand from the communities' point of view that this is an important service for them. We have not ruled out including it in the planning for stage 2. It is under consideration. But I call on the local Liberal member, Melissa Price, and the coalition government to put your money where your mouth is and fund the whole lot.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Several members interjected.

## GERALDTON HEALTH CAMPUS — ONCOLOGY UNIT

**319. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Health:**

I have a supplementary question. How is it excusable for the minister —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Just wait, please, member. Thank you.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** How is it acceptable for the minister to sacrifice this vital oncology service in the midwest when the government is sitting on this \$5.7 billion surplus?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Murray–Wellington, I know that it is you behind your mask.

**Ms A. SANDERSON replied:**

It is incredibly rich coming from the opposition benches that this was entirely a federal government proposal but it did not stump up adequate funding to deliver it. It is delivering half the proposal. It is not funding the project. Instead of just a photo opportunity for Melissa Price, maybe it would have been helpful for her to actually fund the entire project. We are providing \$122 million for the redevelopment. It would be really helpful if the federal government put its hand in its pocket and provided this service. As I just said, we have not ruled it out if the federal government refuses to do it. We have not ruled it out and we are looking at it as part of stage 2. But, really, the federal government needs to put its hand in its pocket and deliver this commitment that it made.

## HOUSING — AVAILABILITY

**320. Mr M.J. FOLKARD to the Minister for Housing:**

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's commitment to boosting the supply of housing and land across WA and delivering more housing choice for Western Australians. Can the minister outline to the house how the housing tax reforms and incentives announced in the state budget will help further drive housing diversity and housing affordability across the state; and, can the minister advise the house how this reform package builds on this government's significant investment in social housing?

**Mr J.N. CAREY replied:**

I thank the member for his question. Our government has been driving a very clear reform program in the delivery of housing in Western Australia. Of course, we announced our massive social housing injection of \$875 million last September and \$2.4 billion over the next four years. As I have talked about previously in this house, given the current constraints and given that we have a booming economy with the lowest unemployment rate in the nation and that there are supply issues, we have pivoted our agencies to move to spot purchasing, converting existing

commercial stock that would be sold to the market and, of course, the modular program for the regions. We also understand that we need to look to the future and continue to identify where we can create a further pipeline of housing choice, and that is in the apartment market. It is fair to say that Western Australia has been behind the other states in density and apartment living. We know that cities around the world that are highly successful embrace density and apartment living, because that drives economic activity, particularly for small business, and particularly at night, but it also enables people to have access to social services and so forth—that walkability.

We understand this. It is about providing housing choice, particularly for younger people. That is why, through our housing and residential land supply committee, working with stakeholders in the sector, we have created a new reform program. That includes the 100 per cent stamp duty rebate on apartments for \$500 000 or less. That is targeting the affordable product at the bottom range.

We have also announced a 50 per cent build-to-rent land tax concession. This is critical. This will make our state competitive with the other states. Why is this important? It is because build to rent is often used as a model for affordable workers' accommodation and it is also used as a mix with community housing. This should encourage greater investment in build-to-rent models.

We have also lifted Keystart income eligibility limits to enable people to enter the housing market. We have also created, and are creating, a new product for Keystart that is actually targeted around Metronet stations infill, particularly in the CBD. All these measures have been welcomed by the Property Council of Australia and the Urban Development Institute of Australia because there is a recognition that these kinds of policies will create not only investment in apartments, but also demand, and that is what we need. We need to look to the future and provide housing choice and enable even downsizers the ability to continue to live in their own suburbs by choosing to live in an apartment. I am deeply proud of this package of reforms, working with the Minister for Planning, because it demonstrates a longer term vision about creating affordable housing supply in Western Australia.

#### FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

#### **321. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I refer to comments from the Western Australian Council of Social Service calling for additional resourcing for family and domestic violence services, a sentiment echoed by Alison Evans of WA's Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing, who also said that additional funding for new initiatives like hubs does not ameliorate the historic and ongoing underfunding of this sector. How does the minister respond to accusations of chronic underfunding from key voices in the sector?

#### **Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

I was amazed yesterday when I was asked a question about domestic violence and about a member trying to level a critique of us, as a government, combating domestic violence. I do not think anyone can say that since coming to office in 2017, this government has not provided singular focus, extra resources and also a strategic approach to tackling a very complex but, unfortunately, very widespread phenomenon in our society. Whether someone is in Parliament House in Canberra or on a mining site in the Pilbara, people are learning this the hard way. They understand that poor and disrespectful attitudes towards women, sexual assault and sexual abuse, and also family and domestic violence are manifest all too often and are often hidden in plain sight. The more that we talk about it, the more that we uncover the extent of the problem. It astounds me that I get questions from the opposition about this government's commitment to tackling FDV when it did absolutely nothing in eight and a half years. In fact, before this budget, the member, as the shadow spokesperson, had put out one press release in her entire time as the shadow minister. She has paid absolutely no attention to this issue.

We will have a matter of public interest on this matter today—another extraordinary strategy by the opposition to give us an opportunity to talk about our many achievements and progress in this area.

**Ms R. Saffioti** interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** That is right. We will have an MPI, so we will go through the things we have done, and they have been significant. To date, including in this budget, there has been \$150 million of new funding. We can go through all the different initiatives that we have funded, as well as important law reform and cooperation across all the portfolios and ministerial areas.

I also want to say that it is ludicrous to keep doing more of what we have done before and expect a different outcome. We cannot do that. We have to have a different evidence-based, strategic approach, looking at the evidence of what is effective and bringing the community along to better understand how domestic violence manifests, what it looks like and how we can all therefore step up and change it. The example will be well made this afternoon. I will speak at a discussion about coercive control. We are starting to see in the community a deeper understanding of coercive control, what it looks like and how it can be an early warning sign of some quite troubling and possibly lethal behaviour by perpetrators. That is an example of having a deeper understanding of domestic violence and how it presents.

Yes, we have provided more resources. There is no doubt about that. We have had \$150 million of new spending since coming to office. But we have also taken a strategic approach to understanding that not only do we need to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account, but also the community needs to better understand domestic violence in all its forms if we want to have any hope of stopping it.

#### FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

#### **322. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:**

I have a supplementary question. Is it reasonable that services such as refuges should have to fundraise to provide basic services because the government will not increase the funding, gatekeeping its \$5.7 billion surplus?

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**Ms S.F. McGURK replied:**

It amazes me how often the opposition has spent the surplus. I do not know how many times.

Several members interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** We should get a little toy cash register, Treasurer, and every time members opposite spend the surplus, we will press the button and get a little kerching.

Several members interjected.

**Ms S.F. McGURK:** I think that might be a good idea—a nice prop.

We have not only opened two new refuges, but also given significant extra funding to the sector to respond to the very unfortunate and tragic increase in demand for domestic violence services that we saw particularly during the COVID pandemic. We worked with the sector to understand how we could best place those additional resources. I understand it is frustrating that services fundraise. Sometimes they fundraise to garnish extra understanding and buy-in by the community about their services. In fact, I was at a fundraiser for Starick and I know that the member for Victoria Park and some members of the upper house, including Hon Kate Doust and the like, were also at that fundraiser. I often go to those fundraisers. It is an important way for all of us to support local services, and I support the public, as well as members, going along and supporting those services.

There is a lot to do, member. The opposition left us with a lot to do in this area. We have built two refuges. In fact, as we opened those refuges as a result of COVID, we got extra funding and, 12 months later, we doubled their capacity. We opened two new refuges—one is the first therapeutic refuge in this state and the second is the Andrea Mia refuge, which is a larger modern facility that enables bigger families to be accommodated. As I said, after opening them, we announced their ability to double their capacity. We have opened two hubs. We have funding for a third hub. We have had nation-leading law reform in concert with the Attorney General. There are extra counselling services in the south and north metropolitan areas and extra services in the Kimberley. We have the Respectful Relationships program in schools and the Pets in Crisis program. We have made reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act. We have done so much work because the member's side did absolutely nothing in eight and a half years. It is astounding that she can stand and try to talk to us about what we are doing about domestic violence. We are light years away from her efforts.

**The SPEAKER:** Before I give the member for Murray–Wellington the call, I want to say this: I have said over and over again that I expect short, concise supplementary questions. That is the nature of it. I also expect concise answers. It does not help if we get kind of a new topic in the supplementary that is vaguely related to the first question and then the minister feels the obligation to respond to all of that. That means that we get very lengthy answers to supplementary questions. If that is the way we are going to proceed, I will have fewer questions each day. It will mean that whoever is asking the fifth question will not get to ask the question; I will just let the supplementary go on and we can have long questions and long answers from ministers if that is what you want to do. We will have about three questions a side if we progress like this. I again implore people to stick to the rules for supplementary questions: ask a simple, direct question—something that can be answered briefly—and do not introduce a new element when you ask a supplementary question. Likewise, ministers, if you could answer a supplementary question in a minute or so, that would be fantastic, because some of the supplementary answers are longer than the original answer. That would effectively double the number of questions. We have had question time go for the best part of an hour on various days. It is getting beyond a joke. There is a responsibility on both sides—to the people asking the supplementary questions and also to the ministers responding.

#### ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE — REGIONS

#### **323. Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE to the Minister for Transport:**

Before I start, I acknowledge our emergency services volunteers on Wear Orange Wednesday and thank them for their service in our community.

A member interjected.

**Mrs R.M.J. CLARKE:** I am very orange today, yes!

I refer to the McGowan Labor government's record investment in the state budget for regional road infrastructure across Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on what this government's investment in regional road projects, such as the Pinjarra heavy haulage deviation and Tanami Road, will mean for local businesses and local jobs?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house how this government's investment compares with the way regional communities were treated by the Nationals WA and Liberals?

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:**

I thank the member for Murray–Wellington for that question and her commitment to regional road safety and spending.

- (1)–(2) Members will be surprised to hear that there is another record level of spending on regional roads in this year's budget. There is \$5.6 billion to improve and renew our regional road infrastructure. Importantly, there are some very significant projects in this budget. They not only help local residents and, of course, improve road safety, but also are about increasing economic activity and supporting the many resources projects that we have throughout regional WA, and the many prospective resources projects we have in regional WA. Of course, they are all growing the economy, creating regional jobs and supporting our export performance.

There is \$500 million for the Tanami Road to the Western Australian border—again, a transformational project that will further support the resources industry, and the potash industry in particular. It is very, very good —

Several members interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** What is wrong? The potash industry, of course, was raised yesterday in this place —

Several members interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** It is funny that when you actually talk to people in industry about their priorities, they raise the fact that they appreciate a state government that is working to get the infrastructure in place to support their developments. Without this type of infrastructure, it does not matter about the royalty rates, because they cannot actually get the product to port. The key point in all these projects, the number one priority, is working through the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation and the ministers responsible to actually get the infrastructure in place. This \$500 million commitment for the Tanami Road, in particular, is essential for supporting the industry in that area. Again, when I talk to everyone around the state about all these resources projects, it is about what we are doing in our ports. That is why we have invested in Geraldton port, that is why we are doing Lumsden Point, that is why we are expanding Broome port, and that is why we have record infrastructure spending on roads.

With regard to the member for Murray–Wellington's area, we have made a commitment to the Pinjarra heavy haulage deviation, which will allow us to do stages 1 and 2. I appreciated the feedback and community interaction on this project when we initially funded stage 1, but there is a need to fund both stages 1 and 2 so that we can do the entire project and not have some of the local community access issues. As a result, we have been working very hard to get that project funded, and I am very happy to have it funded.

Of course there are other key projects, including improvements in the Yilgarn area. There is \$120 million for road upgrades to the Great Eastern Highway between Moorine Rock and Mt Holland. Again, that is supporting lithium development in that area. With regard to the Great Northern Highway, we are looking at how we can support trucks and make sure that we get rid of one-lane bridges. In respect of the secondary freight roads through the midwest and south west, again, we are making sure that we can get our grain to port very efficiently. As I understand it, the grain price has jumped dramatically over the past few days, so we want to make sure that we can get that grain to port as quickly as possible to maximise that price. As members can see, there is record road infrastructure spending that is supporting jobs and supporting regional economies.

With regard to the last question, we have a lot of catch-up to do because, remember, it was the National Party that said, "We don't believe in spending RFR funding on roads." It did not commit to regional road funding. We have so much to catch up on as a result —

Several members interjected.

**Ms R. SAFFIOTI:** Oh, my goodness. Finally got one! It was a bit quiet, but I finally got one!

There is \$5.6 billion, and we have the Deputy Leader of the Nationals WA complaining about it. Regional WA has never seen this amount of road spending. We are bringing back local jobs, because the National Party privatised it, remember? It was the National Party that privatised those Main Roads jobs. There is more regional road spending and we are bringing back road jobs for regional Western Australians in our regional communities.

**The SPEAKER:** The Leader of the Liberal Party with the last question.

## STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION

**324. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I refer to the Premier's budget speech in which he stated that he planned to expand and diversify the WA economy—despite Queensland having outflanked us to secure Fortescue Future Industries' green energy manufacturing centre—and also that he had secured the base for the federal ALP's promised \$100 million battery manufacturing precinct.

- (1) Given that many experts consider WA almost uniquely well-placed to capitalise on emerging energy developments, why is the government being outpaced and outmanoeuvred by other states?
- (2) Why do major projects see opportunities elsewhere but not in WA, where an abundance of rare-earth and critical minerals grants us a natural advantage for developing these downstream manufacturing industries of the future?

**Mr W.J. Johnston** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Acting Leader of the House, perhaps you could set an example in that role and not interject when someone is asking a question.

**Mr M. McGOWAN replied:**

Templeman would never have done that!

- (1)–(2) It seems the Leader of the Liberal Party does not like Western Australia much. It is terrible! We have the Leader of the Liberal Party out there, running down his own state. It is a shocking thing. It shows how far the Liberal Party has fallen. I remember when Richard Court was here, promoting Western Australia, and Colin Barnett was parochially in favour. Troy Buswell, when he was Liberal leader, was always out there, advocating for Western Australia, and also when he was Treasurer. Do members remember Troy? He was one of the Leaders of the Liberal Party, in here advocating for Western Australia.

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** As the member for Baldvis points out, he was a great supporter of the panelbeating industry in Western Australia! Former Liberal leader Troy Buswell and Leaders of the Liberal Party actually supported the state.

Now the state is literally light-years in front of every other state in Australia in economic and financial performance. It is so far in front that they are all whining; all over the country, they are whining. They are looking at us and they are pleading and falling all over each other to be the one who says the most envious things about Western Australia. All over the eastern states, that is what they are doing—the Treasurers, the Premiers. Remember New South Wales, the gold-standard state? They are out there, whining and moaning about how well Western Australia is doing.

The one person who seems to think the other states are doing better than us is the Leader of the Liberal Party here in WA. He is the only one. Scott Morrison, when he comes here, says, "It's great to see the state government doing so well. We've been a part of that." He is out there, advocating that the state government has done a wonderful job. Obviously, he wants to come into my office and catch up with me; he clearly does not want to do that with the state Leader of the Liberal Party! In fact, when he was asked who he was, he thought he was Mia Davies! I was standing there; I almost felt sorry for him!

We have put \$1.3 billion into diversification initiatives in the budget. The member does not listen to the questions, so I will tell him: that was my first question today, from our own side. I outlined some of the initiatives. There is \$1.3 billion for diversification, using our financial success to build the industries of tomorrow. The other day, Josh Frydenberg was over here for the Iluka project, which is virtually 100 per cent funded by the state government, which is interesting. It is a major project in proximity to Perth. We have lithium projects all over the state and we have battery processors undertaking their work around Western Australia. There are significant upgrades to many projects. We have the hydrogen precinct in the Pilbara, the Future Battery Industries CRC established in Western Australia, the LNG task force and numerous downstream processing initiatives.

Yesterday I was out there with Anthony Albanese, who has an interest in these things. He visited our new rail manufacturing workshop, which is an amazing project. It was built from scratch by the Minister for Transport —

Several members interjected.

**Mr M. McGOWAN:** She is a very talented woman! It rose from the ground out there in the member for Midland's electorate, creating jobs and high-tech industries. Do members remember what the Liberal Party said about that? It said it is an old, tired industry. Now we have these high-tech jobs. They are out there, working on computers, and it is a very high-tech new industry. You could have eaten your dinner off the floor.

That is what we are doing. We have 3.4 per cent unemployment, the strongest growth in jobs over the course of the last two years, and 40 per cent of the national GDP produced by Western Australia, yet we have the Leader of the Liberal Party saying it is all bad. Do members not think that says more about him than it does about us?

## STATE ECONOMY — DIVERSIFICATION

**325. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Premier:**

I have a supplementary question. Could it be that even Mr Albanese does not want the hassle of dealing with the Premier or his state development minister —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please. Have you concluded the question?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** No, Madam Speaker.

Could it be that even Mr Albanese does not want the hassle of dealing with the Premier or his state development minister to identify a suitable location for the \$100 million?

**The SPEAKER:** Premier, I am going to rule that question out of order—partly given the time and partly given the advice that I have given about supplementaries. That is what I call a vaguely related question on a new branch of a topic. It does not directly pertain to the original question, and, as such, I am going to rule it out. We are also about to head into the matter of public interest that I would like to conclude ahead of private members' business today.

## STATE BUDGET 2022–23 — FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Matter of Public Interest*

**THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts)** [2.50 pm]: I today received within the prescribed time a letter from the member for Vasse in the following terms —

I give notice that I will move as a Matter of Public Interest:

*That this House joins West Australians in condemning the lack of vision and leadership from this State Budget resulting in underfunding of family and domestic violence support services at a time of record windfalls and when families are under significant housing and cost of living pressures.*

The matter appears to me to be in order and if there are at least five members who will stand in support of the matter being discussed, the matter can proceed.

[At least five members rose in their places.]

**The SPEAKER:** Members, I might just also highlight that last week when we had two Labor members stand, they were standing in support of the matter being discussed; they were not standing in support of the motion. So when I say that, I am saying that members support the matter being discussed. It is a regular thing to support the opposition having an MPI each week. That is sometimes what members are required to do, given COVID and other circumstances.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party)** [2.54 pm]: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move —

That this house joins Western Australians in condemning the lack of vision and leadership from this state budget resulting in underfunding of family and domestic violence support services at a time of record windfalls and when families are under significant housing and cost-of-living pressures.

I am the opposition's lead speaker for this debate. This is on the back of a budget that proves we are the wealthiest state in the nation, with the government enjoying a \$5.7 billion surplus. This is a budget that, according to our ever so modest Treasurer, would make Treasurers across the country look like they have swallowed a bumblebee, apparently. While the Treasurer is busy congratulating himself on accumulating such wealth, the real sting in this budget is for some of our most vulnerable families across the state. The number of family and domestic violence cases, as reported in the budget papers, is expected to increase by 17 per cent between 2020–21 and 2022–23, from 15 127 in 2020–21 to 17 750 cases. However, this needs further explanation for context. The actual number of cases in 2020–21 was 15 127. Last year, the government did not expect that we would see so much of a change, but the number of cases certainly went beyond expectations. It must have been a shock to discover that actual case numbers have gone up to 17 788. At the same time as the predicted number of family and domestic violence cases will go up by 17 per cent from 2020 to 2023, this government decided to slash the budget for preventing and responding to family and domestic violence by the same amount in the coming years—at 17 per cent of the total cost of services.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** It is your budget, minister! The cut is to be from \$89 million to about \$73 million.

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members! Okay. Shall we try this again?

**Ms L. METTAM:** Yes.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo!

**Ms L. METTAM:** I heard the Dorothy Dixier to the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence yesterday. We have heard that the government's explanation is that the commonwealth's COVID-19 funding has ceased, but the truth is that demand has not ceased —

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Ms L. METTAM:** — and the reality is —

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I cannot understand what is going on, and I ask you to bring them to order.

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Members!

Several members interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Just wait everyone—member for Vasse. Points of order will be heard in silence, please. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, can you repeat your point of order?

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I ask you to consider whether or not the interjections of the minister upon the member for Vasse are disorderly conduct.

**Ms S. Winton** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Wanneroo, I call you to order for the first time.

Thank you, deputy leader, there is no point of order there; I do not uphold a point of order. Minister, you will get a chance to respond, so please carry on, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The reality is that just because the commonwealth funding for time-limited initiatives has ceased, that does not mean that the demand has ceased. The demand, in fact, is growing exponentially, to the point of service agencies stating that it is the worst situation that they have ever seen. While this government sits on this \$5.7 billion surplus in a state that is in an enviable financial position, it is extraordinary that this government has failed to ensure that there would not be such a significant shortfall. While the Premier claims he is helping those in need most with a \$400 electricity rebate, I remind him that an electricity rebate is of little value when people do not have a home. It is of little value when their home is a refuge or they are living with their kids in their car. While the budget reports a 17 per cent increase in cases, according to the WA police 2021 annual report, FDV reports are about 19 per cent above the five-year average. In regional WA, people are three times more likely to be exposed to family and domestic violence incidents—statistics that I am sure the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence is well aware of. We also hear from the sector that it is under extraordinary pressure.

I refer to some comments made by the WA Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing's director of family, domestic and sexual violence, Dr Alison Evans, who told the ABC —

“The sector suffers from chronic underfunding and is always trying to catch up whenever there's increased funding ...

“Additional funding for new initiatives like the hubs doesn't ameliorate that historic and ongoing underfunding of this sector” ...

“We all often look at Victoria with a great deal of envy because we know that it can make a difference if the sector is better resourced.”

Dr Evans said she would have liked to see the government invest some of its multi-billion-dollar surplus to help services address the unmet needs around longer-term recovery for victims.

“We need to better support the family domestic violence workforce to enable them to deliver the most effective and safe services for women and their children ...

“It's very difficult when they have to be spending a lot of time trying to get additional grants and things to ensure they can be as responsive as possible.”

In response to my question today about the fundraising undertaken by many refuges, the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence suggested that it was for the extra things. Minister, it is not for the extra things. A south west refuge has had to turn away 300 families over the past 12 months and is already talking about having to turn away 150 families this year alone. It describes this experience as horrible. The current shortage in affordable and available housing has also exacerbated this matter. It is clear that the McGowan government's failings in this area are contributing to this problem. Because of this, many women and children escaping family and domestic violence are forced to choose between staying in an unsafe family home and facing homelessness. The shortfall in funding is hurting the most vulnerable at a time when our Treasurer is gloating about the wealth of this state and comparing his surplus to that of other Treasurers.

There is concern across the board about the recently offered five-year contracts. Those contracts were for funding that was effectively at levels that have not changed since before Labor's first budget in 2017. We have been told that because of the significant demand for services and the significant increase in utility costs, many refuges are considering cutting services. As I said, one south west refuge has been running off the same contract for the past seven years. How shocking is it that at a time when our most vulnerable are waiting longer for assistance, they are effectively being turned away because refuges and services do not have capacity. Under this government, these services, like many others, are having to do more with less. The government has posted an \$11 billion surplus over the past two years, but it still cannot afford to tip in any extra to these services to meet the existing demand, let alone the future demand. We hear that it is absolutely not its fault—that we should look to the federal government. Of course, this issue is not limited to the south west; we see this across the board with other services and we are getting feedback across the state.

Counselling services are also under extraordinary pressure. Waratah Support Centre has reflected the state of the sector in the south west region. It says that it is effectively cutting services just to keep up. It has not seen an effective increase in funding since 2014. Its waitlist for adults and children is about three months. It told us that it should be covering areas such as Manjimup and Narrogin, but it does not have the capacity, given the waitlists it currently has. Clients often do not have the technology and phone counselling is not always suitable for the very sensitive matters that these services deal with. Narrogin's Rainbow Women's Centre says that the demand for services had increased in 2021 by 27 per cent on the previous year. It welcomes the additional funding during the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020, but said that prior to that, the amount of funding had remained stagnant, despite the increased demand for services. I quote Tara Lanciano —

The current rental crisis has resulted in families remaining in safe accommodation for longer periods due to difficulties accessing public and private rentals.

There has been an increased demand of accommodation requests from the metro area, as other refuges are at capacity and not able to bring in new women and children in crisis.

She states that the funding has largely been stagnant. We hear across the board that the lack of uplift in the funding in the contracts is a major concern. I understand the reason for the lack of uplift in funding, or at least the excuse that the government is giving, which is the commissioning work that has been undertaken by the department, but the services need the support now. The Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence referred to the Western Australian Council of Social Service yesterday; however, another comment it made in the same media statement from which the minister selectively quoted was —

“Additional resources are still needed to ensure that existing FDV services can continue at the same level while the service system is being reformed. There is a very real risk that some organisations may have to cut some services despite growing demand.

