



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2022

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Thursday, 24 March 2022

Legislative Council

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Inquiry into the delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia — Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [10.02 am]: Good morning, members. I have some correspondence. The first is from the Standing Committee on Public Administration, and states —

Dear President

...

The Standing Committee on Public Administration has resolved to amend the date for the tabling of a report on its inquiry into the delivery of ambulance services in Western Australia.

The Committee will now report on the inquiry by the end of May 2022.

Yours sincerely

Pierre Yang MLC

[See paper [1172](#).]

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct — Terms of Reference — Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [10.03 am]: I have a second letter, this time from the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. It states —

Dear President

...

The Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission has resolved to conduct an inquiry titled What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct.

The inquiry has the following terms of reference:

The committee will inquire into what happens after a public officer is found to have engaged in serious misconduct including:

1. *disciplinary and other sanctions imposed by departments, local government, the Western Australia Police Force and other authorities*
2. *unexplained wealth and criminal benefits proceedings initiated by the Corruption and Crime Commission*
3. *criminal prosecutions arising from serious misconduct investigations including prosecuting arrangements, challenges and outcomes*
4. *the roles of the Corruption and Crime Commission, Public Sector Commission, departments, local government, the Western Australia Police Force and other authorities in taking action, overlooking and/or reporting the above outcomes*
5. *measures to improve the effectiveness, transparency and/or oversight of the above.*

* *'public officer' includes a public service officer, police officer, member of either House of Parliament, and member, officer or employee of any authority, board, corporation, commission, local government or council of local government.*

The committee will report by 30 November 2023.

...

MR M. HUGHES, MLA

CHAIR

[See paper [1173](#).]

WESTERN POWER AND HORIZON POWER — OUTAGES — REGIONS*Petition*

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.04 am]: President, I present a petition containing 47 signatures, couched in the following terms —

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

We the undersigned express deep concern in relation to the vulnerability of our electricity network in regional WA and the impact that extended power outages has on public health, commerce, education and emergency response.

We therefore ask the Legislative Council to support a full and independent inquiry into Western Power and Horizon Power to examine the following issues:

1. Preparedness for and response to power outages;
2. The appropriateness of the extended outage payment;
3. Review policies and procedures for mitigating fire risk; and

To make recommendations to improve resilience and performance of the network and better serve those who depend on it.

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

[See paper 1174.]

PAPERS TABLED

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

Fourth Report — The definition of ‘public officer’ in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003: Parliamentary inspector’s report — Tabling

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.06 am]: I am directed to present the fourth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *The definition of ‘public officer’ in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003: Parliamentary inspector’s report*.

[See paper [1175](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: This report tables a report by Matthew Zilko, SC, the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. The parliamentary inspector alerts Parliament to flaws inherent in the definition of “public officer” in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003. In particular, the report canvasses the complexities of determining when a contractor engaged by the public sector is a public officer, and whether the definition of “public officer” is fit purpose in the context of modern employment practices.

Section 3 of the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act picks up the definition of “public officer” in section 1 of the Criminal Code. A person may be an employee at law, even if they are engaged under a contract that characterises their situation differently.

The commission and parliamentary inspector’s jurisdiction over serious misconduct extends only to acts committed by a “public officer” as defined in legislation. It is therefore critical to have a clear understanding of the scope and meaning of “public officer”.

The question of when a contractor is a public officer came to the attention of the parliamentary inspector when investigating a complaint about a decision of the commission. This case exemplified the difficulties and resources expended in determining when a contractor is a public officer. The 84-year-old complainant alleged that he was assaulted and deprived of his liberty by two security guards at the Albany Health Campus, where he was a voluntary patient. The security guards were employed by a company contracted by the WA Country Health Service. The problem in this case was that some evidence pointed towards the security guards being employees of the WA Country Health Service, such as staff at Albany Health Campus being entitled to give instructions to security guards and expecting them to be obeyed, while other evidence did not, such as the public sector not paying the guards or being able to terminate their employment. In this case, the parliamentary inspector concluded that it was more likely than not that the security guards were not public officers. The commission came to the same conclusion.

The parliamentary inspector seeks amendment to the definition of “public officer” in the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act. The Corruption and Crime Commissioner, the Honourable John McKechnie, QC, also considers that the definition of “public officer” requires clarification and is no longer fit for purpose. The current definition reflects the varying employment arrangements outside the traditional employment arrangements in the public sector, such as contractors, public–private partnerships and volunteers. Many public sector agencies use contractors

extensively. Commissioner McKechnie says that applying the current definition of “public officer” results in inconsistent outcomes. As the parliamentary inspector observes, it is a matter of policy whether the definition of “public officer” should exclude independent contractors. However, he is concerned about the effect on the public if contractors who may be working with vulnerable people and exercising the coercive powers of the state are excluded from the commissioner’s remit purely because of the nature of the engagement. He considers that this outcome runs counter to the overall purposes of the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act.

In the committee’s view, the definition of “public officer” should evolve as employment practices in the public sector evolve. The scope and meaning of “public officer” must be clear. The Department of Justice is undertaking a project to modernise the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act. This is an opportunity to examine whether the definition of “public officer” is appropriate in the context of modern employment practices and clarify when a contractor is a “public officer”.

The committee recommends that the Attorney General direct the Department of Justice to examine the definition of “public officer” and matters raised in the report of the parliamentary inspector as a part of its project to modernise the Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act.

Fifth Report — Police power of arrest: Parliamentary inspector’s report — Tabling

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.10 am]: I am directed to present the fifth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *Police power of arrest: Parliamentary inspector’s report*.

[See paper [1176](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: This report tables the second report by Matthew Zilko, SC, Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. The parliamentary inspector alerted Parliament to his concerns about the operation of the police power of arrest without a warrant in section 128 of the Criminal Investigation Act 2006. These concerns arose from his investigation of a complaint referred to his office by the previous Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission. In that case, the complainant, a 51-year-old woman with severe arthritis, took issue with her arrest on suspicion of stealing several boxes of hair dye and her treatment by the two arresting police officers. The offending related to goods valued at less than \$100. She did not commit the offence. The actual offender received an infringement notice. The parliamentary inspector’s concerns about the manner of arrest and how the complainant was treated after the police realised they had arrested the wrong person are detailed in his report.

The commission concluded that the arrest was unreasonable and oppressive but lawful, and the Western Australia Police Force considered the actions of the arresting officer unsatisfactory but lawful. The parliamentary inspector disagreed and considered the arrest unlawful. Under section 128 of the act, an officer may arrest a person if the offence is a “serious offence” as that term is defined and if the officer reasonably suspects that the person has committed, is committing or is just about to commit the offence. The parliamentary inspector was “extremely doubtful” that the required “reasonable suspicion” existed, which is the second criterion.

The first criterion defined in section 128 defines “serious offence” to mean an offence with a maximum penalty of imprisonment of five years or more, or life; that is, the only criterion enlivening the officer’s power of arrest in this state is the head sentence of the offence. The commission concluded that the offence was a serious offence because the head sentence for stealing in section 378 of the Criminal Code is seven years’ imprisonment. This is despite the wide variation in the degree of culpability involving stealing offences and the fact that, if dealt with summarily, the maximum sentence for the alleged offence, or any offence related to goods valued at less than \$1 000, is a fine. The parliamentary inspector accepts that the offence of stealing, however trivial, is a serious offence as defined, but he is troubled by the broader implications of this conclusion because any stealing offence authorises arrest and gives police very wide powers of arrest. These powers may be exercised in respect of offences that are obviously minor in real terms. He considers this inconsistent with the overall intent of the act.

The intent of section 128 of the act is that although officers have the power to arrest without a warrant for a serious offence, other offenders should be summonsed to attend court and retain their liberty unless particular circumstances apply. The second reading speech emphasised that the act would ensure that police exercised the power to arrest only if reasonably necessary. Laws in other jurisdictions take a different approach to the police power of arrest. For example, in New South Wales the law says that an officer must be satisfied that arrest is reasonably necessary. The parliamentary inspector recommends amendments to the Criminal Investigation Act. He notes that the police commissioner agrees that changes to the law are required, but disagrees with the commissioner’s proposed amendment. The parliamentary inspector has written to the Attorney General respectfully requesting that he consider amending the powers of arrest in the act.

In September 2021, the Attorney General advised that the request had been forwarded to the Minister for Police for his consideration and that he had instructed his department to assist in the event that the Minister for Police decides to consider possible amendments. The committee recommends that the Minister for Police respond to this request by way of a government response tabled in Parliament.

I will add that sometimes as committee members we table reports with which we may not necessarily agree. In this case, I personally think that the government may have this right and the parliamentary inspector may have this wrong. However, I am happy to have that in open debate in the house, and I look forward to explaining my reasons for thinking that is the case.

*Sixth Report — The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function:
The review by the Honourable Peter Martino — Tabling*

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.15 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the sixth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission titled *The Corruption and Crime Commission's unexplained wealth function: The review by the Honourable Peter Martino*.

[See paper [1177](#).]

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission monitors and reports to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Corruption and Crime Commission.

Since September 2018, the commission has had the power to investigate unexplained wealth and criminal benefits, and initiate and conduct confiscation proceedings. The law seeks to deter crime by reducing the profitability of illegal activities. It reverses the onus of proof and requires a person living beyond their apparent means to rebut the presumption that property has been acquired or is derived from criminal activity. The commission has used its unexplained wealth powers to recover the financial benefits of serious misconduct by public officers and organised crime.

This report attached a report by the Hon Peter Martino on his review of the commission's use of its unexplained wealth powers. The commission has been undertaking this function with its current resources. In February 2022, the commissioner, Hon John McKechnie, QC, told this committee that the commission cannot continue to undertake this function and properly fulfil its other functions within its current resources. Hon Peter Martino noted that undertaking the unexplained wealth function involves a range of expertise and skills. He said it is also highly desirable that there be a commissioner and an acting commissioner at all times so that the commissioner who decides to use the commission's investigative powers against a person is not the same commissioner who examines that person about their property.

The commission has made a submission to government for funding to expand its capacity to undertake this function over the next five years. It has sought funding just short of \$5 million a year to fund 20 full-time equivalent officers. In 2021, the commission's total cost of services was nearly \$28 million and it employed 116.2 FTEs. If approved, the proposed funding will considerably expand the resourcing of the commission. The commission should be appropriately funded to undertake its functions.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Fifty-eighth Report — Overview of petitions 2 June 2021 to 2 December 2021 — Tabling

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [10.18 am]: I am directed to present the fifty-eighth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs titled *Overview of petitions 2 June 2021 to 2 December 2021*.

[See paper [1178](#).]

Hon PETER FOSTER: The report I have just tabled advises the house of petitions that were finalised by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs between June 2021 and December 2021. During this period, 39 petitions were referred to the committee and the committee concluded its inquiries in relation to 24 petitions. Petitions finalised during the reporting period related to a broad range of social, environmental and planning issues. For example, petitions expressed concerns about the building industry, greyhound racing, the biosecurity levy, staffing of school libraries, the ban on gel blasters, changes to the Kalgoorlie home care program and the management of Aboriginal corporations. Environmental concern was the focus of a number of petitions, including those relating to the Pinjarra aluminium refinery, Dardanup waste facility and the proposed Albany motor sport facility. Planning concerns were noted in petitions relating to the Percy Doyle Reserve and the Glen Iris golf course. There were transport concerns such as the safety of railway junctions, speed limits, sound mitigation on Mitchell Freeway and the availability of bus services. Three petitions opposing bills were tabled. The committee notes that it usually does not inquire into matters that are currently, or will imminently be, before the Legislative Council. At the end of this reporting period, the committee was continuing its inquiries into 15 open petitions.

The committee takes this opportunity to thank all tabling members and to encourage them to provide a written submission to the committee after their petition has been tabled. The committee also notes that a trial of the e-petition system will run from 1 January 2022 until 31 March 2023. Petitions can now be created on the Parliament's website and will be considered like existing paper petitions, once they have been tabled in the Legislative Council. I commend the report to the house.

SHIRE OF BROOME WASTE LOCAL LAW 2021 — DISALLOWANCE

Notice of Motion

Notice of motion given by **Hon Martin Pritchard**.

CORONAVIRUS — EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS*Motion*

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [10.21 am] — without notice: I move —

That in relation to the McGowan government’s extended use since March 2020 of emergency declarations made under the Emergency Management Act 2005 and the Public Health Act 2016 across Western Australia to manage COVID-19, and the related use of extraordinary powers and directions, including, but not limited to, the present COVID Transition (Level 2 Public Health and Social Measures) Direction (No. 2), the government must —

- (a) explain how Western Australia is still in a “state of emergency”;
- (b) explain why both emergency declarations have been recently extended, and how the multitude of COVID directions that stem from those declarations are justified;
- (c) provide all written advice that the Minister for Emergency Services and the Minister for Health have relied upon in extending, each fortnight, the above declarations;
- (d) commit to tabling the justification for each future emergency declaration extension granted; and
- (e) describe at which point the government will revoke the emergency declarations, and at which point each of the present COVID directions will be reviewed or repealed.

It is my intention in the time available to me this morning to have a rational, reasonable and focused debate on the questions as they are put. This is not a time for our traditional Thursday morning rancour, which sometimes can be good for the tribal soul. It is not my intention to deviate from our obligations to serve the public and retreat into narrow ideology or to seek partisan advantage. The purpose of this motion in the terms it is put is to shine a light on the obvious, which is that in Western Australia we have been operating under a state of emergency for more than 24 months. That is an extraordinary set of circumstances in legal terms and in regulatory terms.

In the course of debate on 17 November last year on the COVID-19 Response Legislation Amendment (Extension of Expiring Provisions) Bill (No. 2) 2021, I made this contribution —

We need to start scrutinising the continual deployment of this state of emergency at the point at which we reach the vaccination target—such as that is; it appears to be 90 per cent—for those 12 and over in this jurisdiction. I say that because an insinuation seems to be embedded in the transition plan —

That is the transition plan that preceded the opening —

as it has been described so far, and will continue to be refined no doubt, that the state of emergency will continue in some form. I am coming around to the view that that is quite problematic. We cannot justify the continuation of a state of emergency toward the end of next year —

Meaning 2022 —

if there is no precipitant new crisis in respect of the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is something that I think should become easier should we reach the 80 and 90 per cent vaccine thresholds.

I am not using this opportunity to make a political pronouncement. I just think that as a matter of principle there has to be a point at which a state of emergency is no longer required. I am seeking when that point is. It is actually a different question from when the border opens.

That was obviously the issue of focus. I continue —

This is a facet that most commentary has missed. Everyone is obviously focused on broader issues, but the capacity to control the border is itself dependent on not only the passage of this bill —

The bill that was then under consideration —

but also the continuation of the state of emergency so declared.

We are in a unique situation, presently, and we have obviously made some advances over the course of the last 24 months. I was only recently apprised of the most recent COVID-19 daily update. I note that there are 8 616 new confirmed cases. With great sadness, seven deaths were recorded yesterday. However, I understand that six of those are historical deaths, so that requires some further confirmation, no doubt. But the good news, if we can reflect on this, is our extraordinarily high rate of vaccination. More than 95 per cent of those aged 12-plus have received second doses. Encouragingly, although slowly, 73.6 per cent of those aged 16 years and older have received their booster dose. The purpose of this motion is to reflect upon the appropriateness of two states of emergency, in effect, now. It is not to reflect on the merits of the original declaration. In fact, that was obviously the right declaration to make.