These challenges and the lack of uplift ahead of this reform are creating significant issues. The issue of families living in their cars and being turned away because of the extraordinary pressure across the system has been raised with me. We know that housing, or the lack thereof, has a significant role to play. Since June 2020 the number of people waiting to access priority public housing has increased by 316 per cent and the number on the public housing waitlist has grown by over 9 000 people. Obviously, cost-of-living factors are contributing. Even with the one-off \$400 payment, households are still \$650 worse off in this financial year as a result of the accumulated cost-of-living impacts imposed by this government since 2017.

The opposition supports the new investment initiatives that the minister has announced—the commitment to the Armadale family and domestic violence hub, funding for enhanced response teams, the Kimberley family violence services—but that cannot be it. The funding is not keeping pace with these extraordinary demands, and it is not an attempt to even plan for the future. Women and children need these services. This is an unprecedented situation and an unprecedented level of demand. Extraordinarily it comes at a time when the Premier is gloating about the unprecedented wealth of this state. That is why the opposition puts forward this motion, and that is why we ask the minister to take responsibility for her portfolio, listen to the sector and support those vulnerable women and children, because what has been put forward is certainly not enough.

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [3.09 pm]: I would like to thank the shadow Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence for this motion and the opportunity to speak on this very

important issue. No matter which way we cut this, there is less funding available for those impacted by family and domestic violence than there was last year. That is the bottom line in this budget. The shadow minister succinctly outlined that there is an increase in demand.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I am not taking interjections, thank you, minister.

We can contrast that with the fact that there is a continual and growing demand for these services, unfortunately. They are vital, and we want the government to continue to invest to support families that are impacted. I would like to spend the time I have to speak about three issues in particular. They are issues that the minister will be familiar with. The first is in relation to DVassist, which is a program that provides support for regional victims or survivors of domestic violence—families, men, women, children; all those who are impacted. The second relates to the question I asked previously around the government's capacity to forgive the debt of those who have to call an ambulance as a result of family or domestic violence, and the third relates to the government's announcement around the new service to support young people who have been impacted by, or exposed to, family and domestic violence, which I think will be delivered in Rockingham, but also in my electorate in Northam and the wheatbelt.

I will start with DVassist, because this is something that the opposition has been asking the government to support. Interestingly, the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, in response to a Dorothy Dixier yesterday, counselled against the opposition campaigning or asking for support for this program. I find that remarkable, given that we know we have a very large state and we cannot possibly have bricks-and-mortar services in every region. It is just impossible. Services like this, which has been created by someone with lived experience—Fleur McDonald from Esperance—seek to fill that gap as this network of support is built across our state. It is horrifying to me that people who live in remote areas of Western Australia are 24 times more likely to end up hospitalised as a result of family and domestic violence than people who live in metropolitan areas. People are three times more likely to be exposed to family and domestic violence and 24 times more likely to end up in hospital if they live in regional Western Australia, compared with those who live in our metropolitan areas. It is shocking no matter where anyone lives, but that is a shocking figure to me. Police crime figures show that in the last decade, recorded family violence-related offences in regional WA have increased steadily by 43 per cent, totalling 14 984 offences committed in 2020. I do not have the latest figures, but that was in 2020 alone. One in five women who live outside capital cities have experienced violence from an intimate partner since they were 15 years old. By comparison, three in 20, or 15 per cent, of women who live within a capital city have experienced violence from an intimate partner. That is ABS data. When we stand to request the Premier to consider providing support to services that are trying to do things a little differently, it is not because we are saying that we are from regional Western Australia and we want the government to help and this is a very deserving program, but because there is a great need. I think we should look at all those programs to try to support those who find themselves victim survivors of family and domestic violence.

DVassist has provided the first virtual regional counselling service that is free across the state. I think it truly is breaking new ground, because it has a determined focus on regional communities. It has delivered the first regional WA domestic violence help line, it is the first regional WA —

**Ms S.F. McGurk** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The minister does herself no favours by criticising someone and their organisation that is trying to resolve some of the challenges that her government faces. She does herself no service.

DVassist has provided the first regional WA domestic violence webchat service, and the first regional WA area localised online service directory and online localised information hub. It is a professional outlet, unlike the minister tried to intimate in the answer to her question.

**Ms S.F. McGurk:** Don't put words in my mouth!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I do not have to; I was in the chamber yesterday when the minister gave her response to the Dorothy Dixier.

The hurdles that regional people face when they seek assistance are specific to regional communities. They include a lack of anonymity; confidentiality difficulties; limited, if any, refuge options; geographical isolation; and social isolation. We know that in smaller communities, there is community support for perpetrators who are considered to be good and respected individuals in that community. There are also transportation issues, with fewer options, and variable access to internet and communications. If someone is trying to extract themselves from a situation, they are faced with additional hurdles when they come to do that. The service reports that since it launched in September 2020, 61 per cent of its calls have been from Geraldton, Kalgoorlie and Bunbury. Forty-two calls have been from rural, remote and regional areas outside the 16 areas it targeted when it started. It is disappointing that this minister has counselled against the opposition and others advocating on behalf of this service. There is clearly a demonstrated need. With no prospect of having bricks-and-mortar services based in all regions across the state, this is one option that those who are exposed to family and domestic violence can take up. I have to say in DVassist's

defence that it is not sitting on its laurels just waiting to be 100 per cent funded by government; it has started to develop partnerships with private sector operators in the regions. But given such significant demand and the feedback it has received since it launched, I would have thought the government would try to support this. Given the financial circumstances of this state—we are flush with cash—that is something we would wholly support if the minister had a change of mind.

The second issue is the ambulance bills. I have raised this with the minister already. I hope that whatever comes down as a result of the inquiry, which we will hear about tomorrow, and the work the minister is doing, we can find some way to forgive the debt for anyone who calls an ambulance as a result of family and domestic violence and gets a \$1 000 bill. That seems to me to be patently unfair. Women who have been brave enough to tell their stories have told of some really horrifying experiences, but they said they had simply stopped calling police because they could not afford to pay the ambulance bill. It is not just individuals who have been forthcoming on that front. In an article in the *South Western Times* of 12 May, Ali White, who is the chief executive officer of the South West Refuge, said that she has a financial counsellor who is almost wholly dedicated to trying to negotiate with debt collectors on this issue. That is something that we could write a line through. The government could fund that. That would certainly make an enormous difference to women who find themselves in extraordinary circumstances already.

The last thing I want to focus on is the announcement the minister made for a new service for Rockingham and Northam. This was announced as part of the budget to provide support for young people who have been exposed to family and domestic violence. Firstly, I say on the record that I welcome any additional services in my electorate. I welcome the fact that attention has been paid to providing services into the wheatbelt. I have sat in this chamber during estimates and asked questions, particularly when funding programs have come through this minister's portfolio, and asked why we never seem to see pilots or programs coming to the wheatbelt, the upper great southern or parts of the midwest. It is a hard area to service. It is a thinly and sparsely populated area. But I am unhesitating in my support for any additional services that can come to the electorate. I am pleased that it is focused on the fact that young people are caught up in this horrible situation and are impacted by family and domestic violence. Interestingly—I am hopeful that the minister can shed some light on this—these services will be delivered by the Australian Childhood Foundation in partnership with the Youth Affairs Council of WA and Karla Kuliny Aboriginal Corporation. The service model will be guided by the lived experience of members of the youth steering group and a sector reference group with representation from agencies, Aboriginal organisations and elders.

The alarm bell rang for me when I put a call in to the organisation that provides a majority of these services in the electorate. Share and Care Community Services is based in Northam but covers the wheatbelt and midwest as well. It has been around since 1975. Carol, who is the CEO, knows how to extract a dollar out of any government of any persuasion. She is an exceptional individual who has worked incredibly hard on a shoestring budget for many, many years. They do a wonderful job. Disappointingly, there had been no contact with Share and Care Community Services, and it received a phone call only as a result of us calling and asking whether it was aware that this was being announced. I hope that we are not going to see a model whereby an organisation from Perth delivers into the wheatbelt because that is doomed to fail. I watch organisations do that, or try to do that, on a regular basis, whether they are delivering aged-care services or other services.

I am passing on the concerns of Share and Care and Avon Youth Community and Family Services: first, neither were consulted; and, second, why did the government not contact existing place-based services, such as Share and Care, which have such an intimate knowledge of the region to assist in the delivery of this funding? I know from experience, no matter how well meaning and experienced organisations are, if we do not have place-based solutions, we will see these services fail. We know there is a big job to do. I encourage the minister on this front to make sure that the providers are engaging in-depth with people in the wheatbelt to make sure that we make this a success.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [3.20 pm]: I rise to reiterate the support that I have for this excellent motion that has been moved by the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party at a time when a reduction in services is being forecast in the budget. Whichever way that is cut, a 17 per cent reduction in resources at a time when the state is sitting on a \$5.7 billion surplus is a disgrace. From the case prosecuted by the member for Vasse, we see a rise in cases of 17 per cent. I understand from what she said that the Western Australia Police Force reports that over the period of this government, the number of cases being reported has increased by 19 per cent. As regional members, we know that, according to WAPOL, domestic violence is three times more likely to occur in regional areas and someone is 24 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of one of those interactions. Regional people know full well how important it is to have local services that can be relied upon.

The Leader of the National Party has made a good case for concern around drive-in drive-out servicing of the wheatbelt from Midland and elsewhere. In fact, at its last state conference the National Party had on its books a motion condemning the practice of what is called the white cars rolling out into regional areas from Perth or from a major regional centre to those smaller centres, delivering a service for a couple of hours, popping back in the car and going back again. They do not give follow-up, continuity or understanding of the regional circumstances that a place-based provider would be able to give.

It is shocking to think that women fleeing domestic violence who have to call an ambulance because of an injury or an event are being pursued for debts in this manner. I reiterate the call that the Leader of the Opposition has made for the government to draw a line through these debts. It could be a very simple matter. It is not a big item for the government, but it is a huge item for people who are caught up in this terrible situation. It is unbelievable that they would be pursued for ambulance debt at a time like this.

I would also like to reiterate the concern around the lack of funding to and the lack of concern the minister has shown to pleas for funding of the DVassist hotline. I went out there when that service began.

[Member's time expired.]

**MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence)** [3.23 pm]: First and foremost, what is incredibly frustrating about the cornerstone of the opposition's attacks on this motion is a lack of understanding of how to read the budget papers. Under national partnership agreements, the federal government and the state governments agree that the federal government will provide funding. Member for Vasse, you might want to pay attention. Get off your phone and pay attention, because it is clear that no matter how often we say it in the house, you fail to understand these very basic questions of how to read the budget papers. Under national partnership agreements, the federal government reaches an agreement with us, the state government, that it will contribute a certain amount of money and the state delivers the money. The money gets put into the state budget papers as NPA money. It is explained. It is not as though it is a complex issue that is beyond people. Even someone who does the most basic reading of the papers can follow this. Page 531 of the budget papers says that the money that the member is talking about falls away because of the time-limited national partnership agreement contributions by the federal government.

I said yesterday in question time that I was critical; in the past, the partnership agreements have been for four or five years. These COVID-related funding agreements were for two years and for small amounts. If the member wants to criticise anyone for cutting funding or providing time-limited funding or not enough funding, perhaps she wants to look at her own federal counterparts, because the reduction over the forward estimates is a reduction in federal funding, not state funding. I do not know how many times we need to explain that to the member. It is very basic.

Similarly, the criticism of DVassist is staggering. We had no consultation on or input to this. The federal government put in money for DVassist, and the federal government decided not to provide ongoing money for DVassist, but the only call from the opposition is that the state government should come in and fix what the federal government has failed to provide long-term funding for. It is based in Subiaco, and that is a fact. Whatever I think of DVassist, we are not in a position to chase after the federal government and fix its funding shortfalls. We are not in a position to do that. I do not know what sort of advocacy the member has provided to her federal counterparts to say that they should not provide short-term funding or two-year funding under the national partnership agreement and they should provide ongoing funding and that should be reflected in the budget papers. There have been no cuts to services or domestic violence budget line items. There have been only increases. If the member understood the budget papers, she would understand that point.

I said before in question time that providing more resources is important. I do not deny that and we have demonstrated our commitment to doing that since coming to office. An amount of \$150 million in the five years of being in office is a significant uplift in resources to the sector. The attention and extra resources that we have given to this area has been marked. We have also provided a strategic approach, and that is to work together with the sector to say, "Look, there is a lot to do. How do we make sure that if we are providing safety for women and children, we are doing it in a way that is culturally appropriate for them? How do we make them safe places for them to come forward and places where they can stay for longer if they need to?" The first therapeutic refuge is an example of that. The hubs are also community based. People can come in for advice and there is information sharing at those locations so that people do not have to retell their stories. They have a number of services under one roof. They are the sorts of innovative approaches that we are taking as a government, and we are not doing it alone. We are doing it in partnership with the sector and with researchers and others who provide us evidence-based advice on how to best approach these complex issues.

I listed 26 different items that we have done since coming to office. I do not think I will have the time to run through all of them. First and foremost, we developed a 10-year strategy because there is so much to do. We want to make sure that what we do is the best, evidence tells us it works, it is done in partnership and it takes into account the breadth and the need of these complex issues across our state. We now have a 10-year strategy and we are working our way through that. We have two new refuges; one is the therapeutic refuge and the other in Kwinana. We have a second residential-based perpetrator program. We have two one-stop hubs, one in Mirrabooka and one in Kalgoorlie, with a further two to be established in Armadale and the Kimberley. We have extended counselling services in Peel and the north metropolitan area. We have set up the RSPCA Pets in Crisis program.

We have nation-leading law reform that I have done in cooperation with the Attorney General, picking up on the 2014 Law Reform Commission report. That is something that the previous government did not even touch. That report was handed down in 2014; it was a very comprehensive analysis that we picked up on, and we implemented

nearly all the recommendations. The former government did not touch it and it had time to do that. We made changes to the Criminal Code, bail, restraining orders and sentencing to protect victims. We created new criminal offences for non-fatal strangulation and persistent family violence. We commissioned an Aboriginal family safety strategy, something that was called for by Aboriginal advocates nationally as well as in this state. It is a different way of approaching domestic violence in Aboriginal communities. We began that work, which is being led by Aboriginal women and Aboriginal leaders. It is something that, federally, the government was criticised for, but in WA, we picked up that work.

We introduced antenatal screening in the public health system to support women who are about to give, or have just given, birth. Since coming to office, we have improved police protocols and training—it is a massive change—with a complete overhaul of police protocols for domestic and family violence and we have trained all frontline police staff in the new protocols.

We improved the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 to ensure that victims are not left to pay for damage or debts for which they are not responsible. We introduced shuttle conferencing in courts to make it less traumatic for victims of FDV. We invested in practical supports for victim survivors, such as the funds for freedom program, which provides grants to purchase household items and other items—for instance, ambulance cover for victim survivors.

We introduced paid leave and other measures for public sector employees, which was opposed by not only the previous Premier Colin Barnett, but also Senator Michaelia Cash. She opposed paid leave for domestic violence victims, which is absolutely outrageous. It is very straightforward and simple and has now been picked up by a large section of the private sector as well as the Fair Work Commission. We amended the Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993 to provide for five days' unpaid domestic violence leave in the private sector, established a trial of the Caring Dads program, implemented the Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program in schools and introduced an electronic bracelet trial for high-risk offenders. The 16 Days in WA campaign is a huge campaign that has gains momentum every year and brings along corporates, community groups, the community and the whole state to see what can be done to get the message out about FDV. We delivered our election commitment to expand the Safer Pathways program to make sure that women can stay in their houses and are supported by organisations to stay in their tenancies and lead a safe and stable future.

We have awarded nearly \$1 million in grants for prevention activities, including funds for the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing. That is how you pronounce the name of the organisation, member for Vasse; it is the Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing. It is a peak body that represents domestic violence, sexual assault and women's health services. The member for Vasse might want to learn how to say its name if she is going to do grievances on the issue. The centre has done a prevention framework that, I think, will be very useful to make sure that we can expand the work of prevention in our community. We have also commenced consultation on coercive control laws.

There is so much that we have done as a government—it has been quite wide-reaching. Do we have more to do? Yes; we do not deny that. Anyone who says that we will get magical results in domestic violence turnaround if we just put in more money is kidding themselves and demonstrates a lack of understanding of the deep-rooted nature of not only the origins of domestic violence, but also how it presents. During question time, I spoke about issues such as coercive control, as an example. Increasingly, the community is understanding that the way domestic violence manifests can be very subtle at times but, very, very destructive and, at times, lethal. We need to understand that not only in terms of law reform, but also as a whole community—how services respond, as well as what we, in the community, can do. That may be how we can do that in Parliament—and in, perhaps, the member for Vasse paying attention—and community organisations, such as sporting organisations and the like, and by employers understanding what they need to do in their industries to better respond to domestic violence and violence against women in all its forms. It can also be around dinner tables. We need to understand the language that we use and the effort that we make to understand what is going on. That will be the only way that we will ever really start to turn around violence against women.

There are many examples. We have talked about Parliament House in Canberra and the obvious failing by the Prime Minister to provide leadership in responding to a sexual assault report in Parliament House. There has also been a very rude wake-up call in the mining industry about the extent of assaults. I have to say that within the opposition, a former Leader of the Liberal Party has now pleaded guilty to domestic violence charges. This is widespread, and if we think that it is not amongst us in our community, we are kidding ourselves—it is everywhere. It is in our cities, suburbs, regional areas and remote areas, and it is quite likely that any one of us has either experienced such violence or knows someone who has experienced that violence, whether or not we know about it. We do not need lectures from the opposition, which has just woken up to the issue about how to respond to domestic violence. The government has been working hard on this issue for the last five years, and it is not something that is easily turned around. Work needs to be done across all areas to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account. It is a very complex area and there is not a lot of evidence on how to do this effectively and make sure that our justice system is up to the task while also making sure that the community is on board. The opposition's cheap pots shots and its basic illiteracy of the budget papers does its cause in advocating for more effort in domestic violence no benefit at all.

**MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing)** [3.36 pm]: I wish to add to this debate as the Minister for Housing; Homelessness. As we know, there is a strong correlation between women who flee domestic violence and homelessness. I want to put on the record that there is an upper house parliamentary inquiry into homelessness and my agencies have already made significant submissions that outline in detail much of what the Minister for Community Services has gone through. There is a huge and significant investment in both homelessness and connected services for preventing, and assisting victims of, domestic violence. This year, we will spend \$190 million on a range of initiatives and projects. As the Minister for Housing; Homelessness, obviously I come to this responsible for the building crisis and transitional accommodation and additional housing to address these issues. I work hand in hand with the Minister for Community Services. The work that the Minister for Community Services has outlined is one part of the picture. The other part is supporting the accommodation and the capital infrastructure spend. I note that only recently, our government announced a major new injection of funding for both community housing providers and crisis accommodation. We announced the social housing economic recovery package of \$39 million for new builds—new beds—in both social or community housing and crisis accommodation, which includes the building of a new crisis accommodation facility for vulnerable people and victims of family and domestic violence in the south west. We also committed another \$58 million in grant funding, which has been awarded to 47 housing providers to undertake refurbishment of 805 existing properties. This includes funding for Albany Youth Support Association for young people who might have been pushed out of home due to violence, Broome Community Housing Ltd, Newman Women’s Shelter, Geraldton Community Housing Ltd and Zonta House Refuge Association.

There is a clear investment by our state government to support the community housing sector and crisis accommodation. We are also particularly focused on supporting Aboriginal people who may need transitional accommodation. This does not actually get a lot of attention, but there clearly is an issue and it is an issue in the city. I will give an example. I am on the public record about tent cities. Often the majority of these people are Aboriginal people from the regions who may come to Perth for medical, cultural or family reasons and so forth. Unfortunately, those camps can put women and children at risk. It is a concern. Certainly as a state, particularly looking at the CBD, we are driving a new coordinated approach with the communities and the WA Police Force to assist in these scenarios and assist people get back home and return to country, for example. To date, in the city this year, through our concerted efforts across agencies, we have—I was last advised—been able to assist 37 people return to country. I refer to this because the budget contains funding to assist in addressing this issue. We are investing \$59 million in three new Aboriginal short-stay accommodation premises. These are dedicated, culturally appropriate and designed accommodation that provides transitional accommodation to avoid the kinds of scenarios that I have just talked about when a number of Aboriginal people from country camp out at a particular location near the city. We are building them in Kununurra, Geraldton and Perth. We are working on the Perth location now. That is significant investment right there to assist with providing some of our most vulnerable Western Australians with safe transitional or short-term accommodation, which is ultimately trying to assist them also to get home safely and avoid the scenarios that I have described that occur from time to time in the city. In reference to the most recent tent city encampment, I want to put on the record that my department has been out every day actively engaging and offering accommodation and support, and has got 37 people to return to country.

There is another part that I mentioned in a Dorothy—in a question that I received —

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** I nearly slipped there! I think I did.

Several members interjected.

**Mr J.N. CAREY:** Sorry? I do appreciate that.

The remote communities fund is another substantial investment that will obviously, at its heart, tackle the living conditions of Aboriginal people in remote communities. We know the complex challenges and issues in those communities. We are deeply aware of them. There is a long history to this. I say this sincerely: I think one media outlet gave it attention, but \$350 million is a very strong start to working hard in those communities to lift basic standards and tackle issues like overcrowding. It will fund upgrades to water and power and it will also tackle getting ageing housing stock back into the system, where we can. Throughout the years, there have been about 2 700 houses in 112 remote Aboriginal communities that we, as an agency, interact with. We need to try to bring housing stock back online, and the Aboriginal remote housing fund has been created to do that, recognising, as always—I know I say this on repeat—that we face a heated construction market and that there are challenges to delivery. But we never give up and we will look at every opportunity to pivot our agencies to deliver.

I think the Minister for Community Services went through a very long list of all the initiatives in legal reforms, new protections and new programs to drive innovation and provide new support. I present to members that although we have focused on service delivery, from the housing and homelessness side, there is a substantial investment and we have been supporting both the community housing and crisis accommodation through \$39 million for new builds, \$58 million in grant funding for refurbishments and we are also working in particular to support Aboriginal people through a \$59 million investment for three new Aboriginal short-stay accommodation facilities in Perth. We are also assisting to tackle the tough issues in remote Aboriginal communities with the \$350 million remote community fund.

**MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary)** [3.46 pm]: I rise to make a contribution to the debate on what I think, frankly, is a fairly absurd motion brought forward by the opposition this afternoon. I think it is fair to say that nobody denies the need for providing as much resourcing as we can possibly bring to address the scourge of family and domestic violence. It is pleasing to hear that the opposition seems to be coming around to the realisation that we need to have a serious conversation about family and domestic violence, because, as I will talk about, it has been a very long time coming before it has started to take family and domestic violence and, indeed, community services and social policy, seriously. It is long overdue.

Nobody denies that over the last 12 months in particular there has been an extraordinary amount of additional pressure placed on families, communities and the support services that reach out and provide assistance. I want to put on record the gratitude we have to all those social service providers who have gone above and beyond. They have been on the frontline of this pandemic and it is important that we acknowledge and thank them for all the support they have provided. This afternoon, the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence talked in her contribution about the need for a strategic approach. That was long overdue. She went through the various ways the government has already sought to seriously attack family and domestic violence. She emphasised the need to change the way that we do things. She has said today and in contributions in this place over the last couple of weeks that there is much to do. There is a lot of catching up to do. Under the former government, this issue—this series of incredibly complex problems—was neglected for an extraordinarily long time. This government is taking it seriously. We are the first government to have appointed a Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. That is worthy of acknowledgement. This government has made a record \$150 million investment in family and domestic violence. In this budget is \$160 million of new money for the community sector and \$60 million in this budget alone for family and domestic violence.

The Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and the Minister for Housing have gone through what we have done, but this motion gives me a fantastic opportunity to talk about what this budget will deliver for the prevention of family and domestic violence. The \$60 million election commitment is made up of a \$29.5 million Safe Home Safe Family package for women and children fleeing violence. Two additional one-stop family and domestic violence hubs will be established to make it easier for women to access help and not go through the traumatic experience of having to retell their story over and over again. The \$29.5 million package will expand the safer pathways program to Mirrabooka and Midland—I see that the member for Mirrabooka is in the chamber—which will provide intensive case management, risk assessment and safety planning for public housing tenants when family and domestic violence has been the primary cause of a tenancy breakdown. There will be a rapid rehousing program providing rental assistance to help women set up their new home—the new place they have been forced to flee to. We will be expanding the Safe at Home program to provide safety planning and security upgrades to help women feel safe in their homes. I also note that we are doing the same thing for seniors—helping seniors feel safer in their homes.

The minister also mentioned, as did the Minister for Housing, the law reform package that the Attorney General is championing to hold perpetrators to account. This is the first time that a government has seriously tackled that issue. There will be a \$7.3 million boost to prevent family and domestic violence by expanding the Respectful Relationships program into schools; training frontline responders to better recognise and respond to family and domestic violence; and developing a primary prevention framework to build the capacity of communities and government to implement effective prevention activities that identify and challenge the norms that drive violence against women. There will be \$4 million invested in supporting initiatives for survivors, including continued practical supports for survivors. It is just the basic stuff, such as driving lessons or dental treatment for women who are exiting refuges. Family violence counselling programs will be established for teenagers, who are so very often damaged by their experiences. There are changes to provide family and domestic violence survivors with five days' unpaid domestic violence leave, which we introduced last year.

In addition, we will continue to implement other important initiatives. The minister spoke about the 10-year path to safety, which is our strategy to reduce family and domestic violence, and the Department of Communities has well progressed the implementation strategy for that initiative. We will review our family violence reform after considering our response on coercive control laws. We will establish an east metropolitan women's refuge to provide 10 purpose-built crisis accommodation rooms and supported transitional accommodation units for a further 18 women. We will implement a family safety strategy.

We are committed, and we will continue to be committed, to stopping violence before it starts. We introduced the 16 Days in WA program. It is great to see the opposition get on board and support that every year, but the various stakeholders across the community and in the private sector are also helping us to promote community action to address violence against women. It is that cultural change that we need to see.

This has raised the profile of the issues, and we will continue to do that. Let us be very real here. Where is the opposition's condemnation of the federal government's absolute white-anting of FDV initiatives in this state? What is it doing about that? Where is it calling for that? It is rank hypocrisy. Members opposite stand in this place and talk about it, but they are doing nothing to advocate on their own side. It is a pattern of behaviour. Family and domestic violence is about patterns of behaviour and they have their own to confront.

*Division*

Question put and a division taken, the Deputy Speaker casting his vote with the noes, with the following result —

Ayes (6)

Mr V.A. Catania  
Ms M.J. Davies

Dr D.J. Honey  
Mr R.S. Love

Ms L. Mettam  
Mr P.J. Rundle (*Teller*)

Noes (40)

Mr S.N. Aubrey  
Mr G. Baker  
Ms H.M. Beazley  
Dr A.D. Buti  
Mr J.N. Carey  
Ms C.M. Collins  
Ms L. Dalton  
Ms D.G. D'Anna  
Mr M.J. Folkard  
Ms M.J. Hammat

Ms J.L. Hanns  
Mr M. Hughes  
Mr W.J. Johnston  
Mr H.T. Jones  
Ms E.J. Kelsbie  
Ms A.E. Kent  
Dr J. Krishnan  
Mr P. Lilburne  
Ms S.F. McGurk  
Mr K.J.J. Michel

Mr S.A. Millman  
Mr Y. Mubarakai  
Ms L.A. Munday  
Mrs L.M. O'Malley  
Mr P. Papalia  
Mr S.J. Price  
Mr D.T. Punch  
Mr J.R. Quigley  
Ms M.M. Quirk  
Ms R. Saffioti

Ms A. Sanderson  
Mr D.A.E. Scaife  
Ms J.J. Shaw  
Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski  
Dr K. Stratton  
Mr C.J. Tallentire  
Ms C.M. Tonkin  
Mr R.R. Whitby  
Ms S.E. Winton  
Ms E.L. Hamilton (*Teller*)

Question thus negatived.

### STATE BUDGET 2022–23 — COST OF LIVING

*Motion*

**MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Leader of the Opposition)** [3.59 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Premier for delivering a budget that fails to provide real cost-of-living relief and is too little, too late for Western Australian families and key sectors in crisis.

Obviously, in the week after the budget has been handed down, there is scrutiny of what the Premier; Treasurer has announced. We look at the key themes of the budget and we provide our analysis as an opposition. One thing has resonated strongly since the budget was handed down. This is, undoubtedly, the wealthiest state in the nation, and the Premier goes to great pains to point that out, but we have many, many families who are struggling to make ends meet. Many households are struggling to pay their bills and many families are trying to keep a roof over their head. How can that be reconciled if you are one of those families or one of those individuals who is struggling and you see the Premier on the front page of the newspaper, gloating and smug about the budget surplus that has been delivered—not once, but twice?

Really, the centrepiece of that budget is the \$400 electricity credit. Nobody is going to say no to a \$400 electricity credit, although I note that the member for Cottesloe has generously donated his \$400 to a charity already. Certainly, that was a call from the Western Australian Council of Social Service at the time. It said that we needed to have a more targeted approach for providing relief to these families and that the budget was a missed opportunity to make sure that the money that is provided actually goes to the families who need it the most.

This Premier and government are sitting on an absolute bonanza of cash; there is no question about that. It was very unedifying to see the Premier coming out of the budget lock-up with a journalist, saying he thought other Treasurers would be looking like they had swallowed a bumblebee. I think there is a modicum of humility required when you are in the Premier's position. We know that there are crises in a number of key portfolios. We have spoken about family and domestic violence, we talk about health on a regular basis, we have talked about ambulance ramping figures and we talk about the pressure that our health system is under and the workers within that health system. We talk about the housing crisis and the fact that this government has taken its eye off the ball in delivering a sustained pipeline of affordable housing right across the state. There are waitlists for public housing, and we all know, as members of Parliament, the pressures on our constituents. They are coming through our doors daily and saying to us that they can no longer afford to pay the rent on their homes, so they are jumping on the public housing waitlist. That is going up and up. Limited work has been done by the government to ensure that we are keeping up with that growing cohort.

The Premier and his cabinet are now trying to spend their way out of a crisis, but for some reason we still hear this echo, now more than five years ago, to the previous government. This government has been in charge for five years, yet we have some serious issues facing the state. We did not see prolonged COVID lockdowns, like other states did. We did not see any of that. The businesses in our community are stretched in terms of labour, but they were largely able to continue operating. This government has had five years. We have a very healthy bank balance, but a big part of that is not due to good economic management, but good fortune. It has come from GST payments from the federal coalition government, record royalties that have flowed into the coffers of the state and increased taxation. There has been a bigger tax revenue coming into the state government coffers.

It could therefore be argued that it is incumbent upon the Premier; Treasurer to share that wealth. Unfortunately, this budget fell very short of the mark. People in our community, including individuals whom we have interacted

with and key stakeholder groups, have expressed their concern that the wealth has not been shared, and that the real issues that so many people are facing have not been dealt with as part of the budget. This is a Premier; Treasurer who is sitting on a pile of cash, but is essentially unwilling to share it. With such a massive surplus, the government could have afforded to be far more generous with its centrepiece than it was. That is the point.

The Premier explicitly said that his budget would help families through the challenges of today. He claimed that his budget would help address cost-of-living pressures on households. As I said yesterday, that is simply not true. The member for Roe yesterday inspired me to have a look at some of the commentary from everyday punters on this issue, and there has been plenty. Certainly, commentary has come from all the key stakeholder groups, and we will get to that as members make their contributions, but I noted that the member read in some of the letters to the editor in *The West Australian*. I think a lot of that feedback correlates with the feedback from my own electorate and the discussions we have been having since this budget was announced. There is consensus that it was a very flat budget, it was uninspiring and that it missed the mark on supporting those who need it the most.

Inspired by the member for Roe, I went to *The West Australian* online yesterday to have a look. I can hear the Minister for Police groaning on the opposite bench, but members opposite use those comments when it suits them, and I certainly did not have to go very far to find the arguments that actually correlate with the proposition that we are putting forward.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Police!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Only about five people read *The West*? Is that what the Minister for Police said?

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I am not talking about that; I am talking about going online.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** I said the member for Roe did yesterday, Minister for Police. Unlike you, I actually listen when your side speaks. I picked up what the Minister for Housing was saying and took note. If you are going to participate in the debate, you can pop up after we have finished and have your say.

Let us just read through some of these. These are ordinary, everyday Western Australians making their views known. One said —

An ALP government to gives \$400 handouts to ... millionaires? How does that work? While people are living in tents!

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** No, they are comments, Minister for Police—as you would have heard me say, if you were not talking over the top of me—to an article —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It says, “Ian B”, and I can point the minister to the website and give him a specific —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Police!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Oh my goodness! I do not think it is a hard concept. We live in an online world, Acting Speaker.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife):** Leader of the Opposition, if you could just pause for a second. I appreciate that the Minister for Police has been interjecting. I think, in some ways, you perhaps do not need to continue indulging him, though, either, Leader of the Opposition. I will keep making sure that there is order, if we can just get on with things.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Thank you, Acting Speaker. It would appear that the Minister for Police is unable to understand the concept of online articles and the fact that there is regularly opportunity for members of the public to provide feedback. I am simply furnishing the house with some of those comments on the state budget and the feedback from the community. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I can point to the actual article and promise that I am not making up names or individuals. They do, in fact, have their names listed below the article. Phillip L says —

The state government has a majority they no longer deserve. Time is passing and very little achieved. There certainly seems to be a dearth of talent in their ranks. It does seem to be a lazy budget.

Wendy F says —

This has been a pretty disappointing budget. There was no need to raise power, water and rego costs when some are really having a hard time. The \$400 credit —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The Minister for Police does the Western Australian public no good when he assumes that everybody comes to these things with a partisan background. It shows just how low an opinion he has of people who engage in this debate. The quote continues —

The \$400 credit will only offset the rise in charges for a short while.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Police!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** The quote continues —

I think he is a little out of touch.

Another says —

Of course the Budget is very slack work by MM. —

That is, Mark McGowan —

For such an important portfolio you cannot be Premier, lead a health crisis, micro manage & be front man of all areas of government and then devote the time to —

Being Treasurer.

It goes on and on. I read these comments just as a reflection of some of the things that have been said, not only online on *The West Australian*, but also in the conversations that we have been having with our constituents. They are certainly reflected in some of those key stakeholder groups. I acknowledge that there are some keyboard cowboys and girls out there, but I do think that this reflects a feeling in the community. Not everyone, but certainly a vast majority of people have passed judgement on this Premier; Treasurer for handing down such an enormous surplus when so many are feeling the pinch. The budget really fails to address the cost-of-living pressures being experienced by so many Western Australian households.

Let me be specific about where it fails. There is an increase in the basket of goods for households. The driver's licence fee people pay is going up by 6.4 per cent. Their car registration will go up by 3.8 per cent. The motor injury insurance is up by 2.4 per cent. Water charges will go up by 2.5 per cent and the emergency services levy will go up by five per cent. As I said yesterday, if people are seeking to be progressive in their choice of car by transferring to an electric vehicle, there will also be a 2.5¢ tax on those cars for every kilometre driven. That is an industry seeking to encourage people to take up electric vehicles—we certainly support that—but that is probably a disincentive at this stage while we are trying to increase the number of people purchasing those cars. In contrast, the opposition called for a freeze on fees and charges for the 2022–23 financial year—not across the forward estimates, and we did not say it should be forever—to acknowledge that there are some extraordinary circumstances in our state at present and to ease the pain in Western Australians' hip pockets. The sustained freezing of fees and charges would probably cause more challenges than it solved in the longer term because there would be bill shock when things returned to normal, but we have to acknowledge that there are some serious challenges in Western Australia at the moment, and I think that would certainly have relieved some of those pressures.

Likewise, we tried to advocate a raft of other issues prior to the budget being handed down, such as the patient assisted travel scheme. This is for patients who have to travel to access specialist services. With the price of fuel at the moment, even the very generous support that the federal coalition government is providing to try to ease the pressure for motorists still does not cover or fill the gap at all. It is simply unaffordable for people who have to travel by land to access specialist services in major regional centres or the Perth metropolitan area. It should never be out of reach for anyone to access the services that they require.

The other thing that would have been a relatively easy gesture to make was to acknowledge those age and disability pensioners who live in regional Western Australia who have access to the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. I am sure that the member for Moore, as the shadow Minister for Transport, will speak to that. When the Labor government came to power in 2017, it removed the indexing of the card, so the increase in funding for the card to keep up with the cost of living and inflation every year was removed. Unfortunately, that means that there is not the same amount of dollar stretching. By far the majority of those people do not have access to public transport. I note that there has been an investment in making public transport fares cheaper in the metropolitan area. The genesis of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card was to acknowledge that there were age and disability pensioners in the regions who did not have access to public transport, and it went towards supporting them to get to medical appointments. It was supporting them to stay connected in their communities and allow them to have some of the support that is available quite readily in the metropolitan area. This government could have increased the amount of funding for the Country Age Pension Fuel Card. The government could have changed the categories of people who are eligible for the Country Age Pension Fuel Card to make more people eligible for it in order to relieve their pressures. It is just a truism that people living in regional Western Australia spend more time in their cars—it is not an us-versus-them thing. They spend more on fuel; that is just a fact. There were most definitely missed opportunities for us to address, and we were very disappointed not to see those changes in the budget.

I would like to talk about two of the questions that were asked today about oncology services for Geraldton and Albany, because the Minister for Health pushed back immediately and said that there would be no funding from the state government, or that only one was under consideration. There was most definitely a reluctance by the state government, even with the budget situation it finds itself in, to partner with the federal government on, or match, funding that has been made available for Geraldton radiotherapy services and Albany oncology services. I could not quite understand the minister's proposal because, essentially, most funding that comes from the federal government is matched by state government funding or there is a partnership arrangement. Sometimes the state puts in more and sometimes the federal government puts in more. In this case, the federal government announced this program for, I think, 13 oncology radiation units around Australia. There was one promised for Albany and there is certainly a need for a similar service in Geraldton. We are talking about the cost of living and basic services and where we see failures. Geraldton hospital has been delayed now for five years, and although there is additional funding in the budget, which we welcome, we now do not have a finish date. That has not been shared with the public and the people who are waiting for it so desperately. We thought that there would be an opportunity for this government to consider that as part of the redevelopment. Given that there have been delays, it could have been wound in to the redevelopment.

There was a tragic article published on ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt online on Monday, 16 May showing the real face of this tit for tat between federal and state governments on funding, such as patients like Geraldton general practitioner—I hope I say her name correctly, apologies in advance—Mahee Jayakody, who became a patient herself when she was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. The doctor said it was a very bad diagnosis. Having to travel down to Perth on a regular basis has had serious financial implications for her and her family. She has young children. When people cannot get treatment close to home, they cannot provide reassurance to their children. They are not able to go about their normal lives, if they have the health to do so. Unfortunately, too many people fall into that category.

The Albany radiation oncology service has been campaigned for for a very long time. The community, and Mary Williams in particular, has done a marvellous job of trying to keep this on the agenda. I know that Rick Wilson, as the federal member for O'Connor, has done a significant amount of work. We are still waiting to see when that facility will become operational. Unfortunately, I actually have friends who have required the services of a facility like this in Albany. When a person is very ill, the last thing they feel like doing is to get in a car or on a plane and driving or flying to Perth on a regular basis. That can be expensive, and although there are opportunities to use Crawford Lodge and others places in Perth, the problem is that these people are then away from their home and the comfort of their friends and family. Too many regional Western Australians have to do that. This is an opportunity to set politics aside. The federal government has put funding on the table for these two services. This state government has the financial capability to deliver on services like this that people really respond to and see the value of. It would be a marvellous outcome if the government were to put some funding into and deliver on these projects, and we would wholeheartedly support it.

I will finish up by saying again that when a Premier has been in charge for five years, as this Premier has been, and delivered two whopping budget surpluses, one would absolutely expect to have a health system that is in good nick. One would expect to have a housing sector that had received investment right throughout the entire supply chain in terms of unlocking land, investing in community and public housing and making sure that we have affordable rentals. It seems like we are delivering it all in a rush at the most difficult time, instead of this government having had the foresight to invest in the sector earlier. We have a housing crisis and a health crisis. Fees and charges are increasing that will put additional pressures on families that are already under stress. As I said yesterday, government members only need to talk to the staff at Foodbank Australia—as I do when I visit Albany, Geraldton or any of those regional centres—to hear that not only do they see coming through their doors the people who have been regular clients for the last five or 10 years, but also they are starting to see families who have never had cause to walk through those doors. That is an indictment on a government that is sitting on a massive budget surplus—a pile of cash—that could have been shared with more Western Australians to help ease their household budgets.

**DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe — Leader of the Liberal Party)** [4.22 pm]: I rise to support this excellent motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. Earlier today, I delivered my budget reply speech and I reiterate from that that any measures to assist Western Australians families in this budget are too little and, for many, too late. I want to emphasise the point made by the member for Vasse today by way of interjection during a government answer in question time. When we talk about the relief that is being provided to Western Australians, the government touts its big relief package of \$400 to households. I will talk about what that actually means later. Of course, for the homeless in our community, it is no help at all. For those people who do not have a place to live and who are sleeping in their cars or sleeping rough, it provides no help or assistance whatsoever. We all know that they are the people most in need. Although it is not the major topic of my contribution, I am not sure that that will get significantly better; if anything, we have seen it get worse under this government. The really massive increase in rent is going to force more people out onto the street. I know that the Minister for Housing is a person of good intent and genuinely feels compassion for those people. My concern is that the actions his government has taken on homelessness are too little, too late. The housing industry cannot build houses at anywhere near the rate of normal demand. Getting additional housing will be enormously hard. I welcome the build-to-rent initiative and the stamp duty relief; it is

a good initiative and something that members of the opposition have discussed with the building industry. We told it openly that we supported that as a good initiative. However, a third of all apartment projects at the moment are on hold because they cannot attract a builder. There are actually no builders to build them. When we talk about new projects coming into the market, I struggle to see how this will improve. As I say, I appreciate the minister's good intent, but because of actions this government took in its first term, that may now be an impossible dream.

Our state has received a massive budget surplus. As pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, it is nothing to do with smart economic management. It is pure windfall. The income that this government will receive this year is \$16.5 billion more than that in the last year of the Barnett government. Take that in, members—\$16.5 billion. That is a 66 per cent increase in income. We should compare the surplus that has been announced to the \$16.5 billion increase in funding. The Premier says that somehow he, as Treasurer, is so much smarter and brighter than the Liberal government. He comes into this place and mocks us on this side for the performance of the past government. The surplus reported this year is only \$5.7 billion against a \$16.5 billion income increase. We have seen a massive 30 per cent increase in expenditure by this government. Even if we take out inflation, it is a 20 per cent expenditure increase by this government, but we do not see any commensurate improvement in services. What we see is households being hit up for more fees and charges.

I know that Western Australians have not accepted the spin from the government that their fees and charges will not increase because of that \$400 sugar hit, which, as I say, seems to be very conveniently timed before the federal election. The McGowan government in its first six budgets increased household fees and charges by \$1 050 a year. That is the underlying increase in fees and charges. This government can talk about a one-off hit, but those underlying increases are annual hits, and then there are the stated increases that the government has announced. It uses a model household to look at those particular fees and charges, but we know that there would be only a handful of households in Perth that are represented by that model household. Nearly every household would have significantly more fees and charges than that model household. Even if we accept that and the hypothetical consumption of water, the use of public transport and the like, there are still substantial increases. In 2022–23, the average basket of goods, as it is put, will cost \$6 536 per year. That is a 2.5 per cent increase. The underlying cost in fees and charges this year is going up by \$156. Very few households are going to see that \$400. They will not see anything like it in the reduction in charges. If they are the so-called model household, the net is only \$244.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** The government is giving \$400 with one hand, but taking away money with the other, minister. It is supposedly giving \$400, but taking back \$156 —

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Minister for Police!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** — in increased underlying fees and charges. We will talk about that a little later. Even if we include the \$400 just for this year, the average household is \$650 worse off than it was in 2017. These are very substantial increases. I know that there are members here who care about those who are doing it tough. They are very close to the issues of people who are struggling and so on. They know that for many families their income has not gone up, so that \$650 simply comes out of other things. As I have said in this place before, we end up with this horrendous situation in which parents have to choose between getting themselves food or buying shoes for the kids. Do they just make the kids go to school in shoes that clearly do not fit because they cannot afford to buy them? That is what the \$650 increase means.

Electricity consumers in Western Australia have suffered massive cost increases. That was due primarily to the Gallop Labor government's reform in mid-2000 to split up government agencies. All of a sudden, we had four agencies and four executives and senior managements for what was once one agency. That reform promised massive reductions in fees and charges.

**Ms J.J. Shaw** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I have read the original debate in Parliament, member. That reform was touted —

**Ms J.J. Shaw** interjected.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** For goodness sake!

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for Swan Hills!

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** That reform was touted as one that would substantially reduce fees and charges. We never saw that. All we saw after that was massive increases. The Barnett government had to pick that up. That government had forecast 10 per cent increases year on year. The Barnett government inherited that. I know that on this side, an error was made about the charges under the Barnett government. Those fee increases were inherited from the previous Labor government. That is not spin. That is a fact. That reform did not result in businesses and households paying substantially lower fees and charges. In fact, there were significant increases because of the splitting up of those agencies.

The reality is that throughout this government's term, the decisions it made in past budgets have contributed significantly to cost-of-living pressures for Western Australians. This government's first budget in 2017–18 had significant price increases for our utilities, with a 10.9 per cent increase for electricity and a six per cent increase for water. As we pointed out at that time, that was well above the rate of inflation. The government was clearly front-loading those increases so that it could tell a better story at the end of its term in government. The reality is that those increases were not once-off. They are cumulative increases that are continuing to this day. Those increases in utility prices really hurt family budgets. In the early part of 2020, this government was on the rocks, but COVID hit, and that changed the whole political situation. I remember going out to the electorate of Darling Range with some members here and talking to householders. The pain they were feeling was visceral. It was quite remarkable, actually. It was shocking. Families were extremely distressed.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Can I interject?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Yes, you can.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** It will be interesting to see the position of the Premier when it comes to Albanese supporting a 5.1 per cent pay rise to marry up with inflation. The inflation rate in Western Australia is two per cent higher than the national rate, so it will be interesting to see whether the Premier supports wage increases to meet the inflation costs here in WA.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** As always, I appreciate the value of the member's contribution, unlike some others in this place. I deeply pray that we never get to find that out, member.

Several members interjected.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Do you support it?

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, you are interjecting on a member of your own alliance at the moment. You do not have the call, member for North West Central.

**Mr V.A. Catania** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER:** Member for North West Central, do not argue with the chair. I call you to order for the first time. Sorry. What was that? Did you have something to say, member for North West Central? No.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Thank you very much, Acting Speaker. I need protection everywhere.

As I say, member, I deeply hope we will never get to test that thesis. That is of great concern to me. Those price rises hurt family budgets. Despite the government's power bill credit, which will come in on 1 July, electricity bills will still go up by 2.5 per cent. That will effectively be a cumulative increase—the increase that will occur this year, and, on top of that, the two per cent increase next year.

In 2020, the government provided Western Australian households with a \$600 electricity credit. We could only describe that as an election inducement. That was at a time when our state had a significantly smaller surplus than the surplus that has been delivered this time. The state also had a substantially lower rate of inflation, and lower global price pressures. As I have said before in this house, I understand that this time, there is uncertainty. The government has said the reason it has done this is to calm people down and make them feel that they will not be under financial stress. The actual realised financial stress that households are under now is much greater than it was at that time. It is a government decision. The government holds the reins. If the government thought that \$600 was appropriate at that time, why does the government now think it is appropriate to come up with an electricity credit of only \$400, when households are under vastly greater financial pressure than they were at that time? It does not seem to make sense. This is what the government has chosen to do. However, there seems to be a complete inconsistency between an imagined risk at that time versus a real risk or a real pressure at this time.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** Can I interject?

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Yes, quickly.

**Mr V.A. Catania:** That \$600 came from the Bell Group settlement. It was based on the WA Inc days. It was one way for the government to try to sell to the community that it was doing a good thing, rather than putting that money in its coffers.

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** I thank the member, but I had best move on. As always, that was a valuable point. The reality is that the government stated that that was a windfall, so it is not something that would make a big difference. No. It was income that the government had received. It had the choice to spend it on many things, and it chose to spend it on that.

The opposition has consistently called in this budget for a freeze on government fees and charges. That is what happened last time, when as well as the \$600 credit, there was a temporary freeze on increases in fees and charges. That would be appropriate now. The reason that a freeze would be of value to households is that it would reduce the cumulative effect of increases over the following year. By giving households \$400, yes, they will get a sugar hit now, but the underlying fee will go up by 2.5 per cent, and next year it will go up by another 2.5 per cent. If that

fee was frozen, the net increase that people would see next year would be 2.5 per cent and not the cumulative increase of five per cent. In fact, it would be more than five per cent because of compound interest. That is why we have called for that. That would provide sustained relief to families, whereas what the government is doing now will add \$160 to their costs forevermore. Mr Albanese came to WA and made great moment, as the member for North West Central alluded to earlier, of the very high inflation rate in Western Australia. Again, given that very high inflation rate, that one-off payment will not make any major difference.