I will go through some rudimentary definitions because I think that will help focus the debate. The Emergency Management Act 2005 defines “emergency” thus —

emergency means the occurrence or imminent occurrence of a hazard which is of such a nature or magnitude that it requires a significant and coordinated response;

That leads one to ask what a hazard is. The legislation defines “hazard” to mean —

- (a) a cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, tsunami or other natural event;
- (b) a fire;
- (c) a road, rail or air crash;

Of relevance here, it also describes —

- (d) a plague or an epidemic;
- (e) a terrorist act ...

Or —

- (f) any other event ... that is capable of causing or resulting in —
 - (i) loss of life, prejudice to the safety, or harm to the health, of persons or animals; or
 - (ii) destruction of, or damage to, property ...

The Emergency Management Act 2005 came about partly as a consequence of the work of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, which, in its second report of the thirty-sixth Parliament that was tabled in 2002, investigated emergency services legislation in Western Australia. At that point, we did not have coordinated emergency services legislation. A number of reasons may have motivated the standing committee to undertake that work. I imagine that one of those motivations may well have been the September 11 terrorist incident in 2001. The report was very extensive and substantial, and it is worth reflecting on.

One of the chapters of the report talks about the importance of information in an emergency. I will quote from page 52 of the report, where it states —

The provision of information in an emergency is an essential task and cannot and must not be considered a peripheral or secondary function of the emergency services.

The report also reflects on the role of the media in an emergency, and states —

As in all facets of modern life, the media plays a crucial role in informing people of issues related to emergency management. It is through the media that the public information is disseminated.

The media must, therefore be treated not as a problem to be managed, but as a part of the process. Throughout the inquiry, the Committee has been told that the media can provide an essential community service during an emergency, but if they are kept out of the information loop, their deadlines pressure can lead to inaccurate or misleading information being provided to the public. This is a far greater risk than providing the media with information.

Lamentably, over the last 24 months we have encountered scenarios in which full information has not been provided to this house, the public or the media on facets of COVID-19 management in this jurisdiction. Limb (a) of this motion is probably the central dimension. It politely requests a justification from the government of why the current scenario in Western Australia, not the previous scenario, constitutes an emergency. The motion also seeks a justification of the twin declarations—a state of emergency under the Emergency Management Act and a public health state of emergency under the Public Health Act 2016. Furthermore, those states of emergency apply statewide. From those declarations also come, I think, 60 individual COVID directions.

Why might we doubt or question the utilisation of the word “emergency” and the declarations of states of emergency that are continually rolled over on a fortnightly basis? This is the point. An ordinary understanding of the term “emergency” infers that it is time bound; it is a temporary but extreme and necessary measure. Emergency powers and declarations of this kind were designed to be rolled over if a contingency justified that extension; they were never designed to be used as a permanent fixture or a statutory instrument of first resort, which they are currently being used as. I question, at least in part, the necessity for this or perhaps the rendering of the scenario that we are facing, which is not a trivial scenario by the way—I emphasise that point. The government can deal with matters that present some manner of threat in a way that does not compel it to declare an emergency. Is there another means of dealing with the challenge that COVID-19 presents, including the present variant and future variants, particularly to vulnerable members of our community? By “vulnerable”, I specifically mean people who are unable to be vaccinated, especially children under five years of age; people with very complex underlying health conditions; people in aged-care facilities; and people who live in remote Aboriginal communities.

Is there potentially another more appropriate mechanism that would throw the blanket of protection around those people in a manner that does not invoke two very powerful and very opaque statutory instruments? I put to members that there is potentially another way of managing this contingency that would not automatically require the invocation of the most powerful lever that executive government has. I think that is, effectively, the best way that I can render the present scenario.

I have reason, as an individual, to question whether the government itself truly believes the present scenario to be akin to an emergency. My interest was piqued by two radio interviews that the Commissioner of Police, Chris Dawson, provided in the course of the last four or so weeks. I will quote from a transcript of a radio interview with Gareth Parker on 6PR on 2 March. Parker asked this —

Obviously the phase 2 restrictions also kick in tomorrow and there's a whole bunch of elements to that but I wonder, are your police officers going to be doing enforcement work? I mean some of the things around requirements for people not to attend community sporting events and so on?

The commissioner responded in an interesting manner. He said —

Oh look, we will be responding to matters that we believe would put the public at risk and I don't have the officers nor the information to go around monitoring community sport unless there's some particular public health risk police have got far —

Then there was a gap, before he continued —

far more important I would say ...

There was then another pause in the transcript, because, politely and generously, the commissioner pulled himself up. An inference can clearly be made that the commissioner believed that policing a number of the level 2 restrictions was not a priority police task, unless there was something really compelling. The reason I mention that is that about a week afterwards, on 9 March, the commissioner gave another interview on 6PR. It was quite a reasonable one. He talked about the force complement of serving officers devoted to Operation Tide, which was the principal police effort to assist the state's management of the threat posed by COVID. Half of the assigned officers have been moved off COVID duties, and the decision to move them off was made before level 2 restrictions were brought in. One might say that the majority of that policing effort was dedicated to border security roles at the airport, and that is a fair assumption. But the role of the commissioner is not just that of police commissioner; he is also the principal COVID commander. He is the director of the State Disaster Council. He is not the chair—I think that is the Premier—but he is the most senior official on that disaster council. To me, as an individual and a humble member of this place, it seems slightly incongruous that a very respected and capable officer who is advising the government on the most appropriate COVID response on the one hand advises, on the basis of health advice presumably, to escalate restrictions, and on the other, simultaneously, reduces the force structure dedicated to policing those restrictions. That, to me, is more than passing strange; it is incongruous. As is the appropriate thing to do, I asked a question in this chamber. What I received back was a diatribe. I put it in those terms. The question I asked was —

- (1) How is the commissioner's decision consistent with the inferred elevation of community risk presented by the Premier's decision to implement level 2 COVID restrictions on 28 February?
- (2) When did the commissioner advise the Premier of his decision to reassign half of the Operation Tide force back to frontline policing duties?

The question was out previously, but the answer I got back on Tuesday, I think, told me things I knew, such as —

Operation Tide has played a crucial role to ensure that the state of emergency measures, based on public health advice, have been implemented in a calm and considered manner.

But this is where I am slandered —

I note that the member does not support the public health advice and the measures taken to keep the WA community safe.

Now I might address that at another time, but I will say this: at every stage to this pandemic, I personally, and the opposition collectively, have supported the government in every legislative instrument that it has brought in. I have taken personal steps. I am a self-declared vaccine hardliner. I will not be slandered with stupid answers to questions like that. It is absolutely beneath anyone in the office of the Premier to draft an answer like that, and it is absolutely beneath the Premier to sign off on an answer like that. But that is not the point. The point is to answer the question: are we in a state of emergency or not? Some of the government's own actions seem to indicate that it does not truly believe that to be the case either.

Might I reflect on another incongruity—the marketing blitz. Never have I seen a tourism campaign launched in a state of emergency. That, to me, seems to be an odd thing to do, but I will let that pass.

I have also sought via questions in this place to truly understand what the public health implications would be if the state of emergency declarations, both of them, were rescinded, because we should understand what the consequences would be. Now is the opportunity to have that discussion. When the question was put to Hon Stephen Dawson in his capacity as emergency services minister, the answer was, "You'd have to ask the health minister what the consequences would be if we took out 30 or so declarations under the Emergency Management Act." I thought that was strange, but the justification provided by the Minister for Health was that effectively the vaccine program could not be rolled out. I found that a very, very quizzical response, particularly in light of vaccination figures.

With the 30 seconds left, I might just reflect on this: it would be to the government's advantage to provide justifications for why these two very powerful instruments are continually rolled over. It is not good enough, in my estimation, to rely upon verbal briefs from officials. It must be in writing and those reasons must be tabled. We must also understand, in accordance with part (e) of the motion, when it is likely that we will return to normal ways of governing in this state.

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [10.43 am]: I rise to contribute to the debate on the motion moved by Hon Tjorn Sibma this morning during non-government business, and I congratulate him on the way that he has presented his arguments to the Council. I think it is a reflection of many of the questions that members of Parliament, no matter what side of the chamber they stand on, face each day in engaging with their communities and constituents on different aspects of the response to COVID-19. To some extent we can all provide answers to some of those questions and to some extent it is difficult. If this debate elicits some more information about the stage of COVID-19 response we are at, I think it will be to the advantage of all the members of this place and our communities. I want to put on the record, as I have done previously, the recognition of the success of Western Australians so far in the response to COVID-19. I attended yesterday the public hearing of the Standing Committee of Estimates and Financial Operations that the Department of Health, including the Chief Health Officer, attended. I think the Leader of the House, quite appropriately as the minister representing the Minister of Health at that hearing, recognised the significant work done by the Chief Health Officer and those supporting his office over the past two years, as we have at times chartered un-navigated waters.

This motion talks a lot about the dual declarations of state of emergency and the directions that flow from them. This is an issue that I have spoken about previously, as have Hon Tjorn Sibma and others, in this chamber. Since the election I have taken on the responsibility of shadow Minister for Emergency Services, and that has meant that on two occasions thus far, I have had responsibility on behalf of the opposition for the extension of powers bills, which apply every six months. Indeed, I suspect it probably will not be too much longer before we see another bill introduced prior to the winter recess to extend those powers beyond, I think, their expiration date of July, but that is yet to be seen. I think Hon Tjorn Sibma asked a question about that, if not this week, the week prior, and the government has not yet committed to that course of action.

I have spoken previously about the dual activation of these two statutory instruments under the Public Health Act and under the Emergency Management Act. It is certainly an issue that I have tried to understand more fully through the contemplation of those bills that have come through this Council. When we compare the powers available under the Public Health Act and the Emergency Management Act, they are highly comparable. In fact, they are mirrored in almost in all senses. It would be interesting at some point—I am not sure whether we would get to that level of detail today—perhaps in the consideration of a future bill extending powers, we could have deeper consideration of whether both instruments are still required, whether one is required or, indeed, at what point neither are required. That would be something I look forward to. We may not achieve that in the very time-constrained circumstances we face on this Thursday morning, but perhaps the committee stage of a future bill might present a better opportunity for the house to explore that issue.

I want to talk a bit about some of the directions that have been in place. I think from the very early stages of this pandemic the government has made it clear that some of the directions, whilst appropriate, are draconian. That was a term that it used in the activation of the emergency management power and particularly the extension of section 72A of the Emergency Management Act. I think in recent days the Premier has also acknowledged the inconsistency in some of the directions that are issued. There are concerns from the community that I do not think we should just dismiss. In fact, I received an email just last night that I will quote, but I will redact certain information so as not to identify this small business within my electorate that wrote to me. The email said —

Thank you for the opportunity to outline our problem. ... We are a small family owned ... where we employ six people three of which are employed in the office.

The problem began when the State Government mandated vaccination and mask wearing for all ... employees as they have contact with the public. We implemented this strategy, all of our staff were happy to comply except one employee who refused to accept this and refused to wear a mask.

We started sending the appropriate letters to suspend ... employment. We recently received a letter from the Fair Work Commission asking us to participate in a conciliation conference. We engaged a solicitor ...

We took part in the telephone meeting, the outcome of which is that unless we want to go to a formal hearing we are required to pay our ... employee six weeks part time wages and write a letter outlining her abilities as an employee. We have already had to spend a considerable amount of money up to this point, to go to the next stage would require further expense on legal fees with the chance of an adverse decision.

While we agree with the government's position on its strategy to control covid19 we see ourselves complying with the Government mandate at the same time being penalized by the ... commission.

I believe this problem sets a precedent, that could affect many other small business in our community.

Look forward to your comments and input.

I am sure that I am not the only one who received that plea for help from this business. Effectively, we are expecting others to enforce directions and sometimes wear the cost of that enforcement.

Hon Colin de Grussa has asked some really interesting questions over the last couple of weeks about contact tracing. This matter was further explored yesterday at the Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations' public hearing with the Department of Health. Members should be aware that contact tracing has effectively ceased. We have reached a daily case load in Western Australia—yesterday we had almost 8 500 cases and today we have more than 8 500—that exceeds our ability to contact trace. The Department of Health has now confined its limited resources to contact trace in places it considers to be a high-risk environment including aged-care facilities, boarding hostels, prisons, hospitals and those sorts of places. Hon Colin de Grussa finally got to this point as the answer to his second question was further explored yesterday. That begs the question: at what point do we reconsider the application of the contact register directions that enable use of the SafeWA app electronically or physical registration? I made the point yesterday that it feels like I am the only one in Western Australia that is still using the SafeWA app out of fear that someone might catch me not using it. I think that there is general, broad noncompliance with those directions. The point that I want to make is that much of the success in the response to COVID-19 has been through the goodwill, support and confidence of our community. It has not been through the threat of offence, penalties and fines. My concern is that we make sure that we remain responsive to amending the directions as the pandemic response evolves. Contact tracing is one example of where a short-term review is needed in light of the current circumstances and the current response and capacity of the Department of Health to contact trace. There are other examples.

As I said before, I just read a letter out that I received last night from a small business in my electorate. As an individual member of Parliament, I do not know the answers to these complex questions. They are not easy for an individual to answer. For example, we have gone from having one of the worst vaccination rates in the country to having the best, and internationally it is quite significant. At what point would the public health advice support an alteration to the vaccination mandates, for example? We have seen some adjustment already to the mandate around bottle shops. Shortly we will be approaching a 75 per cent third-dose rate in Western Australia; it may come in the next few days or so. Based on health advice, at what point is it appropriate that those mandates be revised?

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [10.53 am]: Thank you for the opportunity to make what is obviously a very brief contribution to the motion before the house today. Before I concentrate in more detail on what I want to speak on, I want to reflect on a couple of the statements already made this morning. The first one from Hon Tjorn Sibma is that the current members of the opposition, as represented in this chamber and the other chamber, have been immensely supportive of the government's activities for the most part in its response to the COVID vaccine, to the point where I probably receive, almost on a daily basis, the same offensive emails that everybody else on Labor and the opposition side receives. I get those all the time. I do not bother responding to most of them. I take the view that there is no point trying to talk down a psychopath necessarily; it does not do you any good. But we have been immensely supportive. In a previous debate here within the last couple of weeks, that support was questioned because I have put in media releases and said in other statements that I appreciate the work that the government has done, particularly in its response to keeping out COVID. I was asked to justify those comments. At the time I was not prepared to do that because those comments were public. If members want to hear me say that in a completely public manner, I am happy to send them an interview that I did on ABC *Mornings* with Nadia Mitsopoulos a month or six weeks ago in which I said precisely that; that the government should be congratulated and rewarded for the good work that it has done to date in keeping out COVID in particular. After making that statement, I received a number of comments from people, including from some Liberal Party people who did not like it very much. It is not the easiest thing in the world to give credit where it is due, but I have done that publicly and will continue to do so, and I am sure that other members of the opposition have said precisely the same thing. The government has done a good job of keeping out COVID. The debate that we need to have is on how the government is performing and needs to perform into the future now that COVID is here. These are two quite separate debates. The government has, either by good planning, good luck or a combination of the two, managed to keep out COVID until a very mild strain has arrived in force. Obviously the other states had significantly higher death rates because they were facing a Delta pandemic. Those countries in particular that had those massive outbreaks with massive death rates faced the earlier version of this virus with an infectivity rate that was slightly lower —

A member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: There are a number of them. We could go to almost every other state—look at New South Wales and Victoria—but we do not have to stop at the national borders, honourable member. In the United States, Europe and other places that have had these massive outbreaks of Delta in particular, the mortality rate is much higher. The morbidity rate is lower but the mortality rate is higher. The infectivity, which is morbidity, is much higher. The McGowan government successfully managed to keep this virus out until the state was effectively facing the Omicron strain instead of the Delta strain. By good luck, good management or a combination of the two, that has been a major positive for the state of Western Australia. It has meant that whilst the infection rate in Western Australia will be high, the death rate should be very low. That has been confirmed again by the figures that have come out. It is interesting to compare the infectivity rate to the modelling, which we eventually got. We

were at 8 500 infections a day. Bear in mind that other members have mentioned that there is a high degree of COVID fatigue out there, I suspect that the true infection rate is significantly higher than the one that is measured. A lot of people are not testing anymore because they do not necessarily want to be quarantined. Obviously that is going to be an issue, so the infection rate is probably significantly higher. We are at 8 500 cases or slightly over today. We were basically at 8 500 cases yesterday. The modelling released by the government says that the peak infectivity rate is expected to be 10 000 cases, and that was based on modelling from the eastern states. It means that we are 85-plus per cent of the way to reaching our peak number of COVID cases as represented by the modelling. I know that the government does not like to rely on the modelling but the modelling has been relatively accurate. The original modelling said that we were going to reach a peak of 10 000 cases a day last week. We are at 8 500 cases this week, and there is every chance we could get to 10 000 by the weekend. The modelling is not inaccurate; the modelling is pretty damn good. That gives this government an opportunity for more certainty than it would have had previously. It means that the government has the information available to make more long-term strategic decisions than pretty much any other jurisdiction because it has arrived at Omicron at a later stage, and well done to the government for that. But we are now at a point where we have to start discussing in a serious way the transition out rather than to focus on keeping it out until we go in. For me that is the key part of the motion as presented by Hon Tjorn Sibma today. This is now about the future and how we manage that future.

I would love to spend an hour or two discussing the shift from level 1 restrictions to level 2 restrictions and back again and what those trigger points would be. My view is that the government has accurate modelling that will allow it to start making those decisions and to particularly start working out the trigger points and thresholds on which those decisions should be made. When the government gets to that point, it will have capacity to let the community know. That is particularly important, not so much for the wider community, which is now 98 per cent double vaxxed and close to 75 per cent boosted, but for the business community that needs that level of certainty. It is interesting from my perspective to see that there has been significant acknowledgement of the impacts on business. The Premier acknowledged it in the last couple of weeks and I noticed that the Minister for Housing, Hon John Carey, said this week that the government accepts and acknowledges that the impacts on the business community have been dramatic. We have argued and debated about the COVID-19 response packages and no doubt we will argue and debate the adequacy and stretch of them again. But there is an acknowledgement from government that the impacts are significant—businesses have shut down—and my point is that it is the uncertainty more than it is the actual restrictions that do the most damage. There are businesses out there today that, with a little certainty in the system, might hang on and not close down as they are intending to do. But they need that level of certainty.

If people go on the government's website, which I do not infrequently, they can get a list of the state of emergency and public health emergency lists, which have both been extended. I note that my good friend the Minister for Emergency Services extended the emergency services declaration from 11 March 2022 for 14 days. Obviously, that will need further extension. The Minister for Health extended the health emergency declaration from the last extension on 22 September 2021, the original one, and now it has been extended for 14 days as of 21 March 2022. We have come to the point at which we are getting fortnightly extensions in both emergency declarations. I think we are at a point in the progress of the disease that the government can afford to have better long-term strategic planning so that it is actually having a conversation about what the next month, two months or three months will look like rather than the next two weeks. The information I seek from the government today is: how do we get more certainty in the system about the emergency extensions—they have to be justified, explained and made public and, again, I reinforce that the opposition has, in all of these circumstances, supported the actions of the government in the implementation of them and received some criticism in some circles, I must say—and how do we make this a longer term issue so that we get a better handle on how long the declarations of emergency and all the orders that fall underneath, including all the restrictions as advised by the Chief Health Officer, will be in place so that the community but, more importantly, the business community, can have longer term confidence? I urge the government to look at that and deliver.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [11.03 am]: I thank members for raising this issue. Of course, it is important that the opposition scrutinises all government actions. But I have to say that I am surprised by two aspects, two of the themes. The first is that the opposition would move this motion because of what is happening. Today, we have the highest rate of infection we have ever recorded. We have the highest rate of hospitalisation and the highest rate of death. On the day when that is happening, the opposition thinks it is the appropriate time to ask, "Why can't we move out of this state of emergency?" I find that quite extraordinary. If the motion were moved in a couple of months' time and we were quite clearly over the peak and coming out of this, one could understand. But why at a time when we are moving to peak infection and peak impact on the community has the opposition sought to have the government step away from the exercise of dual-track emergency powers, those under emergency services and public health? I just find that extraordinary.

The fundamental proposition of the Leader of the Opposition was that he supports the government. He said that we have done a good job, but he needs certainty, a clear path. The reason the McGowan government has been able to achieve this result—he cannot laud the result and then attack the very strategies that produced that result—has

been the government's preparedness to change, the preparedness to change decisions when new facts emerge. Let us look at what happened to Steve Marshall in South Australia. He was badgered by the Prime Minister to move out of restrictions early. He did that and, of course, there was a massive spike in the rate of infection and hospitalisations, all with unprepared restrictions. We have played the waiting game. We did not make early decisions to give certainty to people. We have been saying that we are going to hold back because this is a moveable feast given the entry of Omicron. We were prepared. We did not make certainty the god here. We understood that and that is why we have been successful. When the circumstances changed and it became evident that opening on 5 February was going to be at a time when there was peak infection in the eastern states, which would have resulted in us having mass seeding and still not having a very high rate of third vaccinations, we changed our mind. The opposition said that we should have given everyone certainty. It is our preparedness to look at the changing nature of this virus and the epidemiology around this virus that is the very thing that has produced the result that the Leader of the Opposition has been telling us that he supports. He cannot support the result and then attack the strategies that delivered that result.

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We have had —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, just a moment. Minister, if you would resume your seat. Hon Pierre Yang on a point of order.

Withdrawal of Remark

Hon PIERRE YANG: Acting President, I overheard the honourable member from across the chamber use the word that is spelt S-T-U-P-I-D, which is highly unparliamentary, and I ask him to withdraw that word.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Members, as with many points of order, there is a certain subtlety involved here. I did not hear that epithet applied directly to the minister. Perhaps it was applied to some comments made by the minister, in which case I can understand if there was a degree of offence to be taken from it. If the member who used those terms would like to withdraw them, it would probably be appreciated.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I intended no offence. I was just reflecting on the quality of the argument. I withdraw.

Debate Resumed

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I can assure the member that no offence was taken. I have absolutely every confidence that the analysis I am giving here is the correct one. As I said, I just find it amazing. There have been seven deaths and 8 500 new infections, and the opposition thinks it is all done.

Hon Tjorn Sibma raised the issue of the emergency services report. I have had the opportunity for only a very brief analysis of that report, but it overwhelmingly talks about the traditional, natural disasters of fire and flood. It is perhaps a reflection on the majority of people that we have not really looked very much at pandemics or that we have underplayed pandemics, notwithstanding the fact that in the lead-up to that report, the world had already experienced SARS and Hendra virus. However, here in Western Australia we had really been quite free of pandemics for a number of decades, so they did not feature highly in that report or in the thinking around emergency services legislation.

The member pointed out that we have a dual track of emergency powers: the public health powers and the powers under the emergency services legislation. It is important that they operate together. The member seemed to be saying that now that we are highly vaccinated, we probably do not need some of these powers. I point out to the member that we still have quite a way to go with third vaccines. Interestingly, I also note today that the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation is looking at a fourth vaccine. The new Omicron variant, BA.2, is spreading. I will stand corrected if I have this wrong, but I understand that that variant is present in Western Australia and we are now looking at a subvariant of Omicron that will potentially be even more virulent. ATAGI is therefore believed to be considering a fourth jab for people around the country.

It is in this environment that the opposition is saying, "Take away all those public health measures that allow us to do vaccinations and have more clinics!" That is what the opposition is saying.

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Well, you are, and you did. You are saying, "Why do we need it now?"

Several members interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Well, what is your argument?

An opposition member: Read the motion!

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I have read the motion and I have listened to your argument. Your argument was, "Why do we really —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Minister, will you resume your seat for a second? I cannot hear what the minister is saying because people on both sides of the chamber are yelling so loudly. Minister, if you would direct your remarks directly to me. As I advised one of your colleagues last week, do not use the pronoun “you” when you are framing your remarks, and we might have a quieter, more orderly debate.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I thought we liked a little biffa on a Thursday morning! It is the one time that this otherwise sleepy hollow is allowed to come alive, so we have been continuing in that vein.

Quite clearly, we have many more third vaccinations to go, so of course we need all those public health measures that are very clearly designed to give us increased capability. The member has been asking questions about this in Parliament—that we have the power to vaccinate, whether they are COVID or non-COVID vaccines—and I think answers have been provided to the member about the additional things we can do through public health measures relating to vaccinations, including the range of people who can administer vaccinations. Much of vaccine activity is not dependent on the public health state of emergency, but we need it for the mobilisation of an additional workforce of non-prescribing registered health professionals to operate the volume of clinics that are required. This includes appropriately trained staff at public health services, such as students in their final year of medical training, being able to administer vaccines. It also includes commonwealth-contracted organisations administering COVID-19 vaccines in residential aged-care facilities and, if required, Defence Force personnel being involved in the operation of clinics. We need the emergency powers for that and it may be that, as we move to a new variant, we will need to look at a fourth vaccine, and that is being considered at a national level by ATAGI.

With regard to the powers under the Emergency Management Act, there is a whole range of directions that are still very much in force and still very much needed to enable us to manage this pandemic. We are trying to keep this manageable. We do not want a situation in which our hospitals are overrun and we have the massive supply chain issues that we have seen in the eastern states because they did not have adequate protections in place.

We have close contact laws and today we have been dealing with the issue of close contacts and essential workers. We put measures in place in advance of opening up the state again, knowing that the infection would have multiple seedings here. There are measures applicable to workers in places like abattoirs and shearing sheds to strike the proper balance between dealing with the risk of co-infection and allowing those operations to continue to be productive so that there is food on Western Australian tables. We learnt about what happened in the eastern states when COVID-19 was out of control. The eastern states did not develop a system of close contacts and rapid antigen testing that would have enabled them to keep the show on the road with all those essential operations. By exercising delay and introducing some uncertainty, we were able to ensure that when we hit our peak with Omicron, we had plenty of availability of RATs, which was not the case in the eastern states. We already had those provisions in place. This morning I was advised that about 16 000 people are registered as essential workers in our abattoirs and food processing plants.

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [11.20 am]: I rise to support the motion. The motion put forward by my colleague Hon Tjorn Sibma is very measured and solid. I want to reflect on a couple of points. We have had quite a bit of discussion here about the recent election in South Australia. I want to make the point that it is to the detriment of the state Parliamentary Labor Party not to properly reflect on the outcome of that election. That election was more about the fact that we have seen people’s conceptions or thoughts about the COVID-19 pandemic begin to shift and look to the future. If we go back to January 2020, when we were starting to see the reports coming out of China, we were worried about what was going on in Wuhan. We got to the point when eventually, after the former Leader of the Opposition, Liza Harvey, encouraged the government to close the border, we saw this government step up and take action.

Hon Pierre Yang interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We are very fortunate that we had —

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Member, just continue to address your remarks to me. I am sure things will calm down very shortly.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We are fortunate that we were isolated in Western Australia. I commend the government of Western Australia for the hard border because that resulted in a great outcome. If we reflect on the outcome of last weekend, it is really about looking forward to the future. The things that concern the people of South Australia are things such as hospital ramping, rebuilding in the future and getting on with a normal way of life in this post-pandemic situation. We know that there will be a phase-out. We know that there has to be ongoing and intensive management of COVID. These very reasonable points are being made. I counsel the Labor Party to reflect. In 2025, people will be voting on the future of Western Australia and what life will look like moving forward. We need to reflect and explain how Western Australia —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, I know that the remarks made by the Minister for Regional Development touched a deep chord in all our hearts about liking things to be lively in this place, but there are some limits and we are very close to stepping over that limit at the moment. Member, I give you the call. Continue to steadfastly address your remarks to me.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: Thank you, Madam Acting President. The first part of the motion states —

- (a) explain how Western Australia is still in a “state of emergency”;

We need more explanations, more information and more accountability.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon NEIL THOMSON: We have seen that. I focus on paragraph (e) of the motion, which states —

- (e) describe at which point the government will revoke the emergency declarations ... —

We are not saying the government should revoke the declarations. We want to know at what point they will be revoked. The community expects information, accountability and a government that is focused on going forward, and, as the motion continues —

at which point each of the present COVID directions will be reviewed or repealed.

That is really important. We know that a number of things occurred in April and May. So many things hang off them. I will refer to a couple of things related to my portfolio responsibilities as shadow Minister for Planning. Under section 78H of the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015, there are deemed provisions that were totally reasonable. There was this centralisation of power so that things can be done quickly in relation to temporary structures that might be needed. At the time, we had no idea what the future held. People in the community were afraid. Everybody got behind the government. The opposition supported the government. There was bipartisan support for those provisions going forward. Those deeming provisions were put in place. I would like to know how many decisions have been made. I lodged a question today to get some idea. Those provisions have been in place for almost two years and decisions have been made, with the centralisation of power around the minister. The rationale given at the time, which was totally and entirely defensible, given the very fast nature of change and uncertainty surrounding the pandemic, was that it is impossible to forecast when the state of emergency will finish and when any necessary recovery phase might also conclude. That was two years ago. We have had two years to start thinking about all those things. Are we saying that this emergency will never end? Is that what we are saying to the community of Western Australia?

The website of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage says that there is an inbuilt safeguard. The word “safeguard” should be underlined. Why do we have safeguards? We need checks and balances in society. When we are on a war footing or in an emergency, we take away those checks and balances and then deliver outcomes in order to achieve a very important result. Going forward, thought has to be given to the future, unless we want to move to some form of dictatorship and do away with the normal processes of accountability in Western Australia. If we want to work towards that, we should go ahead and give it a go. I do not expect that is what most people in this place stand for. There is an inbuilt safeguard under which the minister can revoke the notice. How about revoking the notice relating to the emergency? This is what hangs off that emergency. It sits there. The head of power is the emergency services legislation.

Changes were made to the Planning and Development Act 2005 to insert part 17. To the credit of the government, which again was supported, I have questions about how part 17 operated. Again, to the credit of the government, the act included an 18-month sunset clause for the state development assessment unit. We saw that end. What have we seen since then? The Minister for Planning has become very comfortable with these centralised powers. They give the minister unlimited power to make decisions. A very select group of people are able to make a decision outside the normal checks and balances that we have lived with for many years, and everybody is protected within the Planning and Development Act. After the announcement of reforms on 18 March, we saw a proposal to basically reinvest those powers on an ongoing basis so that, for all intents and purposes, the same powers will operate in the future.