Foodbank said earlier this month that it was seeing a trend of clients who are under-employed, or considered to be the working poor. The opposition has raised with this government time and again that for the first time in this state in my lifetime, we are seeing an emerging trend of middle-class homelessness. It is quite remarkable for a state that accounts for 60 per cent of Australia's export income, and has massive windfall surpluses, that we have literally moved to having middle-class homelessness. I have been contacted by people who have nowhere to stay. They have a full-time job, yet they cannot find a house to live in. That is just terrible. I have made the point about targeted relief. The problem with the way the government has delivered this \$400 relief is that the billionaires who reside in or immediately adjacent to my electorate—I counted six of them at one stage—will get the same \$400 credit as a single mum on social security who lives in a flat and is struggling to pay the rent. That makes no sense whatsoever. That is why last year, I donated mine to St Patrick's. I could not in all conscience take that money. One homeless person in my electorate often has to sleep in the basement of my office block. That is a completely inadequate payment.

The government has said that we want to spend all of the surplus.

[Member's time extended.]

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** If the government were doing something to make structural changes that would help the community in the future, maybe we would have a different attitude, but it is not. As I said, above CPI, we have seen an increase in government expenditure by 20 per cent since 2017. That is a net increase above CPI. The government is spending like there is no tomorrow but we are not seeing the commensurate improvement of services. Go anywhere, to housing, hospitals, homelessness or any of the big, core issues, we are not seeing a net improvement at this stage. The Premier promised that above certain thresholds he would apply 50 per cent of the iron ore royalty to pay off debt. As the Leader of the Opposition again pointed out in her contribution to the budget speech, if the government had done that, it would have reduced debt by \$14 billion. Why is that important? It is important because, for every year henceforth, the government—every government of whatever colour—would have more money to spend on critical services. That would provide lasting relief—a genuine relief. It would also, in a small way but I think significantly given the amount of money, put less pressure on interest rates, for example. One of the things that is driving interest rates in the nation is the debt that so many states carry. The government is not making the decision to do that. As I said, there are some initiatives. I think that encouraging the rent-to-buy scheme is a great initiative. The building industry came forward with it, the government supported it and we support it. We all think that is wonderful, but, in the greater part, it is very hard to see where that enormous wealth—\$16.5 billion—is going because we can see very few outcomes and very little of it in useful things in the budget.

The latest energy report released by the Economic Regulation Authority clearly shows that, after the original \$600 credits were applied, the number of customers repaying a bill debt and the average amount of debt owed continued to trend upwards. By the end of 2021, the average residential bill debt for Synergy's non-hardship customers reached its highest level in five years while Synergy and Horizon Power customers in the hardship program had the highest average bill debts since reporting began in 2016–17. Gas retailers reported the average bill debt owed by non-hardship residential customers and customers on a hardship program both increased by 46 per cent in 2021. There was also a substantial increase in the number of non-hardship customers with a bill debt. Currently, during March 2022 alone, 1 466 homes had their power disconnected for non-payment of power bills. That is one every 30 minutes. Every 30 minutes, a household is disconnected. Yesterday, the Premier made the point that relief had to be given with the original \$600 payment because of all the uncertainty, but what we know for certain is that interest rates are heading back to historic levels of seven per cent. That is the long-term average interest rate and that is what our interest rates will go back to, if they are not higher given the state of the global economy.

Based on the budget papers, households will continue to see further increases, as I said, by 2.5 per cent. That means families would see an increase from \$3 216 in 2023 to \$3 706 in 2023–24. That is going to be an increase of \$490 in just utilities, not the whole basket of goods. There clearly is no real solution to all of that. Another member of the community said that they received an additional \$500 bill from Synergy after their previous bill was calculated off estimations. This is a major issue. I will not dwell on it for too long but the issue is that the power utilities have so few people to read the meters that they are estimating them, but when somebody does read the meter and the estimates are significantly incorrect, households are getting hit with enormous bills. On the other side, households that have solar panels on their roofs are not receiving solar credits, so households that have based their budget on the fact that their solar panels are going to significantly reduce their bills are being hit with the full bills and they are not being corrected until some significant time later because there are not enough people to read meters. That is putting even more pressure on a lot of households, some of which have appropriately invested to try to reduce their expenditure. These are enormously high costs. The CEO of the Western Australian Council of Social Service,

Louise Giolitto—someone whom I meet with reasonably regularly—said that stressed community services continue to call for more support for frontline services and help for those families that have fallen below the poverty line. She said —

With petrol prices back above \$2 a litre, interest rates rising and wages going backward in real terms, WA families have never had it so tough.

She is saying that the credit will make very little difference. I cannot go through all of the things I would like to talk to in the time that I have because of the amount of material that the government has given us to respond to, but I will say that water is a parallel to the power increase. This year, the Water Corporation will return just on \$1 billion to Treasury. That is \$1 billion above the cost of service to the customers. This is a basic service. When the government increased the charges, it had a massive impact on families. In particular, it impacted upon larger families and people who live on larger blocks. Many members here would know that a lot of the families who live in the outer metropolitan areas on larger blocks are not wealthy people. A lot of them are seeking low-cost rental accommodation. They are poorer people, but they use more water because of their larger blocks. That is in an inevitable consequence of being on a larger block. Someone who has a large number of children uses significantly more water. They are the people who were belted with that massive increase in charges for consumption over 500 kilolitres. A larger family that needs 700 kilolitres of water—that is not unusual—is now paying \$867 for the first 500 kilolitres and a massive \$927 for the additional 200 kilolitres. That is a massive hit. The people who have been largely negatively affected by the massive increase in water charges are larger families and people living in the outer suburbs. I do not have time to go on. I need to give my colleagues time to make their contributions, but if we look at the other underlying increase in charges, it is the gross rental value. Water charges applied based on gross rental value have increased by 29.7 per cent for small businesses.

The government should have frozen underlying fees and charges because that would not provide just one year's relief, like with the \$400. It would provide year-on-year relief because all the other increases in the following years would be based on a lower base. That would have been the appropriate measure to take to relieve cost pressures on families in Western Australia.

**MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [4.48 pm]: I would also like to contribute to this motion brought by the Leader of the Opposition —

That this house condemns the Premier for delivering a budget that fails to provide real cost-of-living relief and is too little, too late for Western Australian families and key sectors in crisis.

It is about families and sectors within our society that are under real stress. What we saw in this current budget is an increase on certain costs—not a freeze, but actually a steep increase in some areas. For instance, drivers' licences are going up by 6.4 per cent. Car registration fees are going up by 3.8 per cent. Motor injury insurance is going up by 2.4 per cent. We heard of the steep increases in water prices. We are also seeing increases in the emergency services levy at a time when families are under real stress. An understanding of just how stressed people are will come from reading reports like this one of 6 May concerning charities Foodbank of Western Australia and Anglicare that are coming under a lot of pressure from families who are not normally seen as the clientele of these groups. I think it was highlighted by the Leader of the Liberal Party and also by the Leader of the Nationals WA, the Leader of the Opposition, that Foodbank, for instance, has seen not only a tremendous increase in its run on demand, but also a change in the demographics of people who are coming to charities such as Foodbank for service. This particular report states —

Anglicare chief executive Mark Glasson said the rising cost of living was driving more people to his service despite having a source of income.

“What we're seeing is a new group of people emerging, seeking support for bills and food assistance, and they're people that we wouldn't normally have seen in the past,” ...

“One in six people that comes to us for assistance at the moment has a mortgage. Now, that would have been unheard of only three or four years ago.”

...

Foodbank WA chief executive Kate O'Hara said their organisation was seeing a similar trend of more clients who were “underemployed” or considered to be “working poor.”

“[We are] absolutely seeing that phenomenon emerging and becoming more of an issue pretty much week by week ...

“It's just growing incrementally.”

We are seeing people who are not normally in a position of such stress turning to these organisations for assistance, food and emergency help at a very stressful time. Mr Glasson went on to say —

“The fact that we have seen so many people that can't keep a roof over their head and food on the table is something that we should all be ashamed of.”

They are the quotes from those charities. We are not just seeing this in the metropolitan area; I have firsthand knowledge of the situation experienced by Geraldton Foodbank in the midwest area. It is seeing a tremendous increase in demand. It has to reach out to some of the smaller communities in the region in a big way. A recent example of that was the need to send emergency packages to householders in Mullewa. These people were probably already on reduced incomes, but they may have been isolating because they were close contacts of people affected by COVID-19 in the community and their households and could not access food. They could not afford to get a Woolies van or something like that to deliver groceries to them. Without the assistance of Foodbank, some of those households would have experienced real hunger.

This is a combination of a very stressful time when we are seeing people change their lifestyles around the pandemic. We are still adjusting to that. We are in the midst of that at the moment. It is having an effect on households as well as the general rise in the cost of living, as has been demonstrated. In response, instead of freezing charges and some of these fees, which it could have done, the government has made some quite steep increases in some of them.

Before the budget, I raised this matter with the Premier in a question without notice. I asked whether the government intended to set fees and charges against the rate of inflation, which at that stage was an alarming 5.7 per cent—I think it has gone up again—or whether it would take on board the severe stress that people are under and consider freezing charges. The Premier acknowledged that there were cost-of-living pressures and, at that stage, the Russian invasion of Ukraine saw an enormous spike in the cost of fuel. Many households were struggling with those imposts. In acknowledging that, the Premier said that his government was coming up with some initiatives, such as “an amazing two-zone fare policy”, which would be rolled out to 75 per cent of the state’s population. Some families will save up to \$3 000 as a result of that policy. That is fine for those who have access to public transport. But as we know, the other 25 per cent of people do not have access to public transport, and what was in the budget for them?

In that regard, I also asked the Premier a question about assistance for pensioners through the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and what considerations might be given. Some of the 25 per cent of people who do not live in the metropolitan area could have had access to some relief. I pointed out to the Premier when I asked the question that when the government came to office in 2017, the card could be used to purchase 445 litres of petrol. At the time of asking that question, that amount was down to 273 litres. I asked for an increase, not to completely keep up with the price of fuel but simply to match inflation, given the fact that the increase in fuel prices actually led to an increase in government revenue, something that the Premier acknowledged in his response to me. He went on to say —

In respect of the member’s question, he actually raised a reasonable point ...

That was about the fact that government revenue was also rising at a time when stress was on people around the fuel price in these areas where the Country Age Pension Fuel Card takes effect, and he said he would consider it. We know from the budget that just came out that the result was no.

In its pre-budget submission, the RAC put out a number of requests for the government to consider. At the front and centre of that was the freezing of motor vehicle registration fees and public transport fees. We acknowledge that we saw some effort in public transport in the metropolitan area, with the announcement of the two-zone policy, which I will talk about shortly. We saw no consideration given to freezing vehicle registration fees and other licensing fees that were called for by the RAC.

**Mr P. Papalia** interjected.

**The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr D.A.E. Scaife):** Minister for Police!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Not only did the RAC call for that freezing of fees for one year, but it also considered that if those fees were frozen for three years, it would be a reasonable response. The RAC would be as disappointed as we were to see that those pleas had not been listened to.

I return to the two-zone fare subsidy that was announced, which would have an effect on the budget. Budget paper No 3 shows that the total subsidy to Transperth in the current year will have risen to \$915 980 million. That is up from \$856 055 million in the previous year. That is an increase of just under \$60 million, which I presume will cover, in part, that two-zone fare policy and associated changes. Maybe it is also a reflection of falling patronage on Transperth services, which is interesting. When the government is in the middle of building Metronet and expanding services greatly, people are staying off the services in droves. That is reflected in the fact that the government has had to lift the subsidy by \$60 million this year.

If the government considered the effects on country people who do not have access to that level of subsidy, it would only be fair that the value of the Country Age Pension Fuel Card be increased. It is interesting to look at the level of subsidy for regional services run by the Public Transport Authority such as Transwa and the school bus system. I know that the member for Roe was successful in getting an inquiry into school bus issues. Getting their children to school is a real issue for country families. Oftentimes, children get on the school bus or families get some assistance for travel. We have noticed that that assistance has been kept at a stagnant level. I understand that a committee of inquiry is looking at that issue now, but its terms of reference do not include any increase in budget. Even though the government might acknowledge the concerns of country families in getting their children to

school and the costs around that, it has given it no consideration. The government is ignoring regional families while at the same time trumping its successes in Perth and building a horrendously expensive ongoing subsidy into the Transperth system. That needs to be taken into account when we are looking at the totality of the Metronet programs going forward. They will all require more and more subsidies—more track, more trains—and no great increase in passengers will lead to a tremendous drain on the state’s resources. That seems to be okay, but an increase for country people seems to be off the cards completely.

I can see that the Minister for Climate Action is in the chamber. He does not seem to be taking responsibility for measures that are now being introduced in the name of climate action. I wonder whether he will take responsibility for the introduction of the 2.5¢ per kilometre tax on road users who have made an investment in electric vehicles or the 2¢ per kilometre tax on those people who drive plug-in hybrid electric vehicles—vehicles that might do only 40, 50, 60 or 70 kilometres before needing the assistance of a motor. Those people will be paying twice. They will be paying 2¢ per kilometre when they drive their car wherever they go. There will be no allowance for them when the car kicks in and they have to use petrol. That is not being taken into account. I can see this being a real disincentive for families who want to invest in a clean green future for their children from taking the step towards electric vehicles.

One reason put forward by governments for introducing this tax is that there will be a decrease in fuel excise as electric vehicles take to the roads. I refer to a media statement of 10 May, which outlines that motorists will pay their “fair share” towards the maintenance and construction of WA roads. That is a complete furphy. Excise is collected by the commonwealth government. It is a commonwealth government source of revenue. It is not all expended on road infrastructure, although a good portion of it is. As we see a shift to electric vehicles, the impost will not be on state revenues; it will be on commonwealth government revenues. The commonwealth government, and not state governments, will have to come up with ways of funding infrastructure through this. It is an absolute furphy for the state government to say that it needs this charge.

I want to read from an article in *The Age* that refers to the Victorian tax, which mirrors exactly what will be happening in Western Australia.

**Mr R.R. Whitby** interjected.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister!

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** This article by Josh Gordon, who I assume knows what he is talking about because he writes for *The Age*, a very prestigious newspaper, states —

Victoria is trying to muscle in on what has for decades been an important federal revenue source: Charging motorists to help pay for roads.

It goes on —

... Treasurer Tim Pallas —

He obviously has swallowed bumblebees —

said he was “unashamedly” attempting to siphon the federal government’s fuel excise revenue stream using Victoria’s controversial electric vehicle tax.

That is the charge that this government is mirroring almost identically.

**Mr R.R. Whitby:** As New South Wales has.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Absolutely—the minister is dead right. The minister called it in one. He said “unashamedly”. He is pushing the commonwealth out of the tax. The WA government is pushing the commonwealth out of the tax, but the commonwealth will still pay the state government massive amounts of money towards infrastructure, and that is quite evident in the budget. The amount of support that the Morrison government has given to the Western Australian government is amazing. It is certainly not the case that the state government is under stress because of a falling share of commonwealth revenues, and that it has to resort to unfairly taxing people who have made an investment in green technology, something that the Minister for Climate Action surely should be encouraging, rather than taking up a tax that will lead to the impression that we do not really need people taking up electric vehicles. Far from supporting those motorists, the Victorian state government, which admittedly is under financial pressure, is looking at ways of making extra money and is putting in place this system. But this state government does not need to do that. It has massive surpluses. It has a wonderful system. The GST has now been cured by the Morrison government to the extent that the government has a guaranteed floor in the GST. I think the Leader of the Liberal Party mentioned that there was \$14 billion in extra revenue this year.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** It is 16.5 over the 17.

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** It is \$16.5 million over the 2017 budget. This government should not need to rummage around for extra pennies.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** I might not need the extension. This government does not need to rummage around in the cupboard looking for pennies from householders who are already under stress or cause them to make decisions on climate change that are not in the long-term interests of the state.

As I said, this charge mirrors the one that the Victorian government put in place, which I think is currently subject to a High Court challenge. I do not know where that matter is at, but it will be interesting to see where it goes in the end.

How the tax will be levied is quite clumsy. It is a little like estimating electricity accounts. Motorists will be required to make odometer declarations on an annual basis and then the tax will be levied at the rate of 2.5¢ per kilometre for an electric vehicle or 2¢ per kilometre for a plug-in hybrid. I understand, too, that the rate will be indexed to inflation, so by the time it hits the road and is up and running, the rate could be up to 3¢ per kilometre rather than 2.5¢. After reading how it will be carried out, the system looks terribly expensive to administer. It is a very clumsy way of harvesting \$300 or \$400 a year from the average motorist. It is a very poor tax. It is a little like the stamp duties we did away with in the duties bill that was in the house a little while ago—they cost more than they were worth. This tax is probably going to be very clumsy to administer and will cost people a lot of time and effort to participate in. It will be an impost on not only their finances but also their time, potentially, if the system that is used is like the rather clumsy system that the Victorians use of photographing odometers or some other method, or whether someone uses a GPS, for instance, to track where people go. That perhaps would be efficient, but I am not sure that we want to see that come in. Hopefully, the government does not intend to further impinge on people's privacy like we have seen in some of the COVID legislation with the unauthorised release of information.

As I said, this tax appears to be unnecessary for this state. It will be levied by the government in the same way that other state governments levy taxes and charges. But other state governments are scrambling around looking for pennies. They have difficulties in their state budgets. This state government does not. But the people who are having difficulties with their budgets are average Western Australian families. They are the ones who have trouble balancing their budgets. This government's budget is in surplus—\$5 700 million in surplus. The average householder is struggling to pay their bills. We know that because we have heard that from Anglicare and Foodbank. We know that the government has heartlessly increased charges on families through motor vehicle licence, insurance and driver's licence fees. What we need at this time is a McGowan government that is looking to support families and making sure that it does what it can, rather than slugging taxpayers and families with steep rises. The very least the government could have done would have been a modest increase in the Country Age Pension Fuel Card and a freeze on vehicle registration and driver's licence fees. Instead, the government has unnecessarily increased those fees and is introducing a completely unnecessary tax on electric vehicles.

**MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe)** [5.09 pm]: I rise to make a short contribution tonight about some of the elements of the budget that have really disappointed me, and, of course, I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. As I pointed out in my contribution to the budget debate last night, when I woke up last Saturday and read those letters to the editor in the paper, I understood that the average person in Western Australia who was writing those letters appreciated the \$400 electricity credit, but their response was very lukewarm; they were disappointed by the rise in rates and charges and quite a few other elements of the budget. It brought home to me, once again, the rising cost-of-living scenarios that are playing out at the moment in both metropolitan and regional areas.

I will quickly refer to a couple of portfolio areas in the budget that I found really disappointing. The first relates to my shadow portfolio of sport and recreation. The regional athlete support program, a statewide network supporting regional-based talented athletes, coaches and officials, allows athletes to continue their development and progress along the athlete pathway from their home environment. The regional athlete support program is set to receive \$1.29 million in the budget, but this government has seen fit to drop it from the forward estimates. It is funded for 2022–23, but it has been dropped in the forward estimates. What message does that send to our regional athletes and their families? If members had looked at the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries website today, they would have seen the question: how is the state government supporting the regional athlete support program? It stated that the state government would continue to support the regional athlete support program with \$3 million of funding delivered over three years through royalties for regions. It failed to mention that the funding will cease in 2023. I am amazed that this valuable program has been defunded. I go back to estimates last year when I asked the former Minister for Sport and Recreation, Hon Tony Buti, questions about this program. He said —

... it is an incredibly important program. One of the best things that I have done in the six months that I have been in this position is allocate these grants ... I would be very surprised if the program did not continue in one form or another.

That was the response from the former Minister for Sport and Recreation. The response of this government, with a \$5.7 billion surplus, is to cut this program in the forward estimates. That was probably the most disappointing element in the sport and recreation portfolio.

The next is the KidSport program, which was established to overcome the cost barrier of participating in sport, leading to better education, social and health outcomes for our children and adolescents. I called for an increase in funding. In 2018, I think it was, the current government decided that scouts, girl guides and the like were not eligible for this funding, even though they promote activity in our children and, as I have always said, have those health

outcomes down the line. I called for an increase in funding for this program to increase the value of the voucher from \$150 to \$200. To the credit of this government, last year it provided two vouchers per family. I called on the government to increase the value of the voucher to \$200 and to continue with two vouchers per family. Once again, this budget has not taken into account the opportunity this program provides for those families and those kids. As I have said, I scratch my head when I look at a \$5.7 billion surplus and consider the importance of this program to those low-income families especially. With the increases in the cost of living, this was an opportunity for the government to come forth on this.

The patient assisted travel scheme is an important program for our regional constituents who are looking for assistance on those trips they have to make to Perth for medical assistance. As I said in my budget contribution last night, the government predicts that the average cost per trip will rise to \$528 and the reimbursement rate is 16¢ per kilometre. In this day and age, conveyancing allowances are an issue. I know that the two members on my left-hand side are looking at conveyancing allowances as part of the school bus inquiry. We need to look at the cost of fuel in the context of the patient assisted travel scheme for those people who need to go to Perth for medical assistance. They have no choice; their specialist is there. They need that compensation.

The final element that I find very upsetting is the boarding away from home allowance in my shadow portfolio of education. I go back to an article from the *Countryman* when this government, as part of its suite of education cuts, including Schools of the Air, Moora Residential College and the like, reduced the boarding away from home allowance from \$2 105 to \$1 320. The previous government had funded the allowance with \$785 coming from royalties for regions. I will read out a couple of quotes from this article in the *Countryman*. Firstly, Isolated Children's Parents' Association president Liz Sudlow at the time stated —

“Members throughout the State are disappointed with this decision, saying that once again the Government has forgotten about rural and remote families.

“One Kimberley member said ‘the State Government talk about developing the north, yet give families no incentive to live in remote areas’.”

Secondly, the former ICPA federal president Roxanne Morrissey said —

... any savings the Government might make would be minimal compared to the anguish the announcement would cause members who “relied heavily on this much-needed allowance”.

I make a point of this because I am not sure whether members opposite understand the importance of this allowance to our isolated communities. I certainly find it quite distressing that, with a \$5.7 billion surplus, this government has not seen fit to reinstate that allowance for isolated families. I will be interested in August this year, when the Isolated Children's Parents' Association federal conference is held in Perth, how the minister will be able to stand up at that conference with a straight face, having reduced those fees over the last few years, and talk about how important our isolated children and their families are and how this government is helping them.

We have seen not only a \$5.7 billion surplus in this budget, but also a \$5.8 billion surplus in the last budget. We have seen consecutive budgets with those two surplus figures. I express my disappointment, with the examples I gave of expenditure cuts in the shadow portfolios I represent, that the government did not take the opportunity to have a good hard look at these issues and the cost-of-living increases and do something to support our regional families.

**MS J.J. SHAW (Swan Hills — Parliamentary Secretary)** [5.19 pm]: I just had a really interesting exchange with the acting Leader of the House. He is a very erudite man who has been around this place for a very long time. He made a couple of comments to me that I have been sitting here thinking about, and I cannot let what I am about to say go unsaid. I have been a member of Parliament for five years. I had the privilege to go straight onto the government benches. It is truly a great privilege to be in Parliament. I plan on having a long career, but at some point during that career no doubt the tide will go out and I may well find myself on the opposition benches or turfed out of Parliament altogether. I have only ever experienced my parliamentary life as a member of the government, and looking at what is going on across the chamber, I shudder to think what life would be like as member of the opposition. Today, the opposition tried to bring on for debate a motion, but instead we heard a most bizarre cacophony of randomly strung together thoughts, with the opposition adopting a carpet-bomb approach.

I wish people in the outside world—the real world!—would take the time to watch Parliament so they can understand its mechanisms a little more. If people did, they would understand that this week we are doing budget reply speeches, whereby members are given the opportunity to debate the budget. It is a general debate. Members pick whatever topic they want to discuss and away they go. There is also the ordinary ebb and flow of the week, with the part called private members' business. It is the opportunity for opposition members to forensically debate a very particular issue. Let us face it, the majority of the time in Parliament is government business and then every now and then an opportunity arises for the opposition to have a deep dive into an issue. Opposition members can prepare sustained, interrogatory lines of argument should they so choose. In the very limited parliamentary time available to all of us, one would think opposition members might try to make the very best of the time they have available to them, but this opposition does not.