It is amazing how quickly ministers become comfortable with emergency powers and feel that they can just make these decisions. I can tell members that the best decisions are always made when ministers keep a distance, particularly planning decisions. The minister’s focus should always be strategic and there should be distance between the minister and the individual decision. That is the protection that the community deserves. I commend the honourable member for moving this motion. I plead with the government on behalf of my constituents to describe at which point it will revoke the emergency declarations and at which point the COVID directions will be reviewed and repealed. That is an entirely reasonable question to ask.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): I give the call to Hon Darren West, recognising that in a couple of minutes’ time I will be obliged to interrupt debate to give the mover a right of reply.

HON DARREN WEST (Agricultural — Parliamentary Secretary) [11.31 am]: I will be brief because I know others want to speak, and I want to be fair with the remaining time. We get notice of these motions on a Wednesday, and like the minister who spoke before me, I wonder what is going on on the other side of the chamber. On a day on which we have had 8 600 COVID cases, 209 people in hospital and nine people in intensive care units, and, tragically, recorded seven deaths, the Liberal Party moves this motion. It validates all of those people across Western Australia who for the last two elections have voted Labor for the first time: they can now be happy about that decision.

The Barnett government proved to be the worst government in Western Australian history and its carcass is now the worst opposition! I am incredulous. I will help members opposite: we are in a state of emergency because we are at a peak infection rate.

Several opposition members interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: We are in a state of emergency because we have a peak number of infections.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Hon Darren West has the call.

Hon DARREN WEST: Thank you for your protection, Acting President.

We are still in a state of emergency because we have a peak number of infections. The declarations have been extended for the same reason.

A member interjected.

Hon DARREN WEST: I will not enter into part (c) of the motion because that will be forthcoming or it will not. These are questions into the future. The government cannot predict what the pandemic will do next. We have had variants of the virus and different circumstances confront us all the time. The Premier of Western Australia, Hon Mark McGowan, has managed this pandemic better than just about anyone in the world. Western Australians have felt safe and our economy is strong. Members opposite cannot ask more of a government than that when we are dealing with a once-in-a-century pandemic. The opposition's smartest member has come up with far from its smartest motion. The opposition needs to review what it brings to the house on Thursday.

Despite the protestations of the Liberal Party, the government will continue to act in the best interests of Western Australians throughout this pandemic.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: I should explain that the intricacies of the standing orders defeated me and the mover does not have 10 minutes to respond at the end of the motion. I seek the forgiveness of the house for that slightly misleading comment.

HON PETER COLLIER (North Metropolitan) [11.33 am]: I would like to make some comments on this motion. I thank Hon Tjorn Sibma very much for bringing the motion to the house. He should not feel remotely diminished as a result of the nonsense he has heard over the last 10 minutes, because quite frankly —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet!

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: I remind members on both sides of the house that Hon Peter Collier has the call.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Thank you. I say at the outset that the opposition has unambiguously and unanimously supported the emergency powers put forward by this government. We have never under any circumstances on any occasion done anything to the contrary. We have supported the government every step of the way. I have sat on the opposition benches for four years. For the two years we have had COVID, the opposition supported every single COVID-related motion that came to this house. We have been out there supporting the government as best we can. We understand that this is a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic and that people out there are hurting; they are dying. Thousands upon thousands of people are being affected by this pandemic. Most Western Australians are now triple-dosed. That is a serious majority. That is a direct result of the fact that the opposition has been supporting the government in this situation. Quite frankly, to listen to the minister stand up, yet again, and get into this tribalism, this reversion back to the Barnett —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet! I am not taking interjections, and I will never take one from you!

As a direct result of the fact that we have this tribalism, and the minister, yet again, is trying to portray this image that somehow these terrible Tories on this side of the ledger are working against the efforts of the government. It is anything to the contrary.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I suggest to the minister —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Will you be quiet! Can I suggest —

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members! The member on his feet has indicated quite clearly on two occasions that he is not going to respond to interjections, so perhaps we could just get through the remaining minutes of this debate.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I applaud Hon Tjorn Sibma for his excellent motion. Nothing in this motion should be remotely intimidating to the government or indicate any essence of normality that we are being negative towards the government. We are asking only what is eminently sensible and it is what the government agreed to do yesterday in the public estimates hearing. Believe it or not, that is a wonderful occasion, and the government actually said it would do what Hon Tjorn Sibma has asked for—to provide all written advice that the Minister for Emergency Services and Minister for Health have relied on in extending the declarations each fortnight. What is terrible about that request? Believe it or not, people are getting used to COVID. They are now contemplating the prospect that we will be living with COVID. Let us not forget that 12 months ago we closed down this state when we had one case! We have 8 000 cases now, but Western Australians have been vaccinated and got used to the restrictions, but they would like to contemplate that there will be life beyond COVID.

I will give two examples. My electorate officer's husband has a travel business. Their whole life has been turned completely upside down over the past two years. Their lives have been destroyed. They just want a bit of certainty; they want to understand where we are going. They want the government to be transparent—not just when it suits it, as the Premier identified in court last week, but all the time! They want the government to say where it is going. It is not too much to ask.

I have another example of the owner of a coffee shop in the Warwick shopping centre, where I get my coffee every day. It is magnificent coffee—the best in Western Australia. The owner is a wonderful man; it is a family business. He came to my office yesterday and he might have to close—yet again, because of the restrictions. All the opposition is saying is: please, make sure that you are open, transparent and honest with the people of Western Australia about where you are going. It is not too much to ask!

The motion by Hon Tjorn Sibma contains nothing that will determine whether we have a shouting match across the chamber on a Thursday. In a lot of instances that is quite entertaining and enjoyable—we all enjoy it. This is not one of those occasions. I sometimes sit and watch question time in the other place. As I said yesterday, they are rank amateurs down there. Successive ministers take great delight, the whole time, portraying this image that the opposition are somehow these terrible dastardly Tories who are working against the government at every opportunity. Believe it or not, we have a liberal democratic society in this state. We adhere to the Westminster system of government. There is such a thing called the opposition, and the opposition's role is to scrutinise the government. That is what we are doing right now. We are just asking for transparency. I have said on numerous occasions that the problem with this government is that it treats the opposition as the enemy. I am delighted that the new incoming Premier of South Australia said exactly the same thing in his acceptance speech on Saturday that I have said. He said that the government would not be treating the opposition as the enemy. When the government treats the opposition as the enemy, the government treats the opposition as irrelevant. If the government thinks that it knows everything and that it has made all the right decisions and that everything is just peachy out there, it needs to get its head out of the sand and stop beating its chest and standing there like a peacock with its hands on its hips and actually go out there and listen, because a lot of people are suffering. Businesses are suffering. Families are suffering. They have been isolated from their families—from their grandchildren, from their grandparents and their husbands and wives—for a couple of years. Yes, the government has done a good job with COVID. We have said it incessantly and consistently, and we say it sincerely, but that does not remove our obligation to hold this government to account. It does not. All we are asking are simple questions like why the emergency declarations have been extended recently or when the government will provide written advice or commit to the tabling of the justification or describe at which point the government will revoke the emergency declarations.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Excuse me, Acting President! Can I say —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Madam Acting President!

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Dr Sally Talbot): Just continue to address your remarks to me, member.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am; I can assure you.

Can I say another thing? We asked a very simple question in the public hearing yesterday about when the RATs were ordered, but the Leader of the House would not tell us. They were ordered in early December. The Leader of the House got very defiant. Do members know what? The Premier told the other place the night before. Somehow there is a communication gap between the Premier and the Leader of the House. This is what I am saying: just have a consistent message; that is all we are asking. I can tell members that all the name-calling and vitriol that you guys spew at us on a day-to-day basis will not stop our resolve to ensure that we represent those in our electorates and all Western Australians. I promise the government that as we come out of COVID, which we are doing at the moment, people will start focusing on the very real issues of law and order, education and small business. We are

interacting with them to ensure that they have a voice. Believe me, there are a lot of people out there who need a voice. Yes, we applaud the government for the job it has done with COVID. As I said, we supported the government every step of the way. We have supported every piece of legislation, but it will not and never will diminish our role as Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT — REGIONS

Motion

HON PETER FOSTER (Mining and Pastoral) [11.45 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house commends the McGowan Labor government for its record investment into regional Western Australia and its commitment to regional jobs, industry and businesses through the 2021–22 budget, the COVID-19 \$5.5 billion recovery fund, and the regional economic development grants.

As has often been said in this house, Labor is the party of regional Western Australia. We also often hear in this place that the McGowan Labor government is metro-centric and ignores regional WA. Interestingly, I note that the “metrodebt” stickers have disappeared from our WA Nationals colleagues' vehicles this week. I stand here proudly before you all as a regional member of the McGowan Labor government that has made record investment right across regional WA. With this motion, I commend the McGowan Labor government for its commitment to regional jobs, industry and businesses through the 2021 budget, the \$5.5 billion COVID recovery fund and through our economic regional development grants. As we have heard today, the pandemic is not over, and that is why it is important that our government continues to invest right across Western Australia, and, more importantly, into our regions in a targeted fashion to support local jobs, industry and businesses to restart, develop and grow, creating a pipeline of work.

The McGowan government's WA recovery plan has provided —

Point of Order

Hon NEIL THOMSON: I refer to standing order 37. I cannot tell for sure, but it would appear that the honourable member is reading his speech. If he is, I ask that the speech be tabled.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, when the Acting President is deliberating on a point of order, it is my thinking time, not your chatting time. In my view, there is no point of order. The member is simply using his own personal notes.

Debate Resumed

Hon PETER FOSTER: Thank you, Acting President. We have limited time available and we are rolling out quite a large number of projects across regional WA. I will do my best to keep my eyes up and run through the list of projects.

Our government is investing in tourism right across regional WA, including in the \$7 million Carnarvon fascine project. That has been mentioned quite a lot in this place. The \$7 million that has been committed is allocated to finalising and implementing a long-term plan for the future. Access issues to the fascine have been ongoing for a very long time—prior to our term of government—and this government understands how important it is to access the water for locals and tourists alike. The government is working collaboratively with the Shire of Carnarvon, the Gascoyne Development Commission, the Department of Transport and the Carnarvon Yacht Club to solve this long-term problem. I was in Carnarvon a few weeks ago for Carnarvon Windfest. I know that Carnarvon Yacht Club in particular is very excited to see that our government is pushing this project forward.

We have also committed \$6 million through the aviation recovery program and \$3 million through the regional aviation support program to ensure affordable airfares and a minimal level of service for flights into the Gascoyne region, particularly Carnarvon and Monkey Mia, through a collaboration between our government and Rex Airlines. As I said, I have travelled to Carnarvon on Rex many times on parliamentary business and can happily report to the house that services are well frequented by locals and tourists alike, who are grateful for the actions taken by our government to keep the airfares affordable.

We have also committed \$1.3 million for the redevelopment of the Tantabiddi boat ramp in Exmouth. That money is going towards detailed environmental cultural heritage surveys and coastal engineering investigations. The Shire of Exmouth is very pleased to see this project supported by government. In addition, through the plan we have committed \$14 million for the widening of Minilya–Exmouth Road. Construction of that road is well underway. I have also travelled that road recently and can vouch that the work is definitely underway and the road is much wider and safer for tourists and locals alike.

As we all know, Exmouth is a very popular tourist destination. Next year a rare event will occur—the total solar eclipse—which is expected to pass the cape in April 2023. I know there has been commentary that our government is not assisting. Yes, we are. We have been working with Tourism WA and the Shire of Exmouth to prepare the

community for the influx of visitors who are expected next year. By upgrading this road, tourists will be able to travel safely to Exmouth. If people have not booked their accommodation for this event, I encourage them to do so now because there is very little left.

We have also committed a number of investments in the Pilbara, including for the upgrading of a number of schools through the recovery fund. We allocated \$42 million towards the redevelopment of Roebourne District High School. I recall from a media statement put out earlier this year that an architect has been appointed to that project, so it is well underway. We also committed \$22 million to upgrade Karratha Senior High School. It is important to note this one, because as we have seen, more and more people are moving to the regions. As a result, the high school needs to expand. Its enrolment numbers are up and it needs more buildings to accommodate additional students. We have also allocated \$4 million towards a residential facility at Newman Senior High School, so that Martu people who travel from the desert into town can stay near the school, which will encourage attendance. All these education projects will generate local jobs and support regional towns and businesses.

Another tourism project that I am quite proud to talk about concerns Karijini National Park, which has been allocated \$1 million through the recovery fund. This funding will be used to address some access issues at the Fortescue Falls lookout and upgrade the visitor facilities at Dales Gorge campground. As we were saying yesterday, Karijini National Park is home of the Banjima people. It is an ancient and beautiful place that is frequented by many tourists. From talking to the Tom Price tourist centre, I found out that tourist numbers are on the rise, which is great. That is putting a bit of pressure on our accommodation in town—we get people camping on the side of the road because they cannot secure accommodation—but it is great to see that we are getting lots of tourists coming into our inland towns as they support local businesses and create local jobs.

As I said, there is plenty of investments to talk about under the recovery fund, but I know that my time is ticking away. I want to talk about some of the projects contained within the 2021–22 state budget specific to the Gascoyne and the Pilbara, where I am based most of the time. I want to make very clear to members that the record investment for regional WA contained in the 2021–22 state budget was \$9.1 billion. That budget committed \$9.1 billion to regional Western Australia! We are often told by the opposition that our government is metro-centric and that it is focused on Metronet projects and the like. I am here to dispel that myth today. We are spending an immense amount of money in regional WA. The funding through the budget will deliver a strong and vibrant Western Australia. As I have already talked about, Karratha is experiencing a population boom. More and more people are moving to the regions.

Noting the time, I want to talk about a few projects in particular. There was \$363.9 million allocated in the budget to Pilbara ports, spread across the port of Port Hedland and the port of Ashburton in Onslow. These upgrades will enable more users of those facilities. For those who are unaware, Onslow is really steaming ahead. I challenge members to go and take a look. There are more gas operations off the coast, and a new salt provider and the Onslow marine supply base are moving in. The shire recently built a large tip to take industrial waste from those ships. There is a lot of activity happening in Onslow, which is being supported by our government.

We have been talking about investments in tourism. A couple of important ones that I want to touch on are the additional \$16 million to improve facilities at Karijini National Park and \$10 million to upgrade facilities at Mount Augustus in the Shire of Upper Gascoyne. Unfortunately, that mountain has been in the news for some sad reasons as a few tourists have died while climbing the mountain, but I hope that these new facilities will make it much safer. We also put \$3.5 million towards the Gwoonwardu Mia Aboriginal cultural centre in Carnarvon. If members have not visited the cultural centre, I encourage them to do so. It is a great facility that employs local people. It has a cafe and a gift shop, and conferences are run there, including a recent International Women's Day conference hosted by Cherie Sibosado. It is great to see that that facility is well utilised. We also committed \$5 million towards Conzinc Bay in Murujuga National Park to increase tourist facilities in that part of the world. It is supported by the City of Karratha. It is great that our government is able to work with the City of Karratha to increase tourism amenity in that area.

In the four-odd minutes I have remaining, I want to talk about the regional economic development grants that have been underway for a couple of years now. The grants were originally to be spaced over seven years. These projects look at ways in which our government can partner with small business and industry to diversify and grow local jobs. Just looking at the figures for the first three rounds of the RED grants, a total of \$20.7 million was invested over 222 projects. Along with that \$20.7 million, \$83.51 million was co-contributed by other sources. It is great to see that our RED grants not only directly support businesses but also enable businesses to leverage other funds to make those projects and jobs even greater. It is estimated that these investments have created over 2 500 new jobs for regional WA. That is something that we should celebrate—an additional 2 500 jobs in regional WA.