I sit here on the government benches and think about how the last Parliament had very capable opposition members, who did the work, who did the research and took the time to get across their brief and take a forensic look at the portfolios that they were charged with. They came into this place and forensically—quite often somewhat successfully—prosecuted arguments. Opposition members were prepared for debates on legislation and that often led to reform. Sometimes the amendments made to bills improved the quality of the legislation. I tell you what! Absolutely none of that behaviour is evident in this place, and it is bad for democracy. Members opposite do a great disservice to the people of Western Australia with their laziness, lack of preparation and completely bizarre approach of carpet-bombing private members' business.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** I did not hear the debate from last week. If others have made the same observation, perhaps the Leader of the Liberal Party should reflect on himself. Perhaps the Leader of the Liberal Party should reflect why there are only two Liberal members sitting in the chamber.

If the opposition refuses to debate the motion before this Parliament, I certainly will not shy away from it. I am very proud to speak this evening to this government's record and to what Labor governments do to address cost-of-living pressures for families. I am very proud to debate that and I think it is well known that it is always Labor governments that support households and ease cost-of-living pressures. This government has done more to support Western Australian families and ease cost-of-living pressures than any government in the last 15 years.

Let me take a moment to remind the house of our government's record prior to the current budget. We froze fees and charges in 2020–21. We delivered a \$600 household electricity credit. We capped public transport fares at two zones and regional airfares. I was glad that that measure came up in the debate on this motion. As Minister Papalia pointed out when one of the members of the opposition was using a scattergun, carpet-bomb approach to have a bit of a crack at the government for trying to reduce public transport fees by asking what had been done for the regions, regional airfares have been capped. I was on the parliamentary committee that looked at that issue. As we travelled right around the state, regional communities consistently told us that they were fed up with the former government not listening to them. It was one thing the former Liberal–National government could have tangibly done to ease cost-of-living pressures for its own constituents, and those constituents told us that they were sick of the former government's failures in that space. We have acted to ease that cost-of-living pressure.

We have also delivered free rapid antigen tests and a \$318 energy assistance payment. We have restored funding for financial counsellors and expanded the hardship utility grant scheme. But these are definitely challenging moments, with a lot of current cost-of-living pressures. We do not deny that. On account of our strong financial and economic management, we are in a strong position to continue to support Western Australian households and, indeed, we will continue to do that. We are using the surplus to provide relief for households.

Let me assure members that easing cost-of-living pressures for Western Australian households is this Labor government's highest priority. In this budget, we have used our economic position to deliver a \$400 household electricity credit to every Western Australian household, putting \$445 million back into Western Australians' pockets. We will reduce household fees and charges by 3.8 per cent from 1 July. The average household will still pay four per cent less in household fees and charges than prior to the pandemic, in 2019–20. We have gone over and above our commitment at the last election to limit increases in electricity, water and public transport fees to inflation. This will be the third consecutive year that household fees and charges have been kept below the consumer price index, with two years when charges decreased. That is better than anything a Liberal–National government ever did. Electricity, water and public transport fees will rise by less than projected inflation. The government has now spent more than \$2.1 billion over the last four years to keep household fees and charges low.

Western Australians will continue to benefit from the two-zone fare cap on Transperth fares, saving some households and families as much as \$3 000 a year on travel. In a place like Ellenbrook, in the outer metropolitan area—my community—that will make a significant difference. We have also distributed free RATs, saving households at least \$150, and a lot more is being done around rapid antigen tests. We have limited the increase in small business and charity electricity tariffs to 2.5 per cent, which is less than projected CPI.

Let us take a moment to reflect on where the former Liberal–National government was at. Household fees and charges rose by almost \$2 100 in nominal terms during the eight years of the former government, and that would be much higher in real terms. That Liberal and National Parties did not manage in any year to contain household fees and charges to inflation over their two terms in government. My colleague the member for Mirrabooka is going to have a chat about utilities so I might just park that for now, but, as she will discuss, looking at their forward estimates, before they left government the Liberals and Nationals were planning on screwing households even more. If they say they were not, they were planning on digging an even bigger debt hole.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** There is absolutely no denying it.

I want to stick to the topic and talk about families. In particular, I want to talk about what we are doing for the vulnerable families that the Liberals forget about. I want to talk about the fact that we have made a record investment

of over \$150 million in preventing family and domestic violence. During the debate on the matter of public interest motion earlier today we talked about our record on family and domestic violence prevention, as a government what we have done previously and what we will go on to do. We have invested in more community-based services, including two new women's refuges. We have established Western Australia's first family and domestic violence one-stop hubs, making it easier for women experiencing violence to come forward and seek help. These are tangible measures to support families. We have invested in a \$28.1 million support package through our WA recovery plan to address the impact of COVID-19, including \$8 million for extra domestic violence outreach and \$6 million for more community response workers. We have added over \$1 million to expand counselling, advocacy and support services, and provide a new job retraining scheme for women in refuge.

In response to COVID-19, we have ensured that commonwealth funding is distributed for flexible support packages to make sure that there are individualised responses for victims of family and domestic violence and ensure that they get the help they need determined by the situation they find themselves in. We are investing in a number of innovative and practical initiatives to support women experiencing violence, including Pets in Crisis, which the minister spoke about earlier, and funds for freedom providing grants to help people purchase household items, including white goods and security items, so that people can feel safe in their homes. We have provided another \$1.6 million to expand the Safer Pathways program to provide women with specialised outreach support to manage their tenancies, and \$1.5 million in practical initiatives, helping women with driving lessons, dental treatment when exiting refuge and a new youth counselling service for children impacted by FDV. We have committed \$4 million for a rapid rehousing trial to provide funds for rent and bond payments for women to help them access safe housing, and \$4.2 million to expand the Safe at Home program, supporting another 150 women with or without children to provide home security upgrades. We are implementing important reforms to ensure we protect those families who are most vulnerable, including amending the Residential Tenancies Act to make it easier for victims to leave abusive environments. In this budget, we continue to provide support with a \$60 million package of election commitments made up of a \$29.5 million Safe Home Safe Family package for women fleeing violence. I talked about that during the matter of public interest.

Our \$14.2 million law reform package includes expanding shuttle conferencing to support victims in regional and remote areas. We are also trialling a specialised FDV forensic unit, to assist with securing perpetrator convictions, holding those to account. We are introducing an FDV focused pilot program for women in prison to support a safe transition back into the community. We are also establishing an Aboriginal-led family violence court in Broome. As part of the \$60 million package, we have \$7.3 million to boost the prevention of family and domestic violence, which includes expanding the Respectful Relationships program, training frontline responders and also developing a primary prevention framework to build capacities of both communities and government to implement effective prevention activities that identify and challenge norms that drive violence against women. There is \$4 million to be invested in supporting survivors' initiatives, practical support around dental care, driving lessons, and also family violence counselling programs for teenagers. We will keep going with our 10-year *Path to safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020–2030* implementation plan. I am sure that in estimates, if opposition members can be bothered to do their homework, they may like to ask the minister on how the various initiatives under that program are progressing.

In terms of other things that we are doing for our most vulnerable family members, let us talk about child protection for a moment, because that has been very topical. Children are the most vulnerable and fragile members of our family. We are investing an additional \$114 million into the child protection system, supporting services to protect vulnerable children and their families, and steer at-risk children away from the justice system. In the 2022–23 budget, we have more than \$75 million for frontline staff and services to support children in care and those who can remain safely at home. That includes \$36.7 million to help deliver and enhance child protection services, with 36 new child protection workers to boost capacity on the frontline. There will be a new chief practitioner position created to oversee a specialist child protection unit at the Department of Communities. This extra resourcing is in addition to the previous \$6.1 million commitment to create a new Midland care team.

We have increased spending in child protection by almost 25 per cent, and increased the child protection workforce by more than 20 per cent since 2017. That includes 218 full-time caseworkers. That is delivering results. In the last reporting year and for the first time since 1997, the total number of children in care in Western Australia dropped by 2.8 per cent. We are also allocating an additional \$23.9 million in the state budget to expand successful programs that provide support services to families with children who are at risk of coming into care. The state government has also committed \$37.2 million for the Home Stretch program, which supports kids at 18 to 21 years who are moving out of care and going out into the big wide world, making that very difficult transition.

Thinking more broadly about families, it is not just about the nuclear family; we acknowledge the very important role that grandcarers have in providing support for children. For that form of family, we have increased the grandcarer support payments available for those who are caring for their grandchildren. Those payments will be increased to \$1 000 a child. If grandparents are looking after more than two children, that will triple the amount of money available to them, and if they are looking after one child, it will more than double the support payments. We are looking after those grandcarers, and obviously, as well, through the senior security rebates program. We are thinking more broadly about how to support families with a whole range of measures.

The very difficult area is around families that have experienced lengthy periods of difficulty and their children who have recurrent incidents.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** The Target 120 program is intended to assist with children who have repeat interactions with the juvenile justice system and are at risk of having pretty difficult life outcomes, to be frank. The Target 120 program was very successful in the pilot, with 50 per cent of the children who have been through that program not having reoffended. That is being expanded to areas such as Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Newman and Carnarvon. It focuses on very high risk children and their families who really need support. It takes the child concerned and has a very holistic look, and says, "Okay, it's not just about the child. What can we do to help the families concerned?" That is the direct intervention that this state government is making through the budget to support Western Australian families. I was very pleased to see that rolled out in my electorate in Ellenbrook.

In terms of more broad support to the community services sector, which also helps Western Australian families, there is \$160 million in new funding that flows through to families. I will not go into too much detail about that. Financial counselling is another way that we are assisting Western Australian families. It is challenging, there is no two ways about it, and sometimes families need a bit of assistance getting their affairs in order. Whereas the previous coalition government cut funding to financial counsellors, the McGowan government has reinstated it and increased it again during the pandemic. We are really helping. It is not just families who are benefiting from this, but also small businesses, and that helps those small business owners' families.

There is one area in particular that I want to briefly dwell on, and that is early years in child care. This is an area that can really move the dial for families. When it comes to supporting families, we have to start with our youngest members. Obviously, we want to give those children the very best start in life. One thing that can really help families is if mum, dad or the primary caregiver can go back to work, earn more money and not be penalised for it.

Ensuring families have access to cheaper child care is critical to easing cost-of-living issues. The Morrison government absolutely does not get that. It did a little tweaking around the edges and it implemented extra allowable absences and access gap fee waivers for the childcare subsidy during COVID-19 in WA, but that ended on 30 April 2022—right when we were hitting the peak and when our families were being challenged in a way they never had before. It is not its job. It has turned off the tap. Morrison is not holding the hose, and the federal government has turned off the tap for child care. In fact, since the federal Liberal government came into existence, childcare fees in Australia have increased by 41 per cent. In the past 12 months alone, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, childcare costs soared by 6.5 per cent—almost double the rate of inflation.

Federal Labor knows that making child care more affordable and providing the parents of Australian families with the ability to choose to work longer and bring more money through the door will fundamentally make a difference. That is one thing that will significantly move the dial for families. Federal Labor, if elected, will lift the maximum childcare subsidy rate to 90 per cent for families for the first child in care and increase subsidy rates for every family that earns less than \$530 000 and has one child in care. It will keep the higher childcare subsidy rates for second and additional children and extend the increased subsidy to out-of-school-hours care. Under federal Labor, 96 per cent of Australian families, or 1.26 million families, will be better off. An investment of some \$5.4 billion will be made to make child care cheaper and to help parents go back to work to bring in extra money through the door.

It is shameful that the Morrison Liberal government cannot acknowledge that as a fundamental need. The Morrison government is tone-deaf to the needs of the community. We can see that because every time there is a bit of an issue, Mr Morrison cannot just work it through as a normal human would and have an empathetic authentic response. He has to ring his wife for clarity. We know that about this man. He does not understand these things. In fact, during the matter of public interest before, I was talking about patterns of behaviour —

*Point of Order*

**Dr D.J. HONEY:** Just on a point of relevance, we had a lecture from the member before about being on topic for the debate and now we are suddenly talking about the federal government and the Prime Minister.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, leader. I do not uphold the point of order. During this debate you have a fair bit of latitude to talk about whatever you would like to talk about and you respond to what has been said previously within this debate, so the member can carry on.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Carpet bombing applies all the way around. I am talking about things that are relevant to Western Australian families. In fact —

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** The member for Cottesloe is demonstrating just the sort of tone-deafness that happens to be a consistent theme in the Liberal Party. It demonstrates that they do not understand Western Australian families.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** The Liberal Party's federal leader is a joke. When one former federal leader was talking about his party's family and domestic violence policy, he called it "the things that batter". That is how tone-deaf the Liberal Party is to the issues that genuinely affect Australian families—"the things that batter"! A former state Liberal leader has pleaded guilty to domestic violence charges, which the minister raised earlier on. Members opposite are tone-deaf to the needs of Western Australian families. The current family and domestic violence opposition spokesperson, as much as I like and respect her, has only issued two press releases since taking on that role. Members opposite are a joke, and it is shameful that they have brought this motion into the house and insulted Western Australian families. Rather than sticking to the topic and, as I say, doing their job of forensic policy assessment and carrying a decent debate, they have come in here with their scattergun, broad-based motherhood statements of no substance whatsoever. It is a shame that the Western Australian people are not watching, but perhaps they switched off from you lot a long time ago.

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms J.J. SHAW:** We do take these matters seriously. We have Australia's first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. We have already spent \$150 million, we will spend another \$60 million in this budget and there are a range of other things that will seriously move the dial. You guys need to get with the program.

**MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka)** [5.44 pm]: I also rise to speak against the motion brought forward by the opposition parties today. It is quite interesting to reflect on the actual motion. I was listening to the interjection of the member for Cottesloe when he accused the member for Swan Hills of being off topic, but it is quite clear that the motion talks about the impact of the budget for families, which is exactly the point that the member —

**Dr D.J. Honey** interjected.

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** I am not going to take any interjections because I listened to the member without interrupting. There is only a short amount of time left and I have a lot of things on this topic that I am very keen to talk about. I am delighted to have the opportunity to talk about cost-of-living issues, which are central to the motion. However, I am once again very disappointed at the lack of vigour with which members opposite have addressed the debate this evening. We know that cost-of-living issues are incredibly important. Labor members understand that. We are a government and a party that deeply understands the pressures and stresses that everyday people experience. A motion about cost of living in this place deserves to be debated and treated seriously, but I am very disappointed that this evening we have heard a kind of re-baking of many of the same talking points that opposition members made about four weeks ago when they brought a similar matter into this house. I also agree that we should be seriously debating the issues that are affecting the cost of living and our responses to that.

I am very happy to have the opportunity this evening to talk about some of the things that the McGowan Labor government is doing to ease cost-of-living pressures for families and to provide them with relief. I totally reject the premise of the opposition motion that it is too little, too late, because, clearly, a substantial amount of work is being undertaken in this regard. It is interesting that the opposition chooses to bring forward this resolution. When its members were in government, they were particularly woeful at managing the cost of living for ordinary Western Australians. When they had the opportunity to actually do something substantial to ease cost-of-living pressures, they did not do that. They have come in here this evening with the crocodile tears and this motion, but they lack credibility and any kind of substance to address what is such an important issue for everyday people in this state. I am incredibly proud to be part of a government that understands the cost of living and the pressures that that brings for everyday families. I am very proud to be part of a government that is taking practical steps to provide relief to households and families. It has always been Labor governments that have understood this and have sought to address this matter for families.

As the member for Swan Hills covered off, we have done a number of things. Prior to this budget, we froze fees and charges in 2020–21 and in that year we also delivered a \$600 household electricity credit. That was very well received in my electorate of Mirrabooka. We have capped public transport fares at two zones, providing real financial relief, particularly for people in the outer suburbs of Perth. The member for Dawesville's constituents saved up to \$3 000 under that initiative. We have also delivered the free rapid antigen test program. We are the only state in Australia to make rapid antigen tests available free of charge for people. Every household has received 15 free RATs as a result of this government's program. I bought some RATs before this program was announced and perhaps others in this place did the same. Five of them cost me nearly \$60. This is a substantial benefit for families in this state. As well as providing them to households, we have made them freely available through electorate offices, through vaccination centres for close contacts and in other ways as well. We have restored funding for financial counsellors and expanded the hardship utility grant scheme. I am really pleased to say that this government is delivering another \$400 electricity credit to every Western Australian household. I can tell members that this has again been extremely well received by my constituents in Mirrabooka. They understand that this will provide real financial relief to them and their households. It represents a reduction in household fees and charges of 3.8 per cent. This government is committed to providing that relief. We can compare that with the opposition when it last held office. The reality is that when the Liberal–National government was in office, electricity prices rose by 90 per cent, or 8.4 per cent every year. We heard a bit from the member for Cottesloe about how cumulative price increases

work, as though we did not have an understanding of that. That was 8.4 per cent, member for Cottesloe, year after year after year. Water prices went up by 66 per cent. It is interesting that we do not have in the chamber this evening the Leader of the Opposition, who at that time was the Minister for Water and clearly played a hand in those dramatic increases in household charges.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I recognise that the member for Mirrabooka is quite inexperienced in the chamber, but perhaps you could remind her that it is unparliamentary to reflect on a member's absence from the chamber.

**The DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Yes. Thank you, Deputy Leader of the Opposition. There is no point of order, but it has been more of a tradition within this place that we do not refer to people's presence in or out of the chamber. Please carry on.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Nonetheless, water prices went up by 66 per cent during that government's term in office. That was an enormous increase. To top it off, when the Liberals and Nationals left office, they left us with a budget that had rises built into it of seven per cent for electricity and six per cent for water, and with net debt on a path to \$44 billion. Members of the opposition have more front than Myer to come in here and want to talk about the cost of living. This is a clear demonstration that they have no credibility on this matter.

What is really significant to also reflect on—we have spent some time talking about this at other times—is that the government is not only doing work to keep fees and charges low. In this budget, as well as the \$400 energy credit, fees and charges have been increased by less than the rate of inflation. This government is also working with the most vulnerable in our community to help them with their utility bills and ensure that they can continue to access these essential services. We are working with people who are in financial stress to help them manage their circumstances, and are providing them with financial counselling so that they can continue to get the services that they need while paying off debt. Again, we reflect on the performance of the Liberal and Nationals when they were last in government. Between the financial years 2011–12 and 2016–17, the number of Synergy residential customers who had their power disconnected increased by 82 per cent. That is an 82 per cent increase in the number of people who were left without power. We have heard a lot tonight and seen a lot of crocodile tears about how families are doing it tough. This comes from two parties that oversaw an increase of 82 per cent in the number of power disconnections. At the same time, power prices increased by 90 per cent. That was the approach of that government. It limited engagement with people who were struggling to meet its exorbitant increases in fees and charges and just brought in the debt collectors. The approach of this government has been to work with Synergy customers who are experiencing hardship and help them repay their bills and put their finances on a better footing. We have developed the Synergy case management program to provide one-on-one support, and we have also reintroduced the household energy efficiency scheme that was cut by the Barnett government.

We have also introduced a domestic violence fresh start policy for people who are leaving a circumstance in which they are experiencing violence from a partner. We have introduced the smart energy for social housing pilot. We have increased funding for the hardship utility grant scheme and made it easier to access. We have also put in place grant programs for consumer advocates. We have put in place COVID relief measures. We have put in place a disconnection moratorium for people who are experiencing hardship due to COVID. Rather than send debt collectors after people, we are working directly with people to provide support. The Synergy case management pilot was so successful that it has become part of Synergy's core business and has been scaled up, because it just makes good financial sense. Since the pilot was launched in July 2020, hundreds of customers have graduated, clearing millions of dollars of debt, and are now in a better place to manage their energy bills going forward. Members, this is what good Labor governments do. We do not just jack up prices and send in the debt collectors, which is what we saw from the Liberals and Nationals when they held government. We work with people to find solutions to the financial problems that they are in.

It is a similar situation with water. We have heard the Minister for Water speak about the work that he has done. The record of the Liberals and Nationals when they were in office was to put up water charges, and rather than cut off water if people could not pay their bills, their water pressure was turned down so low that it was not viable for them to do their many households chores. In the first six years of the Barnett government, water charges increased by 52.8 per cent. That was a disgraceful increase in water charges. Rather than restrict the water supply of people who are in financial difficulty and cannot pay their bills, we have launched new programs to help people who are in need. We are helping them to work through their financial difficulties. We have worked with the Water Corporation to ensure that it takes a proactive approach. When the Water Corporation observes that a person's bill is increasing, rather than just let that bill get bigger and bigger until it becomes an enormous financial burden, it takes a proactive approach of working with clients who have difficulty in meeting their financial commitments to the Water Corporation. It works with those clients to help them get on track with not only their water bill but also their overall financial situation. As a result of that proactive approach, it has become clear that in certain households, water usage increases

because people may be on dialysis or experiencing incontinence and are managing those health situations in their home. This government has responded to that not by turning a blind eye and charging them for their water use, but by putting in place programs that allow those people to access the water that they need to manage those situations in their own home. When the Liberal–National government was thrown out of office in March 2017, 227 customers had had their water restricted because of that government’s approach. In March 2020, only 33 Water Corporation customers had had their water restricted. Again, it is a bit rich to have to listen to a lecture about cost of living from two parties that when they were in government and had an opportunity to do something about these things did nothing.

It is clear that if we want to be serious about discussing the cost of living, we need to look at the very good budget management of this government in delivering for all households with the \$400 energy credit. We also need to look at the approach and the commitment of this government to work with vulnerable families, such as in many of the programs that were outlined by my colleague in her contribution. We are working with vulnerable families that are accumulating debt on their utility bills to ensure that those debts can be managed, and instead of restricting people’s supply or cutting off their electricity, we are giving people other options to manage their financial circumstances and get back on track.

These are really important programs. I am delighted to be part of a government that understands what life is like for everyday people. There was a bit of discussion during the contribution of opposition members about housing. I also want to make a few comments about that, but time is going to defeat me yet again. I have so many things to say on this subject. I had wanted to go to the member for Cottesloe’s discussion about middle-class homelessness, but again that might have to wait for another time. In the housing space, it is important to acknowledge the incredible work that is being done by this government. Only eight months ago, we announced a record \$875 million injection for social housing. In the coming four years, we will be investing \$2.4 billion on social housing and addressing homelessness in this state.

A member: Hear, hear!

**Ms M.J. HAMMAT:** Hear, hear! That is a record investment. Delivering social housing is challenging, but because of the energy of our Minister for Housing and the commitment of this government, we are getting on with that job. In this financial year, to the end of March, we have delivered 356 new social homes. That includes 250 in the last four months alone. We are doing a range of things to accelerate the delivery of new social housing. That includes spot purchasing, and modular and timber-framed construction. All these programs are helping us to deliver housing.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

*Sitting suspended from 6.00 to 7.00 pm*

**APPROPRIATION (RECURRENT 2022–23) BILL 2022**  
**APPROPRIATION (CAPITAL 2022–23) BILL 2022**

*Second Reading — Cognate Debate*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

**MR M.J. FOLKARD (Burns Beach)** [7.00 pm]: I shall resume, hopefully, for the last time this evening! Remember that if we do not remember our mistakes of the past, we are doomed to repeat them. Our constituents are not fools and there is a reason why the opposition’s mischief across there is so small. My constituents are a conservative lot. When I hear the phrase “sovereign risk” mentioned, I really start to worry, because sovereign risk is not about strong external borders; it is about having good supply chains. In plain language, it means keeping the shelves in our supermarkets full in times of crisis. Who can remember the great rain event that passed through central Australia, cutting off the road and rail in South Australia and effectively crippling the east–west supply chain, to an extent that left empty shelves in our shops? Like we really needed that during a COVID-restrictive environment! Do not forget the runs on and fights over toilet paper.

People might ask why I am talking about sovereign risk and supply chains. I heard in the Treasurer’s speech that this government is sealing the remaining bits of the outback highway to provide a third sealed route across Australia. For those who do not know, the outback highway is actually known as the Great Central Road. It runs up through Laverton, out through Warakurna and on to Yulara. I drove it at Christmas a couple of years ago when the Balladonia fires shut down Eyre Highway. It is absolutely beautiful country. This highway will create a third route along which heavy-haulage vehicles can bring produce from the east coast directly through to the west coast. It also means that our heavy-haulage vehicles can come directly from Queensland through to WA. This will save tens of thousands of dollars in fuel costs, as well as ensuring that our lines of supply remain open regardless of extreme natural events. It keeps and creates an alternative route so that our supply chains will remain open no matter what.

That leads me to the next topic I wish to discuss, which is the relationship between cost-of-living pressures and the supply chain et cetera. Who can believe that the price of fuel has risen to over \$2 a litre in the last couple of days? It hurts my pocket. Cost-of-living issues, after health issues, are arguably the greatest pressure facing my community. Through this budget, every household in my constituency will receive a \$400 electricity bill credit.

Ladies and gentlemen of the house, my government, the McGowan government, has been the only government in the last eight governments to have returned money to households. I have been a home owner since I was 19 years old. I have no memory of any government returning funds to me or giving me rebates, other than the first home buyer grant, which I used to buy my first unit when I got out of the Army. I understand that state government utility costs have gone up across the board and that that will eat into the \$400. But if those figures are not adjusted continuously to much cost increases in the production of those utilities, we will pay a greater cost down the road, and that will really hurt household budgets. Keeping those costs to small increases rather than massive increases further down the track helps to avoid the massive price increases we inherited from the last Liberal Treasurer. I remember the great price hikes we inherited from the Barnett government. I remember several pensioners coming into my office in tears because they were battling to pay their power bills. Luckily, this government was prepared for it and was able to reduce the harm that my vulnerable community members faced.

But cost-of-living issues pale in comparison with the main issue that currently faces my electorate, which is health. The McGowan government's health budget has grown from \$8.8 billion in the 2017–18 budget to \$11.6 billion in this year's budget, the 2022–23 financial year. The health budget has grown more than 30 per cent, with 22 per cent of that coming from growth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just quickly, \$1.6 billion will go to new COVID response recovery measures that will keep WA safe. There will be \$360 million added to hospital service spending. There will be \$252 million for an emergency department reform package. There will be \$223 million for new health infrastructure investments, bringing it to a total of \$1.6 billion, in addition to the \$1.8 billion for the new women's and children's hospital. There is \$1.8 million in additional investment for the mental health environment, including \$47 million towards immediate mental health responses to infants, children and adolescents. We have delivered 340 new hospital beds and expect that number to increase by 530 beds by the end of the year. In two years, the health workforce has increased 15.6 per cent, and has included 1 456 extra nurses and over 512 medical full-time equivalents, principally doctors. I understand that figure includes 400 doctors who have been added to the full-time employees of the Department of Health.

To try to address some of the critical issues within our health system, this government has allocated \$74 million to secure appropriate forms of care for long-stay patients who have complex care needs and require support and residential accommodation. That figure makes me angry. Why does WA have 6.6 beds per 1 000 in the aged-care sector but the rest of the country has 8.12 beds per 1 000? Why does this government have to deliver \$74 million to provide and develop long-stay patients' facilities when the vast majority of those facilities are for seniors? Where are these beds? Why do we not have them now? Why does our government have to fork out good money to fix a federal government problem? It gets worse. Why does WA have 77 doctors per 100 000 residents while nationally it is 95 doctors per 100 000? I have not plucked these figures out of thin air, unlike the member for Cottesloe. I am referring to a state government report titled *A fair share for WA health care*. When members read this report, they will see it is quite evident that we are being ripped off over \$630 million per annum per average patient costs. Currently, we have a Liberal–National government that keeps telling us that it is doing the right thing by WA. What a lie. What an outright lie. Are we Western Australian citizens any lesser Australian citizens? Why are we being ripped off?

I have tried raising this with the members who represent my federal electorate, Ian Goodenough and Christian Porter.

**Dr A.D. Buti:** Ian Goodenough—not good enough.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** I will come to that a bit later.

For the past six years I have tried to engage with these two federal members who represent my constituents. I have done it on numerous occasions, and every time I have heard absolutely nothing from them. We have a critical shortage of doctors, outside the WA health system, within my community. These doctors are the responsibility of the federal government—the useless Scott Morrison government. I have a critical shortage of paediatricians and GPs. I have lost count of the number of parents, teachers and principals who have come to my office in desperation, trying to find appointments for their sick children or to get a referral. The Liberal member Ian Goodenough has refused to talk to me about this situation and Christian Porter has been absent for the last three years. The problem has grown and grown and reached the point of critical mass. Doctors in my electorate have closed their books and stopped bulk-billing. This has caused extreme panic among my seniors, who have been unable to pay their doctor bills as a result. Where are the doctors? We have three universities that produce doctors in this state. I ask again: where are these doctors?

The WA state branch of the Australian Medical Association has a lot to answer for. When this government criticises the AMA and takes it to task over this issue, the AMA comes back and attacks the government. The doctors themselves, through the GP colleges, and the Morrison government, which controls the allocation of Medicare numbers, are the key cause of the doctor shortage. They own it. They are responsible for it. I was of the belief that members of the Liberal–National Party alliance at the state level were supposed to lobby for what is best for our state through their federal colleagues. Clearly, they are all about themselves and their own survival, because they are either asleep at the wheel or they do not have a relationship with their federal mates. I have not seen the member for Cottesloe appear with or photographed with the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison. How can he say that he is working

for our state in that arena? Nor have I seen the Leader of the Opposition photographed with the Deputy Prime Minister. I wonder why. We need change. I need good local federal representation. I do not need another three years of Ian Goodenough.

May I have an extension, please ma'am?

**The SPEAKER:** Madam Speaker, not ma'am, thank you.

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Madam Speaker, my apologies.

[Member's time extended.]

**Mr M.J. FOLKARD:** Do members know that there is a standing joke in the seat of Moore? Has anyone seen Ian Goodenough speaking or listening to a constituent, or seen him out there handing out a how-to-vote card? I can tell members that I have not seen him doing it. The comment about "Ian Not Goodenough"—I am not going there. I need a member who is community aligned, not "The Clan" aligned. The same goes for the seat of Pearce. I need a person who cares for the community and has a demonstrated history of caring for the community, not another puppet from "The Clan".

I am rather passionate about the next issue I wish to talk about. Every child, every mother, every family has the right to good, clean, reliable fresh water. I will say that again: every child, every mother, every family has the right to good, clean fresh water. Every family, every mother, every child has the right to reliable, consistent power for their home; and every family has the right to have a roof over their head. This government has committed \$350 million to remote communities to fund and support the improvement of water and electricity supplies and municipal services, and increasing the availability of appropriate housing to remote Aboriginal communities. Why did the Morrison government stop the funding to our small, remote First Nation communities? No-one can give me an answer. I find it offensive. When these funds were cut from these communities, I was so angry. I am so glad this government is doing something to address this shameful issue. I know we are doing something about it, but what was the National Party doing about it? Clearly nothing. Why have I not seen questions on notice on this issue from our National Party? I think it is because they are too busy getting notoriety from public order and antisocial issues rather than looking at the factors that cause these issues. I know for a fact that one of the key reasons our younger First Nations people are leaving their communities is because the quality of the water is so poor. You would not feed it to your stock, let alone your family! This government—my government—is doing something about it. I hope this money is spent well and wisely because until we address the drinking water for our First Nations people who are on country, their future will be very bleak.

The last issue I wish to talk about is Mitchell Freeway from Hester Avenue up to Romeo Road. I am so glad that this project is continuing with such vigour. I know the frustration of commuters every morning and afternoon entering and exiting the freeway to head south or to return home—the long queues, the frustrated drivers; it never seems to end. This government has invested a further \$9 billion in major road projects throughout the state, boosting local jobs and busting congestion. I am extremely proud of the extension through to Romeo Road at the end of the freeway and the rail extension to Yanchep, which is progressing. These projects will revitalise the communities aligned with the transport precinct. I have observed new small businesses starting up and bigger businesses investing in the area. Further, I really look forward to seeing the smart freeways project being implemented along the Mitchell Freeway corridor. Hopefully, that will take 15 minutes off the commute, which will enhance the lives of my constituents in Burns Beach. This is a good budget. It takes care of the vulnerable. It improves our economy by paying down debt. It reduces sovereign risk created by poor credit ratings. It is a terrific Labor budget. It puts people first, drives the economy forward and looks after the vulnerable in my community.

With that, I commend the budget bills to the house.

**MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party)** [7.20 pm]: I also rise to provide a response to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I rise to speak to this undoubtedly and unashamedly so-called Labor budget. It is one that will apparently make other Treasurers "green with envy" and, in a bizarre analogy more fitting to a primary school playground than from a Premier and Treasurer of a state, it will make other Treasurers look like they have "swallowed a bumblebee". I suggest the real sting in this budget is for our most vulnerable Western Australians—those patients sitting in the back of ambulances for thousands of hours each month because the hospital system does not have beds inside to accept them or the one in five children suffering from mental health illness who are being turned away from treatment because their illness is too complex. Relevant services are having to ration care to treat older children and those with more severe symptoms because they simply do not have the resources to see everyone. There are women and children who are desperate to escape domestic violence but face homelessness if they do because our refuges and support services are so stretched that they are turning hundreds of families away each year. I suggest that some of them would, in fact, not be envious but incensed that a government that is sitting on a \$5.7 billion surplus this year, or \$11 billion over the past two years, has chosen not to make a real and sustained investment in the services that will actually assist them. The government has instead chosen a green-with-envy surplus over investing in these critical services. It has chosen a surplus over those people and it had the audacity to gloat about it.

This is a budget that does barely enough, with no commitment to more. It is a budget that is tinkering around the edges on health, putting out spot fires with no real plan or vision for how it will meet the increase in demand in the future and no time frames for current or promised projects. This budget is a plan for a fix but no deadline to fix it, and this is no more evident than in the health system. There is no shortage of spin when it comes to health. The detail in the budget shows a desperate game of catch-up from a government that has spent the first couple of years in government winding back funding in the health system only to realise that the system is now in such a dire situation that it is having to play catch-up.

Last year's budget in September, and the eleventh hour injection fewer than two months later, indicate a government that dropped the ball and is now scrambling to try to get the system back from the brink. Any investment that will attempt to turn that health crisis around is welcome. It needs it. The frontline health workers who have been keeping the ship afloat, despite being consistently asked to do more with less, have done an incredible job and continue to do so, but the reality is the health system remains in crisis. St John Ambulance WA last year recorded more than 52 000 hours of ambulance ramping—more than double the year before. The figures this year are tracking the same if not worse. At the start of this week, 16 May, the yearly total was 21 990 hours, which is not far from the entire 2020 total of ambulance ramping hours.

The consequences can be tragic, as we saw again on Sunday, with the heartbreaking death of 80-year-old Georgina Wild. Ms Wild waited two and a half hours for an ambulance after calling 000 with chest pains on Sunday. She was in Perth. The call should have been responded to within 15 minutes. Her death follows the similar death in Geraldton last month of grandmother Joan Hope. She also died from a suspected heart attack after waiting 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. The deaths of these women are the result of the whole health system being at capacity. I understand the ambulance service recorded 122 hours of ramping on Sunday due to bed block. That is on the government and it is an absolute disgrace. In a state as prosperous as ours, no family should have to grieve the death of a loved one who had to wait hours for care.

All we heard from the government over the past two years was a denial that there was a problem and, then, excuses for why beds were ramped, ranging from disruptions due to non-COVID respiratory illnesses to the flu season and cleaning regimes. The announcement in this budget of the \$250 million emergency reform package is an admission by the government that it has failed and finally needs to do something to tackle ambulance ramping and improve emergency care. The Minister for Health said that she does not expect to see any great improvement in coming months. It is fair to ask when we will see improvement. Where is the urgency to fix the systemic issues that are now greatly impacting on the whole health system and associated services? Given the recent tragic consequences, there still appears to be a lack of urgency in addressing the crisis that is happening day in, day out in our health system.

The announcement of \$30 million for regional paramedics will be rolled out over two to three years. It was extraordinary to hear the health minister admit that the government is still rolling out funding for paramedics in the regions from two years ago.

The so-called reform package includes \$55 million to embed nurses 24/7 across metropolitan and regional emergency department waiting rooms, but there is no detail on how many extra FTE that will equate to, when and where they will be embedded and where they will come from. The reform package also includes money for real-time data capability to show where available beds are. I accept that most emergency department staff know when no beds are available, because the code yellows, which now number in the hundreds, consistently being called across our health system are the best indicator that there are no beds. Bed block is having a flow-on effect on EDs, causing ambulances to be ramped—but do not expect a quick fix. The minister will lead a task force to oversee the implementation of the reforms. The implementation of those reforms currently does not have a time frame and is not expected to deliver any great improvement in coming months.

There is also \$3 million for a business case to see whether a state health operations centre will help, and \$2.4 million for a program to identify solutions for long-term improvements to emergency care ramping. So, we will have a program and a business case overseen by a task force, in addition to the reviews that have already been undertaken and those currently being done. It sounds like a script written by spin doctors. It is not a quick fix because there are no time frames. Of course, the sustainable health review was to be the review to end all reviews and guide government health policy. It was apparently a blueprint. It called for cultural change, no longer focusing on beds and acute services, and stated that prevention spending needed to increase by five per cent by 2029. The government has committed \$21 million over the next four years to implement sustainable health review initiatives—most will be spent on bureaucrats. It is hard to believe this government is serious about improving the health system and fixing the systemic issues that have intensified under its watch due to chronic underfunding and under-resourcing when only \$21 million will be spent over four years out of an \$11 billion health budget.

I note with interest the commitment to beds announced in last year's budget and the last-minute post-budget announcement of more beds once this government realised how much it had undercooked it. The beds, although welcome, will not come online until October this year—after the current COVID outbreak, after the flu season and after winter, when hospitals are at their busiest. “There is no tap you can turn on for health beds”, our minister

dramatically announced in the house last week. How many of these new beds did the McGowan government turn the tap off on in the first place? According to the Australian Medical Association's *Public hospital report card 2022*, WA has the lowest ratio of public beds in the country, and I quote from Mark Duncan-Smith —

Little if anything was done in 2020 and 2021 to increase capacity, and old beds that had previously been closed by WA Health are now starting to be reopened.

In the middle of the pandemic, the number of ICU beds in WA also went backwards. An Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society report stated that WA had the lowest number of ICU beds per capita in Australia—six per 100 000 people—and the number of ICU beds in WA had dropped from 179 to 159 beds from 2020 to 2021. We have been told that all the new beds being brought online will equate to a new tertiary hospital. The question is: why is the operational budget, with all the extra beds and the extra staff being employed, increasing by only 3.3 per cent? The AMA WA was also sceptical and I quote —

“The McGowan Government has plans to reopen 530 beds this year, yet the operational budget is only increasing by 3.3 per cent, which is effectively CPI. This is hardly in line with Government rhetoric suggesting this amounts to a new tertiary hospital.

“This will probably get us off the bottom of the national list of the number of beds per head of population, but still not far up enough to make a huge difference.

“The AMA ... would like to have seen provisioning for a further increase in beds, and the outlining of a longer-term strategy for achieving that. There is nothing in the forward estimates suggesting such a strategy is on the cards.”

Again, this is a government that is scrambling to put out fires but has no plan for the future. That is except for the plan it went to the 2017 election with. That was the one for medi-hotels. The plan was to free up hospital beds so that more patients could be treated. It was the signature policy of former Minister for Health Roger Cook, who said in July 2017 —

“Medihotels will help reduce waiting times in emergency departments, and waiting lists for elective surgery, by ensuring patients who are not ready to be discharged—but no longer need that high level of care—can recover in comfort, with family and loved ones close by in a convenient location.

The plan was to free up 54 tertiary beds every day and allow 5 262 more patients to be treated in our hospital system each year. The time frame for delivery of the Murdoch medi-hotel was 2021, as outlined in a May 2017 media statement, but the next guess was that it would be in 2022, and I quote —

The Medihotel will deliver up to 60 beds and operate on a 24-hour, seven-day per week basis, and is expected to divert up to 5,000 patients each year from busy public hospital emergency departments.

The latest guess is that it will be in early 2023. There have been multiple media statements but still no medi-hotel five years later. Of course, it was one of three Labor promises to help ease the bed block, which is now having catastrophic consequences across our health system. Where are the other two? The Joondalup medi-hotel is now just a vision, according to the former Minister for Health. It was also said that it would be built to free up more hospital beds and improve patient flow, and I quote the Premier —

The expansion and the introduction of a Medihotel and Urgent Care Clinic will take pressure off the busy emergency department and reduce wait times for patients. These were key initiatives we took to the election and we're getting on with the job.

Except the government did not. The overall expansion plan was for eight extra operating theatres and a medi-hotel to take pressure off the hospital, except that was all talk—a common theme of this government, which is big on spin and short on delivery. Five years later, the promised eight operating theatres have now been reduced to one and the medi-hotel is no longer part of the scope of the current works but remains part of the vision of the hospital. It was an election promise, but it was just a vision. The only medi-hotel that has been delivered is at Royal Perth Hospital, and that is probably because it has just four beds. Four beds have been delivered in five years from what was a key election promise.

**Mr R.S. Love** interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Perhaps. The premise was to relieve pressure on our hospitals and attempt to mitigate the situation we find ourselves in now. Bed block is creating flow-on effects for other services, including St John Ambulance, which is having a major impact on patient care and the efficiency of the system.

That brings us to the priorities of this government. We certainly support the delivery of free rapid antigen tests for WA, but I question the spend of this measure. Why is it not at least matched with the emergency reform package, or other health-related initiatives? There is \$635 million for RATs and \$252 million to reduce pressure on our emergency department system. With a \$5.7 billion surplus, why was the same level of funding priority not given to reforming our emergency departments? The Minister for Health has referred in this place to the 22 per cent increase in the health budget. The reality is that, excluding commonwealth one-off funding for COVID measures

and infrastructure, state-based funding to deliver services has not increased that much over the past six budgets. If we take out the \$560 million of COVID spend, which includes \$167 million for safe transition funding, and look at the funding provided by the state government for the delivery of services, we see that the appropriation is \$5.53 billion. Total appropriations for 2016–17 was \$5.13 billion, so in the last five years we have seen an increase of just eight per cent—barely keeping up with CPI. We are seeing the system do more with less, as demand increases. To say that there has been a 22 per cent increase is pure spin.

Yesterday, the Premier boasted in this place about cutting funds. He said that when the government came to office, it would do a number of things. It would budget conservatively and ensure that it got its recurrent spend under control. He said that it did both those things and that it reduced recurrent spend from around 6.3 per cent per annum down to two per cent, including its election commitments.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms L. METTAM:** That is exactly why a surplus —

**Mr S.A. Millman** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Mount Lawley, if you have a point to make, take it in the proper way. You do not just interject.

*Point of Order*

**Mr S.A. MILLMAN:** When one of our members was speaking, the member for Moore made the point that they were referring extensively to their notes. I cannot help but notice that the member for Vasse has done nothing but read word for word from her notes.

**The SPEAKER:** I am not going to uphold your point of order at this time, but the member for Vasse well knows that it is contrary to standing orders to read your speech. You can refer to copious notes, though.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** I turn now to the new women's and babies' hospital. I think I was quoting the Premier's comments in yesterday's uncorrected *Hansard*. The Premier stated —

We did both of those things. We reduced the recurrent spend from around 6.3 per cent per annum down to around two per cent per annum, including our election commitments. We did those two things at once.

Yes, he certainly did, and that is exactly why our surplus is big but our services are crumbling, with the health system under extraordinary pressure.

I turn now to the new women's and babies' hospital, for which there was a \$1.8 billion commitment announced in the 2021 election campaign, and there is \$8.3 million in this year's budget to finish the business case. There is nothing in the forward estimates about when this major project, which is included in every infrastructure headline, will be started or delivered.

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**Mr R.S. LOVE:** Speaker, members of the opposition have sat in silence through some fairly provocative speeches that have been made by members on the other side. I ask that the same forbearance be given to the member for Vasse in making her contribution to this debate.

**The SPEAKER:** I have to say that the interjections have not been overly robust, but I will just ask members to pay some courtesy to the speaker on their feet.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** Another significant health failing in Western Australia is the lack of urgency in addressing the issue of people with eating disorders. Anorexia has one of the highest mortality rates of mental health disorders in the country; it is also one of the most treatable and preventable. The prevalence of this condition has been exacerbated during COVID. The number of patients admitted to Perth Children's Hospital with the diagnosis of an eating disorder increased by 86 per cent between 2019 and 2020. Despite Labor's commitment of \$31 million to a statewide eating disorder specialist service, there has been no urgency in bringing this commitment forward, and just \$750 000 has been allocated in this year's budget for a business case. This state is lagging behind every other jurisdiction in the country in addressing this issue by providing these dedicated services.

In relation to mental health, and following the release of the report of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents earlier this year, it was expected that investment would be significantly adjusted to reflect the demand and serious shortfalls in the system, as outlined in the report. The report found that services are much harder to access now than they were 10 years ago. Fewer than one in five children are accepted into treatment programs, and one in five children are turned away from treatment because their issues are too complex. The report found also that 14 per cent of children aged between 14 and 17 have mental health

issues, with the number even higher in regional areas. Increasingly, services are in effect rationing care in order to treat older children and those with more severe symptoms and at higher risk. The task force also found that the number of children needing a specialist service for mental health issues has increased by 70 per cent since 2014 but the funding has not kept pace. Only eight per cent of mental health funding is dedicated to services for infants, children and adolescents.

As well articulated by Dr Lynn Jones from the Faculty of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, the report did not criticise the standard of care provided by the child and adolescent mental health service but pointed to chronic under-resourcing and the need to rebuild the service. It is, therefore, underwhelming that the state budget includes only an extra \$181 million over four years for new and expanded mental health services, and, as part of that amount, just \$47 million to respond to the recommendations of the task force. I welcome the recommendations, and the minister's commitment to implement them. However, I question why there does not appear to be any real urgency or substantive funding. Despite promising to overhaul the child and adolescent mental health system, the budget has a commitment of only \$47 million over four years. That includes the provision of fewer than 12 FTE child and adolescent mental health frontline workers. This is at a time when we know that COVID is exacerbating mental health issues and the number of hospitalisations.

Another area of concern is this government's commitment to medical research. Western Australia has the second-lowest spend per capita on health and medical research funding in Australia, at \$19.30, compared with Queensland, for example, which is \$51. We know that for every dollar invested in medical research in Australia, \$3.90 is returned. That represents a significant opportunity for the state. The future health research and innovation fund is vitally important. The opposition supported this program when it was first introduced to Parliament. It is understood that there is currently \$1.6 billion in that fund. At the moment, interest that is earned on this account will be utilised for medical research at the discretion of the Minister for Health. Although the fund is set to provide \$40 million in funding to medical research and innovation in Western Australia from 2023, there are concerns that it is being carved out with business-as-usual spending. This is the first time the fund has been highlighted in the budget papers. It is concerning that the fund appears to fall to just \$25 million in the forward estimates. I look forward to some clarification on this point during the estimates process.

We raised issues regarding family and domestic violence today. The budget papers state that there is a 17 per cent increase in demand for services. At a time when this government has been gloating about a \$5.7 billion surplus, why are support services and refuges resorting to fundraising, calling for donations or considering cutting services because they cannot keep up with demand? The budget for FDV prevention is dropping by 17 per cent. We have heard this government cry foul that it is the cessation of time-limited commonwealth initiatives, but, ultimately, we are seeing funding cuts. There have been unprecedented calls for help. One south west refuge reportedly turned away 300 women and children last year, which is an appalling situation. As I stated earlier, the director of family, domestic and sexual violence at WA's Centre for Women's Safety and Wellbeing Centre, Dr Alison Evans, put it this way —

Additional funding for new initiatives like the hubs doesn't ameliorate that historic and ongoing underfunding of this sector.

There are some concerns that refuges have been offered five-year contracts, but those contracts have been funded at significantly below the current demand and have not kept pace. Those on the ground do not care where the funding is coming from. The reality is that this budget falls well short and is hard to cop when the state is in such a wealthy position and such vulnerable people are being hurt. Over the forward estimates, it is alarming to see that the funding drops even further. Now is not the time to be sitting back and counting the surplus while vulnerable women and children attempt to escape unsafe homes or are living in refuges and cars, waiting for housing. A \$400 electricity rebate is of little value when they do not have a home or are living in their car or at a refuge.

On disability services, many people in the disability community are understandably devastated by the Activ Foundation's announcement this week that it will close its seven sites, which employ more than 700 people with a disability. The last time this was going to happen, the former Liberal-National government stepped in. What is the state government's response to this? The McGowan government is missing in action.

Several members interjected.

**Ms L. METTAM:** Although this is largely federally funded, there is a state role for supporting the sector. There are 411 000 Western Australians with a disability. Only 10 per cent are eligible for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Funding for disability support —

Several members interjected.

*Point of Order*

**The SPEAKER:** Sorry, member for Vasse; the member for Armadale has a point of order.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** I do not generally rise to bring a point of order on reading one's speech. I would not do that to a new member, but this member has been here for many years and she has just read the speech basically word for word.

A member: So did the Premier.