The minister recently announced the successful recipients of round 4 of the regional economic development grants, and I will quickly touch on those before my time runs out. The Town of Port Hedland received a grant for \$97 000 to install a business fibre zone—basically internet—to its business centre and airport precinct. Kingsford Smith Business Park is a fully serviced and easily accessible bulky goods and light industrial precinct located near the airport. This facility is conveniently placed and these funds will ensure that its users have access to high quality internet. Of course, that will contribute to bringing more businesses and jobs to Port Hedland.

Woodbines Enterprises in Karratha was another successful recipient, receiving \$100 000 towards its tender relief program. This grant enabled the company to leverage an additional \$180 000. The aim of this project is to develop an online application for tender submissions to ensure that local contractors have a better opportunity to tender for, and secure work on, local projects. I think this is a great project that our government is supporting through the RED grants.

I also want to talk about Kuarlu Marine Charters in Onslow—I have talked a lot about Onslow today! It is another local success story in the north west. It was awarded a grant of \$250 000, with \$175 000 leveraged from other sources. This \$425 000 project will extend its charter capacity into Onslow. As I said, Onslow is moving forward. The shire, in particular, has invested a lot of money into improving amenities in Onslow. There is a new shire administration centre, a new swimming pool, the basketball courts were upgraded and Ocean View Caravan Park was upgraded. There are lots of new facilities in Onslow and, in turn, more tourists are coming to Onslow. It is great that our government is able to support this tourism business for the expected influx of tourists.

I will quickly talk about two final ones. Weerianna Street Media in Roebourne received a grant of \$110 000 to establish an online streaming service for Indigenous media content. I think it is great that we will have an organisation in Roebourne that will potentially stream Indigenous media online. Darryl Corps Family Trust in Karratha also received \$150 000 towards earthmoving virtual reality simulators to upskill local workers, who will be able to work on the local projects in the Pilbara that I have outlined. Noting the time, I will have no time to talk about the Gascoyne RED grants, but I am sure one of my colleagues may have that opportunity.

In summary, I know that my motion is broad, but it highlights just how massive the McGowan government's record-breaking investment in regional WA is and how committed our government is to regional WA. As I said, \$9.1 billion was invested in our regions under the 2021–22 state budget. In closing, I commend the Labor government.

HON SANDRA CARR (Agricultural) [12 noon]: It gives me great pleasure today to stand in support of Hon Peter Foster's motion. It is an excellent motion, and it is a great opportunity to celebrate some of the significant investment that the McGowan government has made in the regions. As Hon Peter Foster pointed out, it is also a great opportunity to dispel some of the myths that have been perpetuated by some of those across the room that the McGowan government does not spend in the regions, because indeed it does, and the discussion that we will hear today will certainly support and provide evidence of that.

As Hon Peter Foster mentioned, in the 2021–22 state budget, a \$9.1 billion investment was made in regional infrastructure, with only nine per cent of that coming from royalties for regions. An amount of \$4.2 billion has been allocated to royalties for regions over the next four years—that is, \$4.2 billion for royalties for regions. I say that again because honourable members across the room have done a significant job of hoodwinking regional people that they are not still getting their royalties for regions. I think it is important that we emphasise the significance and the sheer volume of spend that is happening in our regions just to remind people that sometimes members across the floor are a little loose with the truth. On top of that, we are also investing in health, education, policing and other key services. We have a strong plan for investing in the Agricultural Region in particular, which is my region that I represent, to make sure that our economy and our communities remain robust and thriving. The McGowan government is building strong communities. We went into this election with the promise of keeping WA safe and strong, and that is indeed what we have done. We heard earlier today about the great safety that we have provided to the community in the instance of the global pandemic. The strength that we are providing to the community is in this investment that we are continuing to provide for the regions.

I will talk a little about the regional economic development grants. Last year, I had an opportunity to speak about RED grants in the community. I spoke about investment into a couple of businesses in the midwest, one being Illegal Tender Rum Co based in Dongara. It continues to thrive, having had that RED grant invested into the business. Recently, it produced an Abrolhos gin to support a food festival in the midwest. It continues to develop and grow in confidence, being able to produce and deliver new products for the community. I know that product has gone down very well because I have gifted it to friends throughout the agricultural region and beyond, and now people have asked me where they can get it from. They thought it was a fantastic product. I give full credit to Illegal Tender Rum Co for embracing the opportunity that the RED grant provided to it and continuing to grow and develop its business and turn it into something significant on a global scale in an important economy, which is the gin economy—one that I fully support!

The other business that I mentioned last time was JMH Group in Geraldton, a group that received a RED grant to provide some brake testing facilities. One of the great things about that investment that the McGowan government made into the JMH Group in Geraldton is that this is an employer, a small family business, that began in Perenjori. It continues to grow and develop into a big, thriving and still very family based business—not in that it is small, because it is becoming a big and significant employer now, but in that it brings that family ethos into the business. That shows that true regional community employer ideology. It looks after its employees. It celebrates the achievements of its employees and elevates them by providing opportunities for career growth and development. Alongside JMH owner, Jaydon Hirst, is his partner Leah Hirst, who continues to utilise the opportunities that the RED grant provided her. Part of the RED grant for her was connecting with the Mid West Development Commission

and the Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry to build her application for the grant. As part of that, she has built some significant networks in the community and has become quite a leader. She is a young dynamic woman. She is a very tiny woman, but incredibly dynamic, and she asks really important questions of the community and continues to adopt leadership roles. She credits the opportunity of having to go through the process of applying for a RED grant with building her capacity as a business owner and leader.

Some of the more recent RED grants include one to Fenix–Newhaul, with \$250 000 to allow it to invest in a world-leading truck simulator. This is an Australia-first truck simulator, and it allows Fenix–Newhaul to train new road train drivers in a much safer and more efficient way. Anyone travelling the roads around Geraldton will be aware that there is an ever-increasing number of road trains and a growing amount of industry throughout the midwest region. Those truck drivers are particularly important to us, and it is really important that they are highly skilled and can be on our roads in a safe way. We know we need those truck drivers because the Fenix–Newhaul website today is advertising for 70 new truck drivers. That investment we are placing into businesses in our community is particularly important. Fenix–Newhaul annually transports 1.3 million tonnes of high-grade ore to the Geraldton port. It needs those drivers, and we need them to be safe and well trained on the roads. That is exactly what that grant provides for.

Another grant that the McGowan government has recently provided is to the Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation. The honourable member across the floor, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, mentioned that he did not really think it was that important that we promote tourism in a global pandemic. However, I strongly disagree. It is all part of building strength and resilience.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon SANDRA CARR: He said it was not important. This grant is particularly important in that it encourages tourism and it encourages people into the community, but more than that, this particular RED grant is about cultural tourism. It provides Aboriginal-driven industry in the community, with its deep-seated connection to the land. It shares that respect and the spiritual significance of the land with the community. That has a manyfold benefit in that it adds value to the Wajarri Yamaji Aboriginal Corporation and also benefits the broader community's own cultural understanding and appreciation of what the full range of our diversity brings to it.

Lastly, I will mention Nufab Industries. It has been given a RED grant for \$146 700. It was founded in Dongara in Western Australia, and produces its own parts for market-leading farm machinery. The agricultural region relies very heavily on farm machinery. Having that machinery made in our region on the ground and readily accessible is particularly important. This season we have had a bumper harvest season and we need those parts and pieces of machinery ready to go to deliver the crop to the ports and have it exported efficiently. Nufab is part of that whole mechanism in the big picture of what allows that to happen.

I will lastly mention some investment in training and education because, yes, it is fantastic to have all of these businesses, but we also need to provide staff for those businesses. In our regions, there have been some complications in staffing. One of the ways the McGowan government has addressed this is to ensure that training and education is being delivered in all the right places. Since we have done the local skills program in TAFE, there has been a 22 per cent increase in enrolments in the wheatbelt alone. That a fantastic indication of the embracing and picking up of those opportunities. We build skills and capacities and have people job-ready to take up those places. We are also investing in vocational education and training.

Another way that we are investing in building capacity is through our year 9 career taster program. This government has invested \$19.2 million into that crucial program. I have always advocated getting young people at an early stage to experience what career opportunities are out there. This program allows them to get direct on-the-ground experience and to start to get themselves job-ready and aware of the genuine career opportunities that are out there, rather than hitting the end of their academic career and blindly trying to find their way into a career. We have careers ready and waiting for them and we can train them now.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [12.10 pm]: I was happy to drop down the list a little bit, Acting President, but that is okay. I will take the opportunity to respond to Hon Sandra Carr's comments and add a few extra ones. I would be intrigued to see where she has quoted me from saying that interstate and international tourism advertising does not matter. I think that is what she said and she named me specifically. I would be interested to see precisely what quote she comes up with for that one.

Let us have a look at the motion before the house. I appreciate Hon Peter Foster moving the motion for the day that commends the government for the amount of money it is putting into regional areas. I do not know whether the member has calculated the entire investment in regional WA, but if he has, I hope that he has taken off the trans-subsidisation of the royalties for region fund as part of his calculation. It is very easy for a government to say that it is going to put in additional billions of dollars into regional Western Australia when it has taken billions of dollars out of the regional fund—the primary fund for regional Western Australia.

I note that Hon Sandra Carr introduced this topic of discussion so I thought it would be a good opportunity to have another discussion about one of my favourite topics—the government's intent to strip funding from the royalties

for regions fund, the primary fund for regional Western Australia, using the process that I call trans-subsidisation, but the department often refers to as substitution. Let me explain what substitution is because members might not be aware. Substitution is when funds or costings that would normally have come from the consolidated fund or a separate departmental budget for the normal operations of government are taken out of the royalties for regions fund. This strips the royalties for regions fund of moneys that would have gone to other things. There are lots of examples of this such as the subsidies around water costing and the equalisation of water, which has always come from the consolidated fund via the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, but now it comes through royalties for regions—at least in part. The government has had to cut it back a bit and we will get to that in a minute. It has put in regional school buses, which has always been a Department of Transport issue. Millions of dollars are now coming out of royalties for regions that were in the Department of Transport. What is the transfer rate, the trans-subsidisation, the substitutions, if you will—I know the minister is very sensitive about the nomenclature on this. The Premier has apparently banned the word “substitution” in his office —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No, no, no—the old trans-subsidisation. How much is that now? It is getting close to \$700 million a year. It is a massive amount of money.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Jackie Jarvis): Members! Can you please cease the cross-chamber chitchat perhaps and direct comments to the chair.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: As you wish, Acting President. The minister and I have fairly robust debates and I most appreciate them, but I will concentrate my comments to you, Acting President, at your request.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Just so that I can prepare my answer, do you want us to include those things that you included in —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Absolutely. If the minister would like me to give her a list of things that I think she should take out, I am more than happy to do that, but by all means keep the regional development commissions in there because in terms of an operating budget, that is not a lot of money anyway.

Let us have a look, members, at the \$600 million to \$700 million that the Labor government has dragged out of royalties for regions in a process of trans-subsidisation so that it can claim to have put hundreds of millions of dollars back into the regions. This is an accounting trick. I feel like I am watching one of those magic-with-cards television shows and this government is congratulating itself. It is like the chase-the-ace card game —

A member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Look at this! Here we go. It is a sensitive subject, Acting President, and why they are a bit fractious today. When you kick a bruise, you tend to get the loudest cries; that is the problem.

What has this government done? It has taken billions of dollars out of the regions and it has put billions of dollars back into other funds and it is congratulating itself for it. This is a great motion if only because it is absolutely hilarious. The government takes the money out of this hand and puts it into that hand and says, “How wonderful are we?”

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: No, you’ve totally missed the point.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I do not think I have. I think that that is exactly the point. Well done on the government’s investment in the regions. There are some good investments in there. One of the issues around the royalties for regions fund—I have enormous sympathy with my good friend the Minister for Regional Development on this being a bit isolated within the cabinet and not on the Expenditure Review Committee—is that the minister has lost a lot of control over what happens with royalties for regions. She has to fund all these slightly crazy, sometimes election commitments out of it as well. She has managed to pull a bit of that back, which is great. The Minister for Regional Development and I agree on lots of stuff. At the 2017 election, tens of millions of dollars were committed to a solar farm and a biomass plant around Collie, neither of which were good investments. I think that the minister and I were in furious agreement on that. What happened? I went out publicly, as I often do—a heart on my sleeve job—and said, “I think these are duds.” The minister could not quite bring herself to agree with me publicly, but guess what happened? She pulled the money back in because they were duds.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: They were duds, which is great. Well done, minister. That was \$60 million she did not completely waste. I wish I could apply that across the board for everything that the Labor Party does. I am happy to give the Labor Party credit: there you go, minister; well done. That was \$60 million she did not waste and flush down the toilet. That is fantastic. Well done! We could make this political and I could mention projects that would probably get the minister a bit fired up.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Like what?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Let us go to the Carnegie Wave Energy project and a few others. We could talk about some of those things if she likes, but let us concentrate on the motion because I have a very short period of time in which to respond on behalf of the opposition and we cannot waste it.

What is happening? The Labor Party takes money out with one hand, puts it back with the other hand and congratulates itself in the process. I think that regional Western Australians are smart enough to understand what is happening. They are not falling for the sleight of hand. They understand exactly what the Labor Party is doing. I am sure that they appreciate it when the government rolls money into projects. I am sure that a raft of Labor members will discuss the projects that they are going to put in place. Some of those projects will be great and we will probably support them, but, as I have done previously with this minister, I may suggest that some of them are duds and that the government should put its money elsewhere. I am happy to go through that process, but the government should be a bit cautious before it congratulates itself on this massive amount of money that it is investing.

I am going to run out of time so I will raise this one issue. Standard and Poor's this week put out a statement on the state of the finances in Western Australia. It was interesting to note the Premier's response. He put out a media release saying, "It's wonderful. Standard and Poor's are congratulating us on our financial management." That is not entirely what Standard and Poor's said, and this is important to this debate. In the Standard and Poor's response, time after time it referenced massive increases in revenue. Guess what, members? Not only have we got this transference in royalties for regions, but this government is doing well because it has more money than any government has had in the past. This government has more money not because of its management, but because of its massive revenues. Standard and Poor's referenced booster revenue collections and a favourable distribution of federal grants. It states —

We expect the price of iron ore, Western Australia's most important export, to be higher than assumed in the state's budget.

It is currently valued at \$US150 per tonne, but Standard and Poor's assume a price of \$US130 per tonne this year. It continues —

The state is benefitting from strong royalty revenues and growth in tax receipts.

It also refers to duties and payroll taxes and says that this state is making a motza, which is not what the Premier said. The Premier said, "This is all our good financial management." I tell you what; when it rains gold upon the government, it is very easy to claim good financial management and it is very easy to transfer some of that into the regions and well done for doing so—for the bit that the government has done, that is great. Well done. But I would be a bit cautious about congratulating yourselves, particularly during the debate on motions such as this one, because there has been a fair bit of luck and some activity. I think the government should be a bit more thankful and crow about it, perhaps, just a little bit less.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [12.20 pm]: I thank Hon Peter Foster for moving this motion and Hon Sandra Carr for talking with such passion—both of them, in fact, talked about projects that are delivering globally with passion. Our support of small and medium-sized businesses in the region is without parallel. I feel that I have to address some of the comments made by Hon Dr Steve Thomas, the Leader of the Opposition, because he is living in the past. His whole analysis fails to accept that we have moved on in funding allocations and the way we fund the regions. As an erstwhile opponent of our RforR, he might be pleased to know that the RforR fund now represents only a small proportion of the investment that this government is making in regional Western Australia. Okay; there are items that go in and out, as happened with the previous Liberal–National government as it balanced the books. Items would come in RforR, such as the funding of development commissions and government agencies and, towards the end, the funding of schools. There has also been a bit of leeway as to what goes in and what goes out. But what is really critical here is that we understand that the majority of our funding and investment in infrastructure and projects across the regions now comes out of the consolidated fund. Although we have preserved the RforR component of the budget and kept the same principles that were at play under the Barnett government, such as spending limits within that fund, we have maintained the integrity of the fund. But that is, in fact, only a proportion of what is spent. At this stage, what we are spending from the consolidated account in the regions far outweighs what is being spent under RforR. The Leader of the Opposition is still running up the flag of RforR. The regional infrastructure spend in the budget was \$9.1 billion. In our last budget, \$9.1 billion was invested in infrastructure and only nine per cent of that came from the RforR fund; the rest of it was in the consolidated account. The Leader of the Opposition can continue to rail and say, "You're putting this in the RforR fund and you're taking that out" but let us look at the global expenditure that we are making in regional infrastructure because that expenditure far eclipses anything done by the previous Liberal–National government. Although we say that RforR is an important component—certainly we fund projects such as the regional economic development grants from RforR—RforR is no longer the full story of investment in our regions. The Leader of the Opposition can keep flogging his dead horse, but we have moved on.

I want to address a couple of other comments made by the Leader of the Opposition. He said that it is easy to get a great rating during economic boom times. I take members back to the Barnett government. It had extraordinary boom times yet, nevertheless, notwithstanding that, it managed to lose our AAA credit rating and drive this state into debt and very difficult economic circumstances so, please, just have a look at what the Liberal–National government

presided over for the bulk of the time that it was in office and also look at its economic performance. Certainly in our first two or three years in government in particular, we had to rebuild that and rebuild it we did. The Leader of the Opposition should not forget that when his party came into government, for the vast proportion of that time it was in receipt of incredible royalties and, notwithstanding that, it was not able to manage the budget.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: I wasn't there anyway.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: But you were talking about government and government performance and you said that it was easy to balance the budget when there is an iron ore boom. The former Liberal–National government had an iron ore boom and it did not manage it. Of course, we are going to celebrate the fact that we repaired the finances. We acknowledge that we have received royalties, but we not going to be leaving government any time soon and, when we do, we certainly will not be leaving books in the parlous state that the former government did, notwithstanding its opportunities.

A member interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes, we are the big regional party in this house.

We have had some great projects. I will pick out a couple of projects that have been funded by regional economic development grants. One of the really interesting things about this diversification is enabling work that would normally come to Perth to stay in the regions. This is one of the really interesting projects. A number of companies have relocated from Perth to the regions because of the assistance that they could get. Recently, Aspect Modular relocated the development of its modular housing business from Perth to Denmark because of the opportunities that were there. The government grant was the thing that tipped the balance in favour of it making the decision to take the building of its innovative, beautiful and creative modular homes to Denmark. Hon Sandra Carr talked about JMH Group's vehicle testing project. No longer do those vehicles have to come down to Perth for testing. We were able to intercept a lot of the work that was coming to Perth, particularly from the Pilbara. We have been building on that project. In the goldfields, there is a \$195 000 grant for the non-destructive testing project to put in place a whole raft of equipment and really expand the workforce locally. It means that these items of equipment will not need to be sent down to Perth for non-destructive testing; it can be done in the goldfields, creating more jobs and diversity there and, of course, reducing the cost of doing business in the goldfields. In the time I have left, I will give a special shout-out to Bruce Rock Engineering—an amazing company that shows what can be done in the regions.

HON SHELLEY PAYNE (Agricultural) [12.30 pm]: I thank Hon Peter Foster for bringing this motion today so we can talk about the investments the McGowan government is making in the regions. The first thing I want to talk about is roadworks. I will set the scene. If you are like me, you have been living in the regions for the past 20 years. Over that time, you would have usually had Liberal federal members of Parliament—maybe sometimes a National—who really have not done a good job at bringing federal money in for roadworks in the regions. Your state member would usually be a National who would similarly have not done a good job of bringing money in for roadworks in the regions. Hallelujah—here comes the McGowan Labor government in 2017!

I have been driving around regional roads from Esperance to Perth and everywhere in between for 20 years, and the roads have always been the same. You try to pass trucks, you have kids in the car and there are no hard shoulders on the roads. It is very dangerous. All of a sudden, in 2017, here comes all these roadworks, and you have to start thinking, "Gosh, I've got to leave time to allow for roadworks." Just last weekend I went to Katanning and I was actually late for my first appointment because of the number of times I had to stop on Albany Highway because of all the amazing roadworks. This is fantastic. It makes a huge difference to people in the regions to have better and safer roads.

This year there will be \$4.5 billion going into the regions to create road projects and safety programs. This includes \$187 million for the wheatbelt secondary freight route; \$15.5 million for shoulder sealing and audible edge lines, which will cover more than 140 kilometres of the Great Southern Highway and the South Coast Highway; and \$79 million for road safety treatments on more than 850 kilometres of wheatbelt roads. This is a really huge investment that will make a big difference for people in the regions.

A member interjected.

Hon SHELLEY PAYNE: This is \$4.5 billion from the state budget, yes.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Members, Hon Shelley Payne has the call.

Hon SHELLEY PAYNE: There is also the state government's \$1.9 million election commitment for the regional airfares cap, which will really help regional people get to the city and wherever else they need to go in the state at a reasonable cost. Airfares have been way overpriced for a long time, so that is a very good initiative.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan, Hon Sandra Carr and Hon Peter Foster all talked about regional economic development grants, which are also fantastic. They create jobs in the regions and help small businesses. More recently, RED grants have gone into Aboriginal enterprises. I was fortunate enough to visit Gnowangerup with Hon Alannah MacTiernan

at the beginning of the year to look at seed projects with the Gnowangerup Aboriginal Corporation and the Tambellup Aboriginal Progress Association. RED grants have gone into those organisations to help with building their seed enterprises. There is a growing need to revegetate and build biodiversity across the state, and there is huge potential for those Aboriginal businesses to capture the demand for native seed and seedlings. That is another really great thing. Money has also gone to the Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation outside Katanning to establish a seed nursery enterprise. These are all really good projects. In a previous round, a RED grant also went to the Tjaltjraak Native Title Aboriginal Corporation in Esperance for its native seed collection projects.

Another program that is really good is the agrifood and beverage voucher program. We have a huge agricultural industry here in Western Australia, yet we really are not good at value-adding to what we are doing. Those food and beverage vouchers are really great for small enterprises that want to start value-adding. One of those is the Esperance Distillery Co. It initially received a small RED grant, but just the other week it also received a couple of vouchers under the program. Businesses can apply for up to two vouchers with a combined value of up to \$15 000. They are designed to help emerging agrifood and beverage businesses to engage a consultant or technical expert to help them grow their business. The vouchers in this case are worth \$2 000 each; they are just small vouchers, but it will really assist the distillery to engage consultants to grow its business and help launch a new product category. Members should keep a lookout for Esperance Distillery Co; it has a really exciting new product coming up.

Another recent regional investment program is the modular building program announced by Minister Carey. This program is designed to address our housing shortage in the regions. It was recently announced that Katanning will get four of those modular homes; both Albany and Geraldton will also receive some. I have spoken to Hon Kyle McGinn about one in Kalgoorlie that is already up and running after only a month, which is really great. About 150 homes will be delivered to the regions through this program, and that is part of the \$875 million allocated to social housing in the state budget. It is another really great investment in the regions.

There is another great project recently completed in Esperance that I would like to thank the government for: the Esperance beach enclosure. Everyone knows that Esperance has a bit of a shark problem, so the McGowan government provided \$400 000 for a new beach enclosure at Esperance, which is really great. It was opened in time for summer and the school holiday season, and for the kids' VacSwim swimming lessons at the beach. It also helps our tourists have a safer experience, and is really bringing a vibrancy to the centre of our town. It is a really great \$400 000 investment from the McGowan government.

The last thing I want to mention is the Lotterywest grants program and how great it has been for the regions. This has been achieved because we have not privatised Lotterywest. For example, last year Lotterywest had a record-breaking financial year with \$860 million provided to the WA community. I do not know whether it is because people are buying more lottery tickets because of the pandemic and they are not spending their money overseas, but this is really great because it means that the money is going into the regions. Some of that money was moved to the COVID relief fund as well, which really helped businesses recover from the impacts of COVID. I have presented quite a number of grants in my region over the past year that have made a huge difference to the community. The Shire of Wagin has created a great wetland playground, and that happened thanks to \$173 000 from Lotterywest. The Shire of Narrogin received \$95 000 for work on a Noongar cultural trail along the creek that runs through Narrogin and is significant for the Indigenous people in that area. That is going to be a great tourist attraction, as well as really important engagement with the local Noongar people. Esperance Home Care provides help to the elderly of Esperance, and it received \$189 000 for improvements to its facilities, which is of great help to the people who come to the day services there. Lotterywest has been really fantastic for the regions as well.

I thank Hon Peter Foster for bringing this motion today, and thanks to the McGowan government for its huge investments and the changes they have brought about, with money and projects going into the regions. It has been noticed, and regional communities are really grateful for it.

HON KYLE MCGINN (Mining and Pastoral — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.39 pm]: It is with great excitement that I rise to add to the excellent motion brought to the house by Hon Peter Foster. I want to start by dispelling some of the mistruths made by members across the chamber. For the benefit of *Hansard*, I am holding in my hand a beautiful media release from January 2021 titled “WA Liberal, National parties at war over Royalties for Regions management”. It states —

... Steve Thomas has slammed the Nationals WA for refusing to meet with him over the “sensible financial management” of Royalties for Regions ...

It goes on to say—this is my favourite line in this article —

Dr Thomas said his party would no longer allow the fund to be used as a “slush fund” ...

It writes itself. I will go back a little further to 2017.

Several members interjected.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: Members are responding to some of the rubbish that was said by members on the other side of the chamber.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Jackie Jarvis): Members! On this occasion, I do not believe Hon Kyle McGinn has been inviting interjections. I ask you to continue. You have three minutes left on this motion.

Hon KYLE MCGINN: Bring it on! Let's go!

The article is headed "WA Election: Royalties for Regions stoush between Nationals and Liberals on election eve", and states —

On Wednesday the Liberals' election costings revealed funds from the scheme would be shifted to meet recurrent costs of regional programs to save —

Wait for it —

\$800 million over two years.

Members opposite want to sit on their high horse and talk about repurposing. The opposition spoke about a repurpose in 2017—Dr Nahan. I nearly forgot who that was. It is hilarious. Those opposite are on their high horse talking about recurrent spending. After seeing this stuff, I hope the Nationals WA never join in a coalition with the Liberals again. What did we see when the Nationals came back after the 2021 election? Now they are really tightknit. It was mentioned that the National Party would be the third biggest party in Parliament. That was wrong. It was the second biggest. There was something wrong in that media release.

I want to touch on a really good regional economic development grant. I am not backslapping. Without doubt, this is one of the best projects that I have seen. It has been set up in Laverton and involves Aboriginal people taking control of road maintenance that is occurring in that region. We know that a huge spend is occurring in that area, involving \$100 million from the state government, and I believe the federal government has also committed to the Outback Way. We are putting \$250 000 into a joint venture with Australian Potash, which is now training local Aboriginal people to work on that road. We want to see Aboriginal road builders as the next role models in their community. That is something that we see with ranger programs and that is what we want to see with road building.

In 2017, I remember that Minister Alannah MacTiernan, Minister Rita Saffioti and I put together a stakeholder group to try to find out how to seal the road from Meekatharra to Wiluna. The project involved training 14 to 15 local Indigenous men and women. After that, \$20 million was allocated to the project. It was brilliant. Over 30 years, nothing happened in that space, right up to the death of the election when the Nats said, "Here's \$60 million" that was not even budgeted for; it was just chucked out there. We are working on projects that see growth in local employment and local Aboriginal employment. I commend the minister, Hon Alannah MacTiernan, for this project. Mac Jensen, who runs that program, does a fantastic job. He will get Aboriginal people trained to build that road all the way across to Queensland if we can. That is a real outcome for the local people in Laverton. I thank the minister for the RED grant program. I think it is absolutely brilliant. I thank Hon Peter Foster for a great motion.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to standing orders.

FOREST PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Second Reading

Resumed from 17 March.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Jackie Jarvis): I give the call to Hon Dr Steve Thomas—sorry, Hon Steve Martin.

HON STEVE MARTIN (Agricultural) [12.45 pm]: We are twins—the long and the short of it! It is Thursday, Madam Acting President.

I rise to make a second reading contribution to the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Member, may I just check that you are the lead speaker?

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am the lead speaker, Acting President. I advise the government that we will not be opposing the bill. This bill has been introduced to amend the Forest Products Act 2000. It does a number of things. It expands the rights and functions of the Forest Products Commission—the agency that was created under part 2 of the act that I just mentioned. As I said, it does a number of things that empower the commission to allow it, for example, to purchase land for the purpose of establishing plantations. I will definitely come back to clause 8, which relates to the purchase of land. Some interesting things have happened around that. The provisions in that clause will enable the commission to dispose of land and to trade in carbon assets associated with forest products, when those products are located on land either owned by the commission or other freehold land on which the commission holds rights. The bill does not empower the commission to deal with carbon associated with native forest products. It also makes further changes around various language in the bill.

At this stage of my speech, I should mention that I have not necessarily a conflict of interest but certainly a vested interest in the legislation, given my family farm in Wickepin. We have several small plots of pines and blue gums, some experimental, some to suck up moisture. They have been in the ground for 20 or 30 years. We have some very minor experience in this sector. The FPC was originally involved in the planting and set-up of those small plantations.

I digress with a quick story about the early days of those plantations. When they were put in 25 or 30 years ago, the small trees were popular with people looking for a very cheap Christmas tree. They were planted on the main road. There was a five-metre jump over the pipeline to get to the trees. On a Sunday afternoon, my father was playing tennis when he got a call from a neighbour saying, “I’ve just spotted four guys in a ute parked outside the pine plantation with a chainsaw.” Being a good honest citizen, he rang the local constabulary. When he was on the phone, the ute shot past, heading west towards the town of Wickepin. He rang the local coppers and said, “We need a roadblock to get hold of these pine tree thieves.” They were subsequently apprehended, Christmas trees in hand. We have been involved in the pine business for some time.

I would like to mention some of the contributions made in the other place and the Minister for Forestry’s second reading speech around some of the things that the bill contains and some of the reasons for its coming into being. I should mention to the Minister for Regional Development that I imagine there will be a small Committee of the Whole process. There are only 10 clauses in the bill, but we will be investigating the impact of some of those clauses during a brief committee process.

The Minister for Forestry, Hon Dave Kelly, spoke about a number of things in his contribution to the bill in the other place. The bill will enable the FPC to purchase land with the intent of planting plantation pines.