**Dr A.D. BUTI:** It is a point of order. She has been told not to do that and she continues to read word for word. It is beyond a joke. She is an experienced member of this house and the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, yet she still continues to read word for word.

**The SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Armadale. I understand your point of order. I heard the interjection that the Premier read his speech. Let us put it on record that it is standard practice in this house that second reading speeches are read into the record. It is a requirement that they are word for word. Every minister or any private member who gives a second reading speech on a bill reads in that speech. That is the standard practice. However, it is against the standing orders to read your speech verbatim. Member for Vasse, I will ask you not to do that. I realise you are towards the end of your speech. You have only five minutes more to go, but I will ask you to desist from reading your speech and just speak to the points you would like to make. Thank you.

*Debate Resumed*

**Ms L. METTAM:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am referring to my notes.

Where has the McGowan government been in this space? When the closure of Activ was raised last time, the Liberal–National government stepped up and stepped in. As I said, the NDIS covers about 10 per cent of the population. We know that funding for disability support in this year’s budget has fallen from \$96 million in 2020–21 to \$68 million in the following year, and we have seen a 24 per cent decrease in staff. According to the budget papers, it is due to reduced spending as a result of the NDIS. We will explore this further during the estimates process. However, what makes little sense is that the NDIS covers only 10 per cent of people with disabilities, so a 28 per cent reduction in funding and a 24 per cent fall in staff seem to be significant drops. It is worth noting that disability services have been exempted from reporting on the efficiency indicators, which makes it very difficult to determine whether it is meeting the needs of people with disability. That goes back to the lack of transparency that we see under this government. Living supports have also seen a dramatic fall, and there is no disabled housing program in the forward estimates. That has been raised by the sector as well and we look forward to exploring that, which is of great concern.

I have only a few minutes left to speak about the commitments to Vasse. This will not take long because there is very little to talk about, as usual. I welcome the McGowan government’s \$21 million commitment over four years for destination marketing funding. I hope some of that funding is dedicated to promoting the Busselton Margaret River Airport routes. I have a grievance on that tomorrow because this government has done everything to undermine the project since it has come to office. I hope some of the generic funding for hospitals—in particular, emergency departments, but also mental health—will also be allocated to Busselton Health Campus and the broader electorate because there is a significant demand. It is disappointing that despite being flagged as a priority by the WA Country Health Service, the Margaret River Hospital upgrades have been neglected and remain unfunded. Despite Busselton recording the highest regional population growth in WA in 2020–21, it is disappointing that there is no dedicated spending for our schools in the region, which separately require upgrades.

This is not a Premier for all of WA. This is a Premier who has delivered quite a cruel budget when it comes to our most vulnerable. It is a purely political exercise and indicative of a government that is not interested in investing in the community or the future of diversifying our economy when it comes to issues such as broader tourism outcomes and medical research.

**MS H.M. BEAZLEY (Victoria Park)** [7.52 pm]: I rise today to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022 and what the 2022–23 state budget means for the people in my electorate of Victoria Park.

Vic Park is a very active and engaged electorate, and the people I represent have told me time and again that they care about the big issues. They want to know that their government is taking strong action on climate change. They want to know that their government is delivering quality education and training for the next generation of Western Australians. They want to know that their government is delivering on its promises to create jobs, build Metronet and boost affordable housing and social support for our most vulnerable. At the moment, though, the people of Victoria Park are talking to me about two issues the most. The first is cost-of-living pressures that are hitting household budgets across Australia and the second is our health system and how it is coping as we learn to live with COVID-19.

The Premier, ministers, the public sector and our Western Australian community have done a remarkable job in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have vaccinated ourselves three times over at record levels, with over 80 per cent of our population having had their third jab. This, combined with our tough border stance, secured our soft landing with lower than expected hospital and ICU admissions. Instead of spending months in lockdown, as we witnessed our fellow Australians in the eastern states endure, our strong border and vaccination policy meant that we could continue our lives with a semblance of normalcy and our resources sector could continue operating throughout the entire pandemic, allowing business investment and exports to remain strong. In fact, 50 per cent of our nation’s exports are now from Western Australia. During the pandemic, we kept the rest of Australia afloat. Billions of dollars generated in WA supported the closed and floundering economies of the eastern states, particularly New South Wales.

I was at a breakfast event hosted by *The West Australian* this week where the federal opposition leader, and I truly hope our next Prime Minister, Hon Anthony Albanese, was guest speaker. Mr Albanese stated, and I paraphrase,

“Take a moment to imagine what Australia would look like if it weren’t for Western Australia during the pandemic.” Honestly, I did take a moment and it made me shudder. Unlike other states in Australia, which have experienced escalating debt levels and large budget deficits, under the McGowan Labor government, Western Australia’s net debt is set to fall for a third consecutive year, to below \$30 billion, the lowest level since 2015. All Western Australians currently feeling cost-of-living pressures know that interest rates are likely to rise in response to rising inflation rates. Paying down our debt helps to protect the state from the impact of the Reserve Bank’s decisions.

Despite significant investments like our household electricity credit, climate action fund and a record asset investment program over the next four years, Western Australia’s net debt is set to peak at just 9.9 per cent of gross state product in 2024–25 before declining the next year. This is in stark contrast not just to the other states but also to our federal Liberal government’s net debt levels, which in the same 2024–25 year is forecast to be an eye-watering \$823 billion, and rising from there, this being a 33 per cent net-debt-to-GDP ratio. Even this year, the federal Liberal government will pay more in interest than on the disability pension. This is only set to get worse if the Liberals are successful at this Saturday’s federal election. Liberals at a state and national level continue to claim that Labor cannot manage money. Their gall is as amazing as their debt is eye-watering.

I commend the Premier, our Treasurer, for his strong fiscal management, which has seen our state achieve this feat while also committing over \$1.6 billion in this budget to support businesses during the pandemic, part of our total \$11.2 billion COVID response measures. I know that this support, including small business grants, has been vital to the many cafes, restaurants, gift shops, bookshops, clothing retailers, printers and more who call Victoria Park home. It is within the context of this critical business support that more Western Australians have a job than ever before, with a record 1.46 million Western Australians employed. Employment is almost six per cent above pre-COVID levels, which equates to around 80 000 more jobs compared with the beginning of the pandemic. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation—a 13-year low at 3.4 per cent. This is particularly remarkable given we also have the highest participation rate on record for any state, at 70 per cent. We also enjoy record female employment and a record female participation rate. More than half of those 80 000 additional jobs have gone to women. We have eight per cent higher female employment compared with pre-COVID. Female employment is up seven per cent over the last 12 months alone. Our female participation rate has risen and is trending upward, narrowing on the male participation rate. Female workforce participation is at almost 64 per cent, much more than pre-COVID levels and higher than other states’ total participation rates. It was the female workforce that was initially hit hardest during COVID, but the gender equality measures and work being undertaken by the McGowan government, together with the flexible work arrangements that COVID ended up creating, has suited female workers. These factors have resulted in greater female participation and employment. Long may this business flexibility continue, as I know our government’s commitment to gender equality will.

This budget also returns a \$5.7 billion operating surplus in 2021–22, with a \$1.6 billion operating surplus predicted in 2022–23, as well as forecast surpluses across the entire forward estimates periods. These strong operating surpluses mean that the McGowan government can give and is giving back to every household in Western Australia. To ease some of the cost-of-living pressures I spoke about earlier, the McGowan government is providing every household with a \$400 electricity bill credit. This is the second year in a row that the McGowan government has provided Western Australian households with an electricity credit. I know how much of a difference last year’s electricity credit made to my constituents, particularly pensioners and those on fixed incomes. Last year’s electricity credit provided local households with months of bill relief. I am proud that we are again giving households in Victoria Park a helping hand in this budget. Vic Park householders will no doubt be relieved to hear that our careful economic management means that household fees and charges will decrease by 3.8 per cent in 2022–23, the third consecutive year of below CPI increases in fees and charges under a Labor government. With the price of groceries at Woolies and Coles increasing before our eyes, I am sure that this will help households balance their own budgets.

Now, as I said, cost-of-living pressures are currently a priority for many of my constituents in Victoria Park. The other issue that comes up frequently with me is WA’s health system, in particular our hospital system and how it is handling the COVID-19 pandemic. The McGowan government has made a massive investment in our hospital system as part of its efforts to secure our soft landing from the pandemic. It has proudly committed a record \$5.7 billion to health and mental health, with \$2.5 billion of this being new spending since the last budget. This massive spend will ensure that our health system is strong and continues to keep Western Australians safe.

Our health system could not operate without the dedicated health workers and frontline services that support it. In the past two years, this workforce has increased by 15 per cent, including an additional 1 500 nursing staff and 500 medical full-time equivalents, most of whom are doctors. The McGowan government will continue to invest in initiatives to boost our health workforce so that it can continue to provide quality services. I take this opportunity to thank our healthcare workers for the amazing work they do, particularly in such trying times.

The government’s massive \$2.5 billion new health spend, which I note was achieved at the same time as reducing state net debt and delivering a \$5.7 billion surplus during a global pandemic, commits an additional \$1.6 billion in funding to pandemic response and recovery, including \$635 million to secure and deliver rapid antigen tests to WA households and free collection depots. The McGowan Labor government was the only government in Australia to provide free RATs to households. In Western Australia, the 15 RATs provided by the McGowan government

saved households around \$150. As a member of Parliament, I was also delighted to be allocated 2 000 RATs for my community, which I provided to local community groups, including homelessness and disability services, women's refuges and schools, as well as to individuals in need.

It is important to note that even if we remove the funding that was committed to the health system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the health budget has still increased by hundreds of millions of dollars this year. Pandemic aside, our government continues to expand the health system's capacity to respond to the needs of Western Australians. Pandemic aside, our government continues to improve upon business as usual. In this respect, the budget includes funding for a \$252 million emergency department reform package comprising 17 initiatives designed to improve access to emergency care and ambulance services. The health budget also commits an additional \$630 million in hospital services spending and \$223 million in new health infrastructure. A total of 530 new hospital beds will be delivered to WA hospitals by the end of the year and, like the member for Vasse said, that is the equivalent of a new tertiary hospital.

The south-east metro corridor, which is captured in my electorate of Victoria Park, has been a direct beneficiary of these funding initiatives. In December, the McGowan government announced the creation of 67 new hospital beds at Bentley Hospital. I can tell members that this was incredibly well received by my community. Of these beds, 37 were placed in Bentley Hospital to expand its general capacity and 30 beds are being created onsite as part of the new modular facility for non-acute patients, which will come online this year. Earlier this week, we announced with the federal Labor leader, Anthony Albanese, that our government will also partner with a Labor federal government to deliver a new \$150 million Bentley Hospital Surgicentre. This surgicentre will feature six new surgical theatres, two new procedure rooms, a 24-bed surgical ward, a new central sterilisation services department and more parking. It is another reason why I am very much hoping for and will be voting for a federal Labor government this Saturday.

Importantly, our Labor government's health investment also includes \$181 million of new funding for new and expanded mental health, alcohol and other drug services. I know that many people in our community have felt the stress caused by the pandemic and cost-of-living pressures. I am pleased that this budget responds to this important aspect of our wellbeing. I am proud that St James in my electorate of Victoria Park will be home to a transitional care unit, which will be the first of its kind in WA. The McGowan government's new \$7 million St James transitional care unit is a 40-bed service designed to help people with mental health issues recover and confidently return to community living. I am very confident that the budget presented to this house by the Treasurer addresses the current key concerns of my constituents: cost-of-living pressures and our health system.

However, as members here today know too well, even during a global pandemic the normal business of government continues. I mentioned earlier that people living in my electorate of Victoria Park have told me, including while on the hustings when I was still a candidate, that climate change is a matter of extreme importance to them. It is critical that governments take strong action immediately to address climate change, and this budget provides over \$652 million to promote green initiatives. This includes incentives for Western Australians to move towards greening alternatives such as a \$36.5 million fund to provide \$3 500 rebates to Western Australians who purchase a new electric vehicle or a hydrogen fuel cell vehicle, as well as grants for charging infrastructure. I have many car yards in my electorate and this initiative will be great for their electric vehicle sales figures as well as our environment. Western Australia, and Australia as a whole, has committed to net zero emissions by 2050. This budget underpins that commitment by delivering \$31 million to climate action research that will reduce carbon emissions. Proudly, our 2022–23 state budget's \$500 million boost to the climate action fund brings this fund to a very significant total of \$1.25 billion. I know that all these green initiatives, including our plans for plastics, Containers for Change and more are and will be welcomed by my environmentally conscious constituents.

We have great green locals in Victoria Park and also very keen cyclists. They often cross over on the Venn diagram of issues. In fact, Vic Park is an electorate of mad cyclists. Although it is not a passion I share, I have come to embrace lycra and bike helmets, just not on me. I even present local schools in my electorate with a bike each year to use as a prize in their fundraising efforts, so I could not give my budget reply on behalf of my electorate without mentioning the \$830 000 grant that the McGowan government has provided the Town of Victoria Park to fund protected bikeways along Archer and Mint Streets in Carlisle. This will integrate Victoria Park into the metropolitan cycling network, including the new causeway cycling and pedestrian bridge, which will connect Vic Park to the city and vice versa. I wish our Victoria Park cyclists many happy cycling journeys along these new paths and I will salute them with my cup of tea from Cafe Bella Rosa!

Victoria Park is an inner-city electorate with a high demand for housing. The electorate has felt the impact of housing supply challenges and I am frequently contacted by constituents who are struggling to find accommodation in the private rental market. I am delighted, therefore, that this budget includes a 50 per cent reduction in land tax for build-to-rent constructions. That is a new urban housing model in which apartments are developed for the sole purpose of being rented. Of particular interest to Victoria Park, where we are seeing more medium to high-density developments, the housing budget includes a density bonus for developments that set aside at least five per cent of their accommodation for social housing. The Treasurer and Minister Carey have also ensured that the government's existing housing stock will be upgraded, investing \$58 million into the social housing economic recovery package fund, which will be distributed among 47 community groups to assist them in refurbishing their properties.

[Member's time extended.]

**Ms H.M. BEAZLEY:** One of these community groups is Connect Victoria Park, which I have spoken about in this house before. It is a fantastic organisation, providing advocacy, social support and housing for vulnerable seniors. Seniors, particularly older women, are the fastest growing section of the population facing housing pressure. Connect received almost \$1 million from this SHERP fund to refurbish 20 of its units. These are 30-year-old units and the funds will replace their original kitchens and bathrooms and allow Connect to install lifts, improving accessibility for many senior residents. This funding also released Connect's maintenance budget and allows it to keep its 50 other units fit for purpose and available to low-income people. In total, our Labor government is investing an extra \$408 million into housing and homeless initiatives in this budget alone, which I know will ease some of the pressure experienced by my constituents.

New housing developments and greater density need to be supported by quality infrastructure, and in Victoria Park, as well as all over the metropolitan area, that means Metronet. In Vic Park, we anxiously await the removal of level crossings along the Armadale line at Mint Street, Oats Street and Welshpool Road, as well as new, modern, elevated train stations in Carlisle and on Oats Street. Understandably, building this infrastructure will necessitate the closure of the Armadale line for at least 18 months. This budget provides \$16 million in funding for replacement bus services while this shutdown occurs so that residents are inconvenienced as little as possible while we await our new elevated rail.

Finally, I could not end my budget reply without mentioning education and training—an area of government that I am passionate about and that is a perennial priority issue for my electorate. Over the last few years, the McGowan government has made an enormous investment into infrastructure and science, technology, engineering and mathematics projects in WA schools. This budget builds on that investment, increasing funding for WA education to almost \$6 billion. This funding will provide significant resources to support students with extra needs—a particular and personal interest of mine—including expanding the specialist learning programs for students with autism spectrum disorder to another eight schools at a cost of over \$18 million. This includes \$2.5 million to help year 1 students with phonics and \$4.6 million to implement the students with disabilities and complex behaviour framework. As a mum of a child with extra needs, this support is very welcomed by me and, I am sure, by other families raising children living with disability. My local schools will no doubt be glad to hear that the budget invests \$595 million towards new and upgraded school facilities and an additional \$33.8 million into maintenance upgrades to improve our public schools.

Minister Ellery and the Treasurer are also continuing to invest in our TAFE system. Under our Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative—one of my favourite initiatives—TAFE fees for 30 additional courses have been slashed. This is in addition to the freeze on TAFE fees that the McGowan government implemented in 2017 and which has remained. These decisions meant that South Metropolitan TAFE, of which I have two campuses in my electorate, Bentley and Carlisle, delivered a record amount of training last year. In fact, TAFE enrolments grew by a record of 150 000-plus in 2021, with apprenticeships also up a whopping 31 per cent. That is an incredible number of Western Australians who will now enter our workforce with new and much-needed skills, as well as confidence. All in all, this budget is a remarkable achievement at a difficult time in our history. I would like to congratulate the Premier and the government for securing Western Australia's future. We also know that the best laid plans of government will not succeed without patience, endurance and the consideration of our community. Western Australians have shown all these traits throughout the last two years of the COVID pandemic, no more so than in my electorate of Victoria Park. I take this opportunity to thank my constituents and local businesses for doing the right thing so that together we can ensure that Western Australia remains safe and strong. I commend the budget to the house.

**MS C.M. COLLINS (Hillarys)** [8.14 pm]: It is my great pleasure to rise and make a contribution to the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. Last year, members in this place, on this side of the chamber, spoke about how the 2021–22 state budget was without a doubt one of the strongest budgets of this generation. Now, standing here in my second year as the member for Hillarys, I am again very proud to be part of a government that has delivered yet another outstanding budget. This budget illustrates that the state of Western Australia has leading finances and a leading economy compared with the rest of the country.

We have delivered an economic plan that truly stays focused on Labor's core platform of equitable support for Western Australia's societal needs. Due to strong financial management, we have managed to maintain the continuity and momentum of opportunity to invest in a whole variety of important areas such as health, industry diversification, the climate, infrastructure projects, social justice programs and cost-of-living initiatives. It is due to strong financial management that we have ultimately been able to lead by example here in Australia. We have heard numerous times tonight from the opposition that this budget does not adequately address current needs such as the cost of living. But this is not just a forward-looking budget; this is a budget that addresses the immediate efforts to deliver relief for ongoing present-day challenges, many of which, of course, are attributed to the global pandemic that we find ourselves in.

It has always been Labor governments that support households and ease cost-of-living pressures, and this government is no exception. We have delivered on our commitment to keep increases in household fees and charges to below

inflation, with a 3.8 per cent reduction. On 22 July, it will be my birthday and I will receive a wonderful birthday present from this government when I—along with every other Western Australian household—receive the \$400 household credit on my electricity bill. This will be the second credit in the last two years; the first one was back in 2020 when I was still a candidate, with the \$600 household credit. This credit will play a small part in easing the burden for Western Australians, many of whom are doing it tough, particularly due to COVID. Our commitment last year to cap public transport fares to two zones has proved to be very, very popular amongst Hillarys' constituents and people across the metropolitan area. For residents in the electorate of Hillarys, it can mean a saving of up to \$360.

In this year's budget, there is an additional \$1.6 billion spend towards our COVID-19 response measures, which will take our total investment to \$11.2 billion for funding frontline services and supporting WA businesses and households. It was an Australian first when the McGowan government announced the program to deliver free rapid antigen tests to Western Australian residents. Thousands and thousands of COVID-19 cases in recent months have run through this state and it is often the families who are most active in the community who are the worst affected. Millions of people are now receiving those RATs, whether they be direct to households or schools, public healthcare workers, community resource centres or remote Aboriginal communities across the state. Many people, like me, perhaps waited longer than they were expecting to get their 15 free RATs from the government in their postbox, but we had an opportunity for state MPs to deliver them directly from their electorate office, so it has been easy for families to access this much-needed assistance while COVID is rampant in the community. It has also meant minimal impact on the household budgets of residents across this state, with each household potentially saving up to \$150. This focused financial assistance has kept our community safe and empowered families to have the confidence and flexibility to avoid community spread.

The McGowan government recognises the valuable role small businesses play in not only the economy, but also the vibrancy of the community as a whole. We are committed to supporting Western Australian businesses, particularly during these unsettling times. The small business hardship grants program gave a helping hand to some of the businesses worst affected by the necessary public health lockdowns. The grants ensured that businesses that experienced a decline in business of 40 per cent or more received financial support from the state government. It was measured and targeted to genuine small to medium-sized businesses and ensured that assistance did not go to only the big end of town, but also the mum-and-dad operations that needed it most. The grants ranged from \$3 500 all the way up to almost \$40 000 and were paid to several thousand small businesses, including some in the Hillarys electorate. The WA state government was able to waive payroll tax for three months for larger hospitality businesses that had experienced a major drop in revenue.

We have not only given financial support. When the pandemic was in full swing, the Department of Transport responded to the concerns of businesses at Hillarys Boat Harbour. We met with the businesses to find ways we could perhaps enhance their ability to operate at a time when COVID was in the community. A decision was made to relax alfresco dining rules to allow more space for diners to eat and drink outside in a COVID-safe way. The relaxed rules will continue at Hillarys Boat Harbour, where lots and lots of businesses take advantage of the incredible open space down by the water. I would like to thank Minister Saffioti and the dedicated ports staff in the Department of Transport for listening to and working hand in hand with my constituents and small business owners to support this welcome measure.

Many constituents contact me about the pressures on our health system. In keeping with the designated spending levels outlined in the 2020–21 budget, this government is committing an additional, and record, \$2.5 billion in funding for our health and mental health systems, taking our spending to a total of \$5.7 billion since the last budget was handed down. The immediate impacts of this infusion of additional financial support will be the easing of pressure on emergency departments, expanding the health workforce and improving health infrastructure. There is \$252 million allocated to improve emergency care and to help address systemic causes of ambulance ramping. The government has delivered 342 new hospital beds, with a total of 530 beds to be delivered by the end of the year.

Mental health is a particular interest of mine, and of many members of this chamber, because of the impact of COVID on our community. The COVID pandemic has had far-reaching impacts on the more vulnerable sections of our society, creating a number of stress points that have resulted in an increased need for support. Increased youth unemployment, family stress due to redundancies and even remote learning have all perhaps contributed to people's feelings of isolation and detachment from the community. We have allocated \$181 million of additional investment in mental health. In recognition of some of the secondary impacts of the last two years of COVID-forced restrictions, this budget also includes \$47.3 million to respond to the recommendations of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents Aged 0–18 Years in Western Australia.

On a more local basis, our budget will deliver significant investments in health care to benefit locals in the Hillarys electorate and the northern suburbs, with the Joondalup Health Campus expansion project to continue. This budget builds on the McGowan Labor government's strong record and commitments to improving health outcomes across the spectrum.

Western Australians have a government that also continues to take its responsibilities very seriously in addressing the wider global issues. High on our list of priorities is a continued commitment to achieve WA's and Australia's

CO<sub>2</sub> and decarbonisation targets in the battle against global climate change. The McGowan government is committed to setting up WA to have a prosperous, low-carbon future by supporting new and exciting initiatives that will protect our environment. We are pumping \$1.25 billion into WA's climate action fund, of which \$31 million will be spent directly on initiatives to reduce emissions across a variety of different sectors and \$60 million will go towards the clean energy car fund to accelerate the use of zero and low-emission vehicles by investing in building the necessary infrastructure to support electric vehicles across our state. There will be \$300 000 put towards the green hydrogen feasibility study to further support our growing interest in creating an entirely new sustainable energy industry in Western Australia. All the aforementioned are just some of the examples of this government's focus on diversification of our energy industry into areas of renewable energy and sustainability.

As a former teacher, I am particularly proud of the fact that in this budget the government is investing \$5.95 billion into WA schools and is providing a massive \$76.5 million boost for workforce training. Our ability to adapt to wideranging societal and economic disruptions on the horizon can come about only if we invest in education and training for the next generation.

A member interjected.

**Ms C.M. COLLINS:** Thank you.

As ground-level examples of where this investment is going, last year Hillarys Primary School received \$18.5 million for a full rebuild and this year will be a special year for Springfield Primary School in Kallaroo. Not only is it its fiftieth anniversary, but also it, too, will receive \$15 million from the state budget for the redevelopment of the school. This school will be completely rebuilt and will have a new capacity for 380 students. The fantastic existing kindergarten and pre-primary block and the four-classroom block are the only parts of the school that will remain. The rest will receive a complete makeover.

The McGowan government has made an investment of \$25 million in modern equipment for TAFE colleges across Western Australia, and training has been focused on equipping students with the skills they need to be in hot demand in the WA jobs market. One example is the job-ready pre-employment program, which is funded through our WA recovery plan. The state government's Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative has significantly reduced fees for 210 courses, including drilling operations and a range of other mining qualifications.