Obviously, concerns exist about whether the FPC will purchase land outright or through a mixture of sharefarming and outright purchases. It appears from the minister’s comments that it will be entirely freehold land purchases. I will go into greater detail about what that might mean, but there are clearly some issues around that very valuable, high rainfall, most productive part of Western Australia and a large government fund coming into that patch and purchasing freehold land. I am interested in why the government and the FPC are veering away from the sharefarming model. I do not entirely agree with some of the reasons the minister has given for this. Minister Kelly stated —

... but the government buying land is to ensure very much that in 20 years’ time, when the first crop of trees is cut down, that, for example, the private landowner does not decide, “I want to do something else with my land.

The minister also said —

... the intention of the government is to buy land so that trees can be planted so that we get not only one rotation for that money but can continue to plant rotation after rotation because we own the land.

I will further tease out the \$350 million investment that has been mentioned. The minister continued —

We all know ... that pines need to be planted in areas where there is sufficient rainfall and it is economically viable as far as the location of transport hubs, mills and the like ... We will not be going out and buying up premium agricultural land ... because the price for which that land would be sold makes it unviable for plantation timber.

The minister has made some interesting conclusions about the value of land and whether the FPC can find the 33 000 hectares of land in that high rainfall part of Western Australia that the government has spoken about.

I will quickly refer to other comments made by members in the other place. Every speaker spoke about the impact of climate change and the good work that this bill and planting pines will do to address that problem. That was on top of everyone’s list of issues, which is fair enough. Nobody mentioned the impact of stopping logging and how that will impact climate change. As we know, an old-growth forest has almost zero-sum gain carbon emissions. Managed forests, which are harvested and regrown, have a positive impact on net carbon emissions for the state.

I read some interesting comments around a part of the bill that allows the Forest Products Commission to trade in carbon. The member for Mirrabooka stated —

It will help the state to enter the lucrative carbon offsets market, generating revenue and future carbon industry jobs for Western Australia.

It is interesting that the state wants to be involved in a lucrative market. If it is a lucrative market like iron ore, wheat or crayfish, private enterprise would usually find a home. I thought that was an interesting aspiration for the government to use taxpayers’ money to get involved in a lucrative market.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You do appreciate that there is not enough pine being grown to satisfy need, so someone has to do it?

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Absolutely; but that is a different issue. If it is a lucrative market, surely private enterprise would fill that gap and take advantage of that situation?

I cannot help myself! The member for Kalamunda contributed to the debate and he went on at length about climate change, which is fine, but he talked about a report that was published by the Australian Institute in 2020 and pointed to the fact that the logging industry was being kept afloat by numerous government grants. I am guessing that he was not in favour of that, but in the same breath he talked about a \$350 million government grant for another part of the forestry sector, which did not seem to bother him. He thought that was okay if it was “renewable and sustainable

timber”. The loggers in the south west of the state would argue that although the harvest has been reduced, the small percentage of the state forest that was being harvested was indeed renewable and sustainable. That is the very nature of timber and it is not species dependent; sustainability does not discriminate and whether it is pine, jarrah or marri, it keeps growing!

The member for Kalamunda then talked about the Forest Products Commission. Since I have been in this job, I have met members of the FPC, which has some fine people. The Acting President (Hon Jackie Jarvis) has had a recent and close relationship with the FPC, so we know that some good people are involved. However, the member for Kalamunda believes, in his mind, that the government has been propping up the hardwood sector. He stated —

... in the way that the books of the Forest Products Commission have been, can I say, massaged, to a certain extent ... native forestry is not profitable and no longer essential ...

I will come back to his extraordinary claim from a member of the government about the FPC massaging its books. He stated that native forestry is not profitable. We know what happens to private businesses that are not profitable—they go broke, and usually quite quickly! I will break the news to the sawmillers in the south west and the trucking operators and contractors who back up that hardwood sector that they are not profitable and they are clearly running at a loss according to the member for Kalamunda.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That is not true. He was obviously talking about the businesses that receive the supply.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: They are involved in the industry. He said that native forestry is not profitable. As I said, I will break the news to them.

The minister also stated that the bill would enable investment in the sector and bring confidence to the industry and attract other players into the market. I would like to tease out in the Committee of the Whole whether any modelling has been done to suggest who those other players might be. I think the industry will look with some cynicism at that minister talking about attracting other players to the industry and bringing confidence to the industry when we think back to some of his more recent efforts. I have some quotes that keep on keeping on! In a debate on 11 March 2020, the minister stated —

Parkside has come to Western Australia and made significant investments because it had confidence that this government supports the ongoing native forest industry ... to say that we are undermining confidence is simply not true.

In December 2019, Minister Kelly is quoted as referring to the largest native forest industry private investment consolidation and restructure in 15 years that will secure hundreds of direct and indirect jobs in the industry. He welcomed Parkside’s commitment to creating high-value timber products from smaller, younger regrowth trees. He said that the native forestry sector was an important employer and economic contributor that supplies our community with sustainable, renewable building materials and other timber products. The minister is talking about engendering confidence in an industry, and he is at it again! He is saying, “Trust me. Trust me. We will support this industry.” If I were an investor looking at investing in the softwood sector, for example, I would have some doubt about taking this minister at his word, because Minister Kelly’s remarks were followed a short time later by completely shutting down that sector of the industry. I want to tease that out further later.

I will come back to the issue of buying farmland, which has some real impact.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I will return to my remarks. Just before we stopped for lunch, I was discussing the land purchases that this bill will enable the FPC to do to plant the tens of thousands of hectares for which the government has put aside \$350 million. We heard from Minister Kelly in the other place that the government’s intention is clearly to buy the land that has sufficient rainfall and is close enough to important infrastructure, such as transport hubs, mills and so on, which is absolutely correct. He said that it will not be going out and buying premium agricultural land.

The obvious question is: is there sufficient wasteland or available crown land? I assume that work has been done, because it is a significant amount of land in a tightly held patch, and that belt with 600 millilitres of rainfall, as we are all aware, is getting significantly smaller. Rainfall in that part of the state has been impacted the most in the last 30 years, and I am keen to see where the department can find that land. While we are discussing what prime agricultural land is, of course, that changes over time and we have no idea what future land use might look like. We know that that part of Western Australia has the highest rainfall and the soil type and so on does not really matter if —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Are you sure? Have you looked at the rainfall in the north Kimberley?

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Apologies; I have not, but it is often quoted that the south west corner is the most affected part of Western Australia and the tip of the south west corner is again the most impacted part of that part. My apologies.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You were saying the highest rainfall level.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Indeed. Agricultural land might be the proviso in that discussion. Getting back to what prime agricultural land looks like, it changes over time. As I said, we do not quite know what future land use will look like, so it would be brave to make that prediction. I will just give a couple of examples. For example, the very profitable and productive Esperance grain belt is now a significant grain producer in the state but not that many decades ago, before the advent of no-till cropping and widespread fertiliser use, it was grazing country, and when the wool price collapsed three or four decades ago, that land was almost worthless. Now it is some of the highest yielding cropping land in the entire state. The land around Frankland and east of Bridgetown, again, as recently as 15 years ago, was grazing country; now they are growing three-tonne canola crops and six tonnes of barley. That land use has changed. What we might not call prime agricultural land can become agricultural land over time. We are blessed in this country to produce more food than we need, but that is rare in the world. There are not many food exporters and there are a lot of hungry mouths, so to tie up what may be prime agricultural land in the future is a significant issue.

The other concern about purchasing land, prime or not, is that it is a marketplace and we will be competing against people involved in agriculture. Whether they are grazing livestock, growing crops, planting avocados or doing other things, there is a market in place, and this will add a significant player that everybody knows has a \$350 million bank balance to spend. I am keen to hear what the minister has to say about what the process —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It's somewhat less than what some of the billionaires have.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Indeed. We will add another \$350 million to that south west land market in coming years, and everybody knows that. I am keen to hear from the Minister for Regional Development, on behalf of the Minister for Forestry, what the plan is for that purchasing process. We have heard that the government does not want to venture any further down the sharecropping path. It will be purchased outright. Are we talking about small blocks of land that will not be contiguous or large parcels of land that would make it easier to do significant works and maintain with fire maintenance and so on? Again, I hope we get an outline from the minister of the plan regarding the purchase of those blocks of land. In fact, have any been purchased for this year? We might get an interesting response from the minister. In effect, we will be competing against farmers, so we will have a taxpaying farmer competing against the government, probably using some of their taxes to buy the next-door neighbour's property. I can understand why there might be concerns.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: There is lots of competition and we are adding another level to that, minister, indeed.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You are not keen on there being good prices available for agricultural land.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am very keen on that indeed. I am suggesting that it is unusual that a state government entity with \$350 million would be out there purchasing farmland. It is unusual. I will move on to the entity that will be charged with managing most of the impact of this bill, and that is the Forest Products Commission. This legislation will give it more significant powers than it has now and, as I said, the ability to purchase land and trade in carbon and so on. I think it is appropriate that we look at how the organisation is travelling. Sadly, if we talk to the forestry sector, it is rare at the moment to hear too many positive comments about the performance of the Forest Products Commission. I am absolutely certain that there are good people doing some work in the commission, but industry has great concerns about the performance of that body. We do not have to look further than the *Forest Products Commission annual report 2020–2021* to discover that. Bear in mind this is at a time when the market for forest products is red hot. The housing market and the market for the things that are produced in our forests and plantations is going through some sort of a boom, yet the Forest Products Commission is in serious decline, according to its own report. The value of its asset has gone down. It is selling less. That seems to be extraordinary in the time that we are experiencing at the moment. We could make a case that the FPC is underperforming.

I will just quote a few statistics and figures from the report. I will start off with the commission's financial performance. As we refer back to the honourable member for Kalamunda, these massaged figures show, according to the FPC, an operating profit result of \$0.06 million and the FPC invested \$5.2 million in the state's softwood estate. I will refer to those figures again. The industry gossip, if you like, is that in this financial year, the Forest Products Commission will need a cash injection—I imagine from Treasury—to avoid making a loss. Although the report refers to \$5.2 million for building a state softwood estate, further on at page 33 of the report, it refers to a figure of \$4 million. Unless I am misreading this, even the FPC does not quite know how much it is harvesting in the softwood estate.

Another area of concern in the FPC report is some of its key performance indicators. On the effectiveness of forest regeneration, the target for jarrah is to have 90 per cent of areas cut over for regeneration completed in 30 months. The actual result was 47 per cent—that is less than half the target. For sandalwood, the target was to establish an annual cumulative coverage of 50 000 seedlings, but the actual was 39 000. On the achievement of thinning schedules—that is hard to say after lunch—the target for karri was to have 1 230 hectares per annum of first thinning, but 637 hectares was achieved, which is about half. The target for the thinning schedule for softwood plantations was to have 95 per cent thinned within guidelines, but the actual result was 75 per cent. It is hardly an organisation humming along at the top of its game.

The management of native forest fuel loads adjacent to priority plantations is really important. I would think it would do an outstanding job of making sure that those fire loads adjacent to pine plantations—the vital resources that we are about to invest even more money in—were managed. The target was 60 per cent, but the actual was 47 per cent. The target for achieving the first and second rotations of softwood planting was 2 714 hectares, but 2 177 was actually achieved, which is a bit better than two-thirds. Over and again, the KPIs have not been met. Following jarrah harvesting, prescribed burning, which is essential for reducing fire loads, is carried out by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The target is 90 per cent, but in 2017, the result was 62 per cent; in 2018, it was 60 per cent; in 2019, it was 42 per cent; and in 2020, it was 58 per cent. On the achievement of thinning schedules over time, in 2016, it was less than half; in 2017, it was slightly more than half; in 2018, it was about half; in 2019, which was a good year, it was only a couple of hundred hectares shy of the 1 230 required; and in 2020, it was back to about half. There has to be a serious look at the operations of the Forest Products Commission, especially considering the extra work it is about to receive.

Another target is for 95 per cent of softwood plantations to be thinned within guidelines, but in 2017–18, the result was 72 per cent; in 2018–19, it was 73 per cent; in 2019–20, it was 74 per cent; and in 2020–21, it was 75 per cent. We have talked about the management of native forest fuel loads adjacent to pine plantations for this year. The target is 60 per cent. In 2017–18, the actual result was 24 per cent; in 2018–19, it was 32 per cent; in 2019–20, it was 45 per cent; and last year, it was 47 per cent. This organisation obviously needs a review if it is about to take on the task of managing the expanding pine plantation. It will also be managing more of the forest that the foresters used to manage, so it has some work ahead of it.

While I am talking about the Forest Products Commission and the impact that this bill will have on it, I would like to mention clause 8. The explanatory memorandum outlines the impact of clause 8 and states —

Clause 8 of the Bill inserts section 13A into the FP Act. This section serves to validate the Commission’s previous purchase of freehold land, prior to Cabinet approval of the Bill.

That sounds simple enough. In effect, the Forest Products Commission has not been able to purchase land prior to this bill, but it quite clearly has been purchasing land—not much, but it has been purchasing some. An example of this in the south of the state in the Shire of Cranbrook some years ago has been brought to my attention, and I will give members some detail and history of it. The Shire of Cranbrook wrote to me about an attempt by the Forest Products Commission to purchase land. In May 2019, it sought to extend an existing pine plantation on lot 1 Bunnings Log Road, Frankland River, with the intention of purchasing the property conditional on council approval. The council knocked it back. It spoke to its community, seeking some feedback. The shire was of the view that this was against the state planning framework to protect productive agricultural land. It put the motion out for public comment and the community was overwhelmingly against the FPC purchasing the land. The FPC then stated that it would challenge the council’s decision and the matter was moved to the State Administrative Tribunal and a SAT notice was issued in July 2019.

I will read from a recent letter I received from the Shire of Cranbrook. It states —

In May 2019 the Forest Products Commission brought an agenda item to the Shire of Cranbrook’s Council meeting seeking to extend an existing pine plantation ... with the intention of purchasing the property conditional on the Council’s approval. At the time, Council were of the view that the plantation extension was not consistent with the state planning framework’s ...

In June 2019 the Council Meeting returned to the original FPC application and —

Someone from the FPC —

... advised that FPC was moving to a land purchase system rather than share farming agreements. The Council Meeting decided to listen to its community and moved not to approve the application lodged by FPC.

I will go on. This is directly from the council —

Ignorant of the fact that Forest Products Commission were not yet legally able to purchase land, we continued to incur legal costs being \$33943, with McLeods Barristers and Solicitors and \$13,756 with Allering & Associates before eventually conceding the matter without defending it. If we had been aware that FPC had no authority to purchase the land, we would have continued to reflect the opinion of the community and defended the matter in the State Administrative Tribunal.

At the very least, I believe that the Shire of Cranbrook should have its legal fees handed back because it was taken to SAT by a body that apparently did not have the legal authority to purchase the land. Now we are apparently going to remedy that through clause 8 of this bill. In the second reading speech, the Minister for Regional Development talked about some purchases that had been made previously.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: It was attempting to purchase the land.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: But what was not being contested in SAT was whether or not it owned the land. It was what was the appropriate planning for that land. Is that right?

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am not entirely sure. I think the point is that if the Shire of Cranbrook had been aware that the FPC could not purchase the land, it would have continued the matter.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: That would not have been relevant, because it was a planning issue that was being contested.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I would have hoped that a lawyer would have cast an eye over it, as has obviously happened recently, because the bill will validate previous purchases. I will find the comment from the Minister for Regional Development. She said —

Notably, clause 8 of the bill will insert a new section 13A into the Forest Products Act, which will serve to validate a small number of land purchases and which the FPC had previously made in good faith.