One of the hardest aspects of representing the electorate of Hillarys over the last year has been receiving messages from families who are concerned about the cost of housing in Western Australia. We are talking about double-income families who have real fears of being priced out of their own communities by the rising cost of rent. We have seen, particularly in recent months since the borders have opened, an influx of people wanting to live in Western Australia, so the supply situation means that prices are increasing. It has become apparent that the strongest tool that this government has at its disposal for taking some of the heat off the rental market is to increase the supply of social housing that is available. Last year the McGowan government invested \$875 million of additional funds into social housing, the single largest one-off investment into social housing in our state's history. The McGowan government will deliver 3 300 new social homes. This record funding will also provide an immediate boost to social housing in order to provide relief through quicker-to-market housing options, such as spot purchasing and modular, prefabricated builds. In addition, the McGowan state government has offered the \$20 000 building bonus grant and the \$116 million Regional Land Booster program, and expanded the eligibility criteria for the shared equity home loan program, Keystart. We will not allow shrinking supply to create further housing pain for Western Australia families.

This budget proves that Labor is the party of responsible economic management. Our budget management is in stark contrast to the record deficits under the Liberals and Nationals. We are supporting all of Western Australia through the current challenges by addressing ongoing community concerns, such as cost of living and public health concerns, but we are also investing in our future, diversifying the economy and taking action on climate change. This budget continues to deliver on our clearly stated Labor platform and priorities for transforming our economy and supporting every Western Australian equitably, whether they are rich or poor, urban or rural, and it sets up WA for a longer term, stronger, brighter and sustainable future. I commend the Treasurer for this excellent budget, and I commend these bills to the house.

**MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren-Blackwood)** [8.31 pm]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I watched with pride as the Premier handed down the 2022–23 state budget last Thursday. This budget is a fair budget and a strong budget. It is a budget that looks after families and our regions. It is a budget that prioritises the health and wellbeing of our communities, and creates new jobs, new investment and consumer confidence. It is a budget that looks after the environment and provides opportunities for our young people.

I watched while in isolation, as I had returned a positive RAT for COVID-19. The irony of the situation was not lost on me. We are the only state government to provide free RATs to all households, saving every family at least \$150. While Scott Morrison and his government decided to put the cost of the pandemic back onto hardworking families, our McGowan Labor government prioritised keeping money within the family budget and offsetting costs where possible.

This budget carries on that good work, continuing to invest in measures to keep WA safe and our economy strong. This year, we are investing \$1.6 billion in new COVID-19 response and recovery measures, including \$635 million to secure RATs and to continue to run the WA free RAT program. Meanwhile, “Scomo”, as the current Prime Minister has labelled himself on Twitter, despite growing pressure, declared earlier this year that free RATs were not a priority for the coalition government—not even for the more vulnerable in our communities, or people on low incomes. That showed a lack of understanding, perhaps—maybe a lack of empathy or a lack of vision—and a disconnect from the people whom we, as politicians, represent. That is disappointing, to say the very least, and I hope this weekend’s election brings much-needed change.

While listening to the Premier hand down the budget, I also reflected on the soft landing that our state has had due to the careful planning and measures put in place by our McGowan Labor government. We have reduced net debt for a third consecutive year, and it is now almost \$14 billion lower than was projected when Labor came to government. Our domestic economy has grown 7.2 per cent over the two years of the pandemic—the strongest in the nation.

We have delivered another strong surplus, and we have done all this in the middle of a global pandemic. It made me think back to a time before I was in this place, when I was CEO of a community not-for-profit, working with youth at risk and helping people tackle hurdles to employment; back to a time when the global pandemic was just beginning and was even more scary. We did not know what was ahead of us. We relied, and heavily, on our leaders to make decisions to help keep us safe. I, along with many, many Western Australians, offer thanks to the McGowan Labor government for being the safe pair of hands that has led us, and continues to lead us, through this pandemic, offering us a safe, soft landing. Not only are we safe, but also we have the strongest domestic economy in Australia. Think back: while the McGowan Labor government was striding ahead to keep us, our economy and our regional and remote communities safe and strong, the people on the other side of this place, the Liberals and Nationals, lost their way. The last state election was testament to that. They pushed to bring down our borders, and struck a rather distasteful partnership with Clive Palmer, putting politics ahead of community safety. Unbelievably, the Liberals have struck another deal and are again in cahoots with Clive Palmer. I actually had expected better of them.

Imagine if the pandemic had been managed properly by the federal government from the start. If Scott Morrison had not taken the “That’s not my job” approach to quarantine, and if the federal government had urgently secured vaccines and provided free rapid antigen tests, could the rest of the country have had better results? That is reflective, perhaps, of our state’s strong leadership and strong economic growth. I am particularly proud of our financial position when we consider the \$11.2 billion investment that we have made to support Western Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic. This money has been spent on equipping our frontline services, supporting small businesses and households, and investing in our economy and jobs. The results speak for themselves. By putting the health and safety of the community first, by having responsible border policies and by achieving world-leading vaccination rates, we have ensured that Western Australia has been able to transition safely, saving both lives and jobs. Our economy is among the strongest in the world. Our WA Plan for Jobs is not only on track, with 160 000 jobs added since we came to office in 2017, but, more importantly, it is working, with unemployment at 3.4 per cent, the lowest rate in the nation.

In my electorate of Warren–Blackwood, we are investing heavily in jobs. We are committed to bringing regional road maintenance jobs in-house to Main Roads, with 490 jobs based in regional WA. That includes establishing a depot in Manjimup. Bringing road maintenance work in-house will drive job creation and economic growth in regional WA. I am proud that Manjimup will be at the centre of this in the south west. It will also be value for money. Before we made this decision, we commissioned a detailed analysis. That report found that moving Main Roads jobs in-house would save more than \$25 million a year, produce major economic benefits and provide increased employment opportunities for regional Western Australia. That includes increasing gross regional product by up to \$335 million over the next 10 years. I am proud to be part of a government that makes informed decisions that are based on evidence and on science, decisions that put the community first and decisions that invest in our future and balance economic opportunities with our environmental responsibilities.

Getting the balance right between economic opportunities and environmental responsibilities is something our government works hard at every day. Last year, we made the historic decision to end commercial-scale logging of our south west native forests. This was an important step in the fight against climate change, which is already impacting the sustainability and growth of our native forests. It is essential that we preserve our native forests for future generations, protect and maintain our ecological biodiversity for forest health, and safeguard important carbon sinks that will help us transition to net zero carbon. This is a historic decision that will directly impact communities across my electorate. As I have said many times before, although much of my electorate celebrated this historic decision, there are others for whom this decision has caused stress and uncertainty. I stand here with my hand on my heart knowing I have worked hard behind the scenes to ensure the communities in my electorate affected by the decision to end native forest logging will be supported through the transition away from the native timber industry. In my inaugural speech, I said I would rock the boat only when it was needed. I am incredibly proud that my advocacy for increased support in the just transition plan has been successful, with the McGowan Labor government allocating an additional \$30 million to establish an industry and community development program to support industry attraction, small business growth and community projects across the south west. This is on top of the increase in the package for businesses to \$26.9 million. This brings the just transition plan to \$80 million. I proactively met

with and listened closely to the concerns of local families, businesses and local governments, and I have advocated strongly for increased support to assist them in the transition. I listened and I advocated strongly. At every opportunity, I pretty much chewed the ears off the Premier and the minister to push for additional support for my communities. It paid off. Last week, we added \$30 million to the just transition plan. That is now \$80 million allocated to workers, businesses and communities linked to forestry. This package presents a significant opportunity for industry development and growth in Warren–Blackwood. Our government works hard every day to get this balance right. We make sure we do not shy away from making hard decisions and, along with that, we support our community through the changes. That is what leadership is. That is strong leadership, something that seems lacking from the state opposition and its federal coalition counterparts.

I was rather astounded this week to read in the local press about the federal candidate for O'Connor, Hon Rick Wilson. He was bleating on about #GiveRickTheFlick stickers that have popped up across the electorate. I am certainly not condoning putting stickers or graffiti on anyone's political signs, but seriously—this is the focus the week out before an election? There was not a peep in the article about funding or policy commitments in the lead-up to the federal election—not a peep about anything that might impact or assist the lives of families across O'Connor. Instead, constituents got a page and a half of whingeing about #GiveRickTheFlick stickers. Given the opportunity, I would most certainly talk about what our government is doing to focus on and support families, support our regional communities and support business growth. I would talk about what we are doing to help reduce the cost of living. We are using the strong surplus to deliver a \$400 electricity credit to every Western Australian household, reducing household fees and charges by 3.8 per cent. I would also talk about how we continue to prioritise investing in education at all levels, like our year 1 phonics initiative to support and develop students' essential phonics skills and knowledge that they need to learn to read. While federal government members are sitting on their hands when it comes to properly funding Gonski, we are putting in a \$54.6 million increase to support students with disabilities and additional learning needs. We are putting 300 education assistant FTEs back into WA classrooms and converting 200 primary school classrooms into science labs. It is a pretty stark contrast. We are continuing to invest in STEM in schools across my electorate—in Boyup Brook, Bridgetown, Nannup, Denmark, Manjimup, Mt Barker and Northcliffe.

We are investing more money to deliver our Lower Fees, Lower Skills initiative to keep TAFE fees low and annual fee caps across 210 priority courses. This program generated record enrolments in TAFE courses last year. It is helping to address the state's skills needs and prepare Western Australians for local jobs. I would also let apprentices know that we are investing \$4.5 million in a new tool rebate to support building and construction apprentices and trainees in their purchase of trade-related tools and safety equipment.

I would use the newspaper spread to let the community know what we are doing to improve health, including our record investment in mental health and palliative care, and the introduction of voluntary assisted dying laws. I would talk about the \$30.1 million investment to secure 18 additional paramedics and six ambulances across regional WA. I would let the community know about the \$5.1 million boost to continue the mental health emergency telehealth service to ensure that regional residents, like those in Warren–Blackwood, can access mental health services more easily. As a previous state regional manager for WA telehealth services, I know firsthand how important those services are for our regional communities.

I think the community across Warren–Blackwood, and those who cut across the seat into O'Connor, would prefer to hear about the environment and what politicians are doing to address climate change. Rather than talking about stickers, I would talk about our \$59.3 million clean energy car fund, which will provide rebates of \$3 500 to Western Australians to buy battery electric vehicles or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles, and support not-for-profits, small and medium-sized businesses and local governments to install charging infrastructure.

I would also talk about the government's historic decision to end native forest logging and saving our forests for future generations. I would talk about how this government is supporting workers, community and industry to transition with an \$80 million investment. I would also make sure my constituents know that we have capped the cost of regional airfares to make it cheaper to travel and holiday within WA; we are improving mobile and internet coverage across the state through the WA regional digital connectivity program; and we are upgrading and reforming our regional road and transport networks.

I would let the community know not only what we are doing to keep them safe through the pandemic, but also how we have secured WA's first large air tanker. It will be based in Western Australia during bushfire season every year from December to March. My electorate has suffered devastating fires over the past five months and this will make a real difference in our ability to respond. We have also boosted our investment in tourism, a major industry across Warren–Blackwood, with \$21.1 million to implement a major marketing campaign and \$17.7 million to develop new tourism experiences in our national parks. We are also putting aside money for important maintenance works, including \$4.6 million for the Tree Top Walk in Walpole in my electorate.

It turns out the stickers were authorised by the Maritime Union of Australia and it hopes voters heed its words.

This budget has something for everyone. It is a testament to the Labor values of fairness and equality and a fair go for all. I commend these bills to the house. Thank you.

**MR G. BAKER (South Perth)** [8.47 pm]: I rise to speak on the Appropriation (Recurrent 2022–23) Bill 2022 and the Appropriation (Capital 2022–23) Bill 2022. I would like to start by saying what an amazing budget the Premier delivered last Thursday. WA has the strongest economy with the strongest bottom line in Australia and probably in the world. We delivered a \$5.7 billion surplus and an operating surplus across the forward estimates. We have a \$400 household electricity credit for every household to help with the cost of living; a \$2.5 billion investment in health and mental health; \$1.6 billion in COVID response measures; \$1.3 billion to strengthen and diversify the economy; and a \$652 million boost to climate change and environmental measures. We are repaying \$1.2 billion of debt, and net debt has fallen for the third consecutive year. It is very exciting to be part of this government and delivering the big picture so well, and that means also delivering smaller things for the electorate of South Perth.

I want to look at what the McGowan government's fiscal discipline has achieved for South Perth. In March, I was delighted to be down at Como Secondary College where we opened the new indoor–outdoor multipurpose space that cost us \$1 million. Kids can buy their lunch there, it can host performances, classes can be run in there and it keeps people warm on a rainy day. It was opened by the Premier and the Minister for Education and Training, along with the principal, Digby Mercer. It is the first new piece of infrastructure down at Como Secondary College for a long time, and it was gratefully received. It was a fantastic day.

Collier Primary School has had a \$135 000 outdoor nature playground installed as part of the school's master plan to put a playground all the way around the oval and have the wider community use it. It is a brilliant initiative and one of my election commitments. It has been great working with principal Emma Bancroft and the P&C down at Collier Primary School to deliver that one.

A new roof is going on Kensington Primary School. Last year was its ninety-fifth anniversary, so it is time it got a new roof. The old one was leaking. Construction is underway and it is looking good. It has been great working with principal Bronwyn Jones on that one.

At Curtin Primary School, I have delivered \$185 000 for the revitalisation of outdoor areas into a nature playground and classroom breakout space. I have been working with principal Jennifer Broz and the very active school board on getting that scoped correctly.

I have also been involved in a number of projects with the City of South Perth, working with Greg Milner and people down there. The Como Bowling and Recreation Club has had a new kitchen installed. It is very grateful for that. That was a joint state government and City of South Perth project. We have redone the lawn at the Como Croquet Club. The two reconstructed courts were formally opened in late March. I have been working with Graeme Broadbent and his committee to deliver that.

We have upgraded the floodlighting on two bowling greens at Manning Memorial Bowling Club. We have delivered that lighting as part of the McGowan government's club night lights program to increase participation in sport and recreation. There is also new lighting at Hensman Park Tennis Club. I recently attended a state ladies league match that began at 5.00 pm. That was great. It is the first time they have been able to start a match at Hensman Park at 5.00 pm because prior to that, the lighting was insufficient, and Tennis West would not let them play. Now they can do it, thanks to the great work of Colin Napier and the Hensman Park Tennis Club team. Manning Rippers Amateur Football Club also got upgraded floodlighting at the James Miller Oval in Manning under the club night lights program. Alan Mulvaney should be congratulated for getting that project up and running. That is the great thing about sports lighting; it extends the use of sporting infrastructure past its normal hours. In a place such as South Perth, it is a lot cheaper to put a couple of good lights around an oval than to find a whole new oval in the inner city.

Another good little project at the South Perth Bridge Club was the building of a new all-abilities restroom. That was long overdue. I have been working with Danny Ravn and everyone at the South Perth Bridge Club, which is probably the best bridge club in the world. That lay-down project was a lay-down *misère*, I have to say!

A member interjected.

**Mr G. BAKER:** Thank you.

Another exciting project is the Mends Street intersection pedestrian crossing. The state government has partnered with the City of South Perth to fix a number of road black spots, making roads safer and supporting local jobs by installing a raised safety platform and traffic signal modification. If anyone remembers Mends Street about a decade ago, it was nearly dead as a commercial space; it was really declining. A number of commercial and residential apartments have gone up around there. It has put fresh life into the place. It is now one of the premier destinations along the river. It will further enhance that little district.

Further down the river, another project that the state government has been involved in with the City of South Perth is the black swan habitat, now known as Djirda Miya Island. This is an artificial island that creates a safer nesting space for native birds. It is a simple piece of infrastructure that is reviving black swan habitats along the Swan River. The swans, pelicans and other birds love it. It is now a mini attraction in its own right. I want to give thanks to Veronica Mcphail for her daily photographs of wildlife down there, showing they are using it. We can track the development of different swan families. We are into the second generation of cygnets born on that island already.

Another great project in South Perth is Perth Zoo. This is a \$143 million investment as part of a 20-year master plan to create a long-term framework to safeguard the viability of the Zoo, including upgrades to facilities and amenities. I have been down there several times with several different ministers making announcements. It is a very exciting time for the Zoo.

A further project that has already been completed but that I am extremely grateful for is the Manning Road on-ramp onto the Kwinana Freeway. It is an example of what can be achieved with good budget control. It was long overdue yet so simple, and it was delivered by this government. John McGrath likes it; I like it; 7 000 people a day like it. Thank you to the Minister for Transport for delivering it.

I am also delighted that money has been set aside in this budget for the Canning Bridge bus interchange upgrade. Anyone who drives along Canning Highway and uses the freeway overpass knows that buses stopping on the overpass is not good for traffic. There is a good reason for that: 20 years ago when the line was designed and went in, the bus interchange was designed for 1 000 bus-to-train transfers a day. Currently, it is operating at 5 000 transfers per day, and there are not just buses. Pedestrians, cyclists, cars and all sorts of things are spilling out across the intersections. The Mandurah train line has been an outrageous success, beyond the expectations of the Gallop government when it designed it and well beyond the expectations of the critics at the time. But the line has definitely outgrown that interchange.

One of the first things I did when I was elected was to pace out around the Canning Bridge interchange with cyclists and pedestrians. I thank Graham Blackwell, Warwick Boardman and Peter Howat for helping me with that. We noted the complex pedestrian crossings and ad hoc kiss and drops in the streets around the interchange, as well as the traffic congestion caused by the eastbound bus stop taking up one lane of Canning Highway at the choke point. Yet, other bus routes that run through Como close to the interchange do not link up to the train due to the lack of space on the bridge. I have had many conversations with the Minister for Transport and her staff about Canning Bridge, and I am very pleased by what I see in the budget. With the commitment in the budget, we can look at a design that will have the potential to address all the traffic, pedestrian, cycling and bus route issues there and find a solution that will really work. I am very excited about this project and I cannot wait to see what happens over coming years.

The great thing about all these local projects that I have talked about, except for the Manning Road on-ramp, is that they will be undertaken or have been undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a very challenging time, but the government has definitely kept things moving. Western Australia has negotiated the worst public health crisis the world has seen since the influenza pandemic of 1919, and I think that it has done it better than anyone else in the world. WA has had better health and economic outcomes than anywhere else in the world. The government has paid down debt and is the only government in Australia that is paying down debt, and according to Deloitte Access Economics, WA can claim to be one of the best managed economies in the world.

Let us compare this with the record of Liberal–National governments and, first of all, the Barnett government. When the Barnett government was in government, it also had a minerals boom. It also had record income from royalties. It had its chance. What did the Liberal–National government under Barnett leave Western Australia? It left debt and deficit. Debt had been climbing across the forward estimates to \$44 billion and there had been repeated budget deficits. It lost the state's AAA rating and increased land tax three times. This happened during a mining boom when the state was getting more money every year than we thought it would get. It is an extraordinary record. What legacy did it leave us? What infrastructure did it try to implement? Roe 8 as an infrastructure project was so poorly planned that if it had been completed, it would not have even reached its destination and would have been short on solving the problems of the port. The Barnett Liberal–National government was a terrible financial manager. It squandered a mining boom. The McGowan government is using our current good luck to deliver for all Western Australians a secure and sound financial outlook.

How does the commonwealth government compare? Let us compare WA's budget position with the commonwealth's. WA is running budget surpluses and reducing debt. The commonwealth is running budget deficits with debt increasing at an eye-watering rate. Commonwealth net debt this year is \$714 billion and is forecast to reach \$846 billion by 2025. This huge debt could be put down to COVID, but it is not just COVID, and it is possibly not even COVID. Let us pick apart those numbers—\$714 billion and \$846 billion—a bit more. When the Rudd–Gillard government ended in 2013, commonwealth net debt was just over \$100 billion. This figure was widely criticised by conservative politicians. I remember Joe Hockey running around at the time calling it a budget crisis. Net debt was a total of 13 per cent of the gross domestic product, which was one of the lowest debts of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries at the time. By 2019, six years later and a year before COVID hit, commonwealth government debt had risen to 19 per cent of GDP. As a percentage, debt went from 13 per cent to 19 per cent of GDP in six years.

Before COVID hit, the commonwealth government had already developed a taste for debt. It had already begun to blow out the budgets and run structural deficits. After COVID, this became a voracious appetite for more debt. From 2019 to now, net debt has risen to \$714 billion this year, or 31 per cent of GDP, and net debt is projected to rise to \$846 billion by 2025. As a percentage of GDP, that is over 33 per cent. It has gone from 13 per cent in 2013 to 19 per cent in 2019. It is now 31 per cent of GDP and is projected to end up at 33 per cent of GDP, or \$846 billion,

over the forward estimates. There is a time and a place for running deficit budgets and running up debts. The days when Australian governments were dealing with the coronavirus public health emergency were exactly when deficit spending should have occurred, although it did not happen in WA. If our national debt was related to just those years, 2020 and 2021, I would have less of an argument, but the debt was not accumulated just in the years of the pandemic. It started right when Scott Morrison and his team came to government in 2013 and it continued when Scott Morrison was the commonwealth Treasurer. When Scott Morrison became the Prime Minister, he lost all restraint and debt was turbocharged during the pandemic. That will continue for at least another three years and reach over \$800 billion during the next term of government.

This debt is costing Australia every day. By 2025, the Morrison government, and by that I really mean taxpayers, will be paying \$25 billion a year in interest to service this debt. That is almost the whole WA government appropriation that we are passing now going on debt payments. Every hospital, every school and all the police stations, emergency services and funding for housing and roads—almost the whole of the state government’s appropriations—could be paid with the interest on that bill. It is an extraordinary waste of money. A debt with an annual interest bill of \$25 billion is painful. However, when we look at the gathering economic clouds on the horizon, we are staring down the barrel of the incoming inflation and interest rate rises. These two risks make our huge debt a problem and a burden when running into these uncertain financial times. What did we get for this \$800 billion debt? Did it improve services? No. Did it improve aged-care services? No. Did it stop the illegal robodebt collections? No. Did it fund the National Disability Insurance Scheme properly? No. Did it stop the commonwealth from pulling out of remote Aboriginal housing in Western Australia? No. Did it provide equitable health funding in Western Australia? No. Did it get vaccines to us in time? No. Did it buy rapid antigen tests? No. Did it increase the minimum wage? No. It failed on all those things, yet the federal government keeps building up the debt. The amount of \$850 billion is pretty much what is needed to fund the US military for a year, but could the Australian government buy one submarine? No. All the while, for nine years, and for three years going into the forward estimates, COVID or no COVID, commonwealth debt has kept going up, with inflation and interest rates looming. Morrison has no financial plan here. Morrison has no fiscal discipline. He is heading Australia straight into the storm, and it stands in stark contrast to WA.

[Member’s time extended.]

**Mr G. BAKER:** I was reading about the fracking business in Texas the other day. I was wondering about the problems that the fracking business in Texas could have. Was it environmental or regulatory? What was it? It turned out there were four challenges that the fracking business in Texas was running into. Three of them were very familiar to me. When I talk to shopkeepers and builders in South Perth and people down at Farmers Market on Manning or any of those kinds of places, they talk about three general problems that small businesses face—staffing, inflation and supply chain logistics. They come up in different measures in different businesses, and they are all things we are having to address in this budget. They are three of the things that the fracking business in Texas is also dealing with—staffing, inflation and supply chain logistics. They are a problem all around the world.

The fourth problem was capital, access to finance, being able to get loans and investors. A number of businesses said flat out that they cannot drill holes because they cannot get the money for them. They said flat out that they cannot get finance. I was reflecting on that and I realised that the businesses I talked to in South Perth do not mention finance as a problem facing their business. I did a bit of research, and around the world this problem with capital, with finance, is popping up in different forms in many different places. Around the world, capital is getting risk shy and it is trying to find safe bets. But, amidst all these worldwide challenges, WA still has capital. Why? Because WA is still a great place to invest. The McGowan Labor government, through sound financial management, budget surpluses, paying down debt, restoring the AAA credit rating, building a world-leading economy and keeping us safe from COVID, has created business confidence—confidence to do business, confidence to stay in business, confidence to hire staff and pay good wages and confidence to invest in WA. This is the great irony of politics today. Today, Labor understands good financial management and understands how important it is for the economy, and the Liberals do not. I commend the bills to the house.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr W.J. Johnston (Minister for Mines and Petroleum)**.

**COVID-19 RESPONSE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT  
(EXTENSION OF EXPIRING PROVISIONS) BILL 2022**

*Returned*

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

*House adjourned at 9.08 pm*

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