That is interesting. It is quite obvious that the FPC did not have the legal authority to do so. I hope we can tease that out a little further and find out where else it has purchased land in good faith without the legal authority to do so.

I will move to my final remarks on this and take a broader look at the forestry sector. The decision to spend \$350 million on softwood plantations and change some of the ways the Forest Products Commission can act has not been made in a vacuum. The announcement was made on the same day as the Premier and various ministers shut down the hardwood logging sector. That has had an enormous impact, particularly in the south west of the state, and all over Western Australia. The flow-on effect of that will be enormous. Small businesses in the suburbs, furniture manufacturers in Osborne Park that I visited recently, will be affected, as will businesses in the wheatbelt such as Mortlock Timber in Cunderdin, sawmillers in the south west, trucking contractors and logging operators. The effect will be enormous on this very strong sector. I was in Manjimup two or three weeks ago and the feeling at the moment is still one of disbelief. Lifetime and multigenerational foresters cannot believe that the government has shut down what until recently the government told them was a sustainable industry. They know it is a sustainable industry. They have been involved for generations. I attended a meeting recently at which 15 to 20 small businesses gathered. They spent an hour and a half telling us their stories and the impact that decision is having on them. It was the toughest hour and a half I have spent in this job. There were several grown men in tears over the impact this is having. They are faced with losing their businesses and sacking friends and family with whom they have worked for decades. There was a gentleman there who in 2001 when the decision was made by the Gallop government on old-growth forests did not take the package. He said, “No, no—it’ll hurt but we’ll keep going. It has been clear what the government wants. It has told us what the future is. We can adapt.” He did not take the package that was on offer. Looking at the package his family has been presented with now, which is in draft form—we hope there is some room to change that—they are looking at losing their father’s house, who made that decision in 2001 not to take the original package. They feel horribly let down by what is happening.

Redmond Sawmill, a business close to Albany, has invested \$10 million to \$12 million in the past six or seven years. It has expanded and employed people. On a rough look at what the business package now means, it might get a hundred grand, which is extraordinary. The impacts of this are still rolling out. It was described to me and those at the meeting by at least a couple of people as like the stages of grief and where they are along that continuum. Some of them were still angry—quite clearly, some of them are very angry. Some of them are in shock. A couple are in denial. I think almost all of them have got past the initial shock that, “It’s okay; it won’t really happen. They couldn’t possibly do that to us.” Almost all of them are past that stage but there are some people hurting in that part of the world, given what is confronting them. They are in for some very tough times. It is a pretty resilient community. Members from that region will know that Manjimup and Nannup and so on will get through this, but please do not discount the enormous impact it has had on those communities—and to be told by the government that this is a sustainable industry.

The Forest Products Commission’s annual report says right at the front that it is doing a great job in the sustainable sector. If one were a businessperson, one would read that as having spent and invested some money, employed people and looked after the local community. Those communities feel let down.

I will mention a couple of issues to the minister that we might discuss in Committee of the Whole. It was raised in the other place that in the briefing we received from the department was some doubt that the FPC had to pay rates on the land it will purchase. I think the response from the department was that it does not have to, but it will. I think that is unusual if that is the case, and I ask the minister to check that. Another matter to discuss in committee is that the \$350 million was for at least 33 000 hectares. By my rough maths, that does not seem anywhere near enough money for that area of land. As members would know, agricultural land has seen a sharp rise in value in the past couple of years. I would like to know the budgeted figure and whether the government thinks that \$350 million will get the job done.

I refer also to some of the modelling. The government talks about the carbon credits in 25 years. What percentage of those pines that are planted now would expect to get through to 25 years? I believe it cannot be claimed until it has been in the ground for 25 years.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You can claim it before, but you have got to undertake —

Hon STEVE MARTIN: To give it back—yes; okay.

Broadly, the opposition supports the planting of pines for the softwood sector, but a number of issues need some work if this is to be successful, particularly around the Forest Products Commission. That is the body that will oversee this growth and increase in the hectares of the softwood plantation. It is not travelling well. Its own report sums that up and spells it out for us. If that is what it is willing to provide to the public, I wonder about morale in the organisation and how it is travelling on the ground. Anecdotally from the industry, there are not too many good FPC stories out there. That will need to be addressed if the government is to roll out this program as well and as successfully as we hope. I know others wish to make a contribution, so I conclude my remarks.

HON DR STEVE THOMAS (South West — Leader of the Opposition) [2.27 pm]: I am very much looking forward to making a contribution to the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. It would be nice to simply talk about the present and the future, and I will come to those in the fullness of time. However, given the government's leadership this morning in going back over history, I think that raises an enormous opportunity to do precisely that in this bill. I will take this opportunity to discuss how we got here and the situation in which we find ourselves.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You will be enormously embarrassed going back over your Barnett government. If you had any decency, you'd be enormously embarrassed.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Let us go back. I am happy to go back over a little bit of history. I think that will be quite good. After the embarrassment of the government's performance this morning, I think we might just continue that along the way.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You know what was embarrassing for you?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It was the embarrassment of the government's performance this morning. The outrage that the opposition might debate an issue around restrictions and emergency services. The outrage that we would do it today. The outrage that we should raise it. What did the Premier do? He walked out today and made an announcement on it.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order! Members, we are dealing with the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. Could we please return to that; thank you.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, Acting President. I will do my best not to be distracted by various rantings that obviously are disconnected to what has happened this afternoon. We will come to that one at some other date, as you guide us, Acting President.

Let us go to the current debate, because I will have more than enough opportunities going forward to point out the hypocrisy of the government on that one. Let us concentrate on the hypocrisy of the government in this debate. I think that should be sufficient for me to occupy some time.

The bill before the house, the Forest Products Amendment Bill, stems from the government's announcement on 8 September 2021 of which I have the joint media release of the Premier, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Forestry. On previous occasions of debate, I have suggested that the Minister for Forestry's performance was only the second-worst performance in the government and in fact the Attorney General had the gold medal and top position on the podium. But I think the positions have flipped; the Attorney General was rising compared with the Minister for Forestry, who will probably be one of those ministers famous in the annals of history of Western Australia as the minister who destroyed the industry for which he had ministerial responsibility. That does not happen too often; unless there was a minister for whaling that I am unaware of who argued in Albany 40 years ago —

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Colin Barnett crucified commerce! He ripped commerce apart!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Sorry; who ripped what apart?

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Colin Barnett ripped commerce apart —

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No; that is not it. The Department of Commerce still exists and commerce still occurs, whereas we are already singing the dirges for the timber industry. We are singing the songs to mark its imminent collapse.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Why are you filibustering?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: No; we are getting into significant debate.

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Let's get on to terrorism!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I know you are very keen to renew your acquaintanceship with Hon Nick Goiran, parliamentary secretary —

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Renew? I'm going!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I know that is an important part of your weekly activity in Parliament!

Hon Matthew Swinbourn: Daily!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: A bromance!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Daily! That might be the parliamentary secretary's daily dose, but the reality is that we have a serious bill before us. It would be remiss if we were to pass this bill without describing the circumstances by which it arrived to us. I am trying—despite the best attempts of the government—to do exactly that.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: The old jokes are coming out, Acting President. It must be Thursday afternoon.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Come on; step up your game.

A government member: What's the iron ore price?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: It is about \$150.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! Let us return to the bill.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Thank you, Acting President. It is about \$150-ish.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Let's get back to PFAS! I like talking about that.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Really? You want to discuss the close to 700 000 cubic metres of PFAS that is sitting in Forrestfield that you cannot get rid of? I am happy to go back to that at some point, too. It is coming, minister. It will arrive in the full course of time.

It is unfortunate that there are so many things that we need to remind government members of, and they keep trying to distract me because we need to focus on the government's destruction of the timber industry in the state of Western Australia, and, therefore, the need for this bill. I am doing my best, Acting President, to get back to the matter at hand.

The media release on 8 September came out the day before the budget on 9 September 2021. It announced the end, effectively, of the native timber industry and the \$350 million expansion of the softwood timber plantations, which the lead speaker for the opposition said is welcomed by the opposition. Investment in those softwood plantations is good. In fact, I am sure that the minister will stand up and give a reply to the second reading debate in which she will detail the history of softwood plantations, attack the opposition, and bemoan its lack of investment of significant funds in them during the previous government. I am sure we look forward to that! Our response will be, again: do not blame us; this is 2022, not 2015. I am sure we will sit through some of that.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Because you know it to be true; don't you?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: So we will be listening to a bit of that; will we not?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I thought you'd want a fullness of understanding.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I am trying to deliver a fullness of understanding. I am nervous, because in previous debates the minister tends to ignore the motion before the house and just goes off on a tangent, so we are trying to have a fulsome debate on the timber industry.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The ACTING PRESIDENT: Order, members! Might I suggest you direct your comments through the chair, Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is sage advice, Acting President. I shall endeavour to do so.

This entire bill and the functions that the government will go through are a result of a press release on 8 September 2021 in which the government announced \$350 million to expand the softwood timber plantations program, as part of announcing the destruction of the native timber industry.

The first thing that the house needs to acknowledge is that the two industries are very different, and the connection between the two, apart from some transport connections, is remarkably limited. The industries might like to create some more connections, because a particular group of sawmills would like to get more access to resources, and when they close down the native hardwood timber industry, where will they go? They will effectively have no choice. It is very hard to cut blue gum, so they will be out there looking for, and competing with, pine. Therefore, the argument that pine should be planted is accepted by every member of the house; in fact, pine should be urgently planted.

When the minister says, "Yes, previous governments should have planted more," I am likely to agree with her. Because we in the Legislative Council try to be agreeable, I am likely to suggest that there is some validity to that statement. It is not only the lack of planting that is part of the lack of pine going forward; obviously, there have been significant fires around the state of Western Australia that have eaten significantly into the pine reserve. Of course members, particularly those in the northern suburbs, would know that the Gnangara pine plantation, which was a huge component of the pine reserve of the state, has been removed and is not being replanted. It is being converted largely into residential areas and other bits and pieces.

The first thing that we need to acknowledge is that there is an absolute shortage of pine, and the issue is that there is a shortage now. There is a shortage not only in the years to come, but also now. It will get significantly worse before it gets better. There is a cliff coming in the supply of softwood timber. We have known about the cliff for some time, and the fires have made it significantly worse.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It does take time to plant. And if you have one government that doesn't plant for eight years, you're going to have that cliff.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: We will be asking in a minute how much pine plantation occurred under the Gallop–Carpenter government, and I am sure the minister will share those numbers. As we go forward, the minister will respond with that.

There is an absolute cliff regarding the supply of timber; there is a requirement for more timber. The issue is the planting of significant areas of pine. I suspect it may take two years to get significant plantings in place—let us say at least 18 months, but I suspect it will be more like two years. The problem is that most seedlings need to be planted when a significant amount of rain is coming. Traditionally, we plant trees in winter, and there is a pretty sensible reason for that, because they tend to survive versus dying off from lack of water. We are not going to be able to do much this winter, so the first plantings will largely occur next winter, which is a bit over a year. From the date of the announcement, which was September 2021, it will not really be until winter 2023 that we will have significant plantings of pine, so that is an enormous catch-up.

The other issue, of course, is that when we plant pine, we get the first thinnings out in about 20 to 22 years after planting and the most significant harvest at around the 30-year mark. When the minister tells us about the cliff that is the crisis in the supply of pine trees, she will be absolutely right. There is a crisis of which we are seeing the first signs of now, and it probably will be, depending on best estimates, 10 or 15 years before we start to come out the other end. Therefore, the planting of \$350 million worth of pine trees, coming in 30 years' time, whilst welcome, is not necessarily the great salvation that we might need to look at in the medium term. Other things will have to be provided for this industry to survive. Obviously, one of those things is the importation of resources. Funnily enough, there are resources out there if we want to be in the marketplace for them. Russia has been a major exporter of harvested pine trees, but I suspect that market might not be the most accessible, and I do not know how long that will last. Other countries around the world also have a pine industry. There will have to be some importation in the interim to try to cover us over this cliff.

I want to go back to the original press release announcing \$350 million for the pine plantations. We can call it softwood or pine; effectively, there is a limited number of other softwoods, so whether I call it softwood or pine is rather interchangeable, unless anybody wants to suggest that other softwoods will play a major role. I want to refer to how we arrived here and why this money is being invested. The \$350 million is the sole reason we are debating the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. It is meant to provide a degree of compensation. I note that the McGowan government's three-headed press release—the Cerberus of press releases, if you will—from 8 September 2021 states —

From 2024, timber taken from our native forests will be limited to forest management activities that improve forest health and clearing for approved mining operations, such as Alcoa.

I think that is an accurate statement, but it bears some reflection because it will impact on the entire forest management system, the forestry industry and why we are here today debating this bill. The government has said that hardwood native timber production in the future will come from what it calls ecological thinning and the removal of forests for mining operations, which is predominantly alumina in my area in the south west. Bear in mind, not much of the timber industry operates outside my electorate in the south west and the electorate, whilst it still exists, of the minister—who has come down to join us. We are effectively, with a little bit down the edge of the metropolitan region, the timber industry in the state of Western Australia. Those two sources will provide effectively all hardwood timber going forward. How much can we accept? It might surprise the Acting President to know, given my youthful looks, that I have been around for a fairly long time now and I have been part of this timber debate for many, many years—let us say decades. I marched with the forest industry in Manjimup back in, I think, 1999; it might have been 2000, but it was about then. My two great protest marches, because I know it is not traditionally a conservative right-wing thing, were about the timber industry and the Labor Party's plan to harvest Yarragadee water and ship it up to Perth. They are the two instances of my great social rebellion, of which I am relatively proud. I would march on those things again.

The timber industry has struggled for a very long time. I was first a candidate for the Liberal Party right at the start of the great timber debate in the lead-up to the 2001 election. I stood for election in the then set of Collie. That was my initial bleeding. I managed to alienate some of my colleagues in response to the activities of the then federal Minister for Forestry and Conservation, Hon Wilson Tuckey. I have to be careful not to say the current member because it gets a bit tricky. Hon Steve Martin has obviously had some dealings with Hon Wilson Tuckey, who is a very forthright gentleman. There was a proposal to put forward a variation on the forest management plan. The federal government came up with three options at that stage. We were, at that point, taking about 450 000 cubic metres of jarrah, as a sawlog measurement. The federal government, under its Regional Forest Agreement, came up with three numbers. It said it could be 310 000, 300 000 or 290 000. I went public at the time as a candidate

and said that they were effectively the same three numbers and that we needed to determine what was sustainable and go back to a sustainable measure because the future of the industry was critical. I had Greens from the south west come and congratulate me, including some who were very odd, and I pulled on a fight with Wilson Tuckey at that stage, and it is probably a fight that continues until this day.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Did you get the iron bar over your head?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes. Luckily, I have a hard head, minister.

At that point, anyone who understood the timber industry understood that reductions were required because the over-harvest was significant. Jump forward a couple of years, and the Gallop government won the 2001 election, to some degree based on its old-growth forest policy. There were probably a couple of other policies and other issues in there as well but the old-growth forest policy was one of the issues that drove that victory. It significantly cut the harvest of native hardwood timbers. That was in the early 2000s, and then the next forest management plan for 2004 to 2013 saw a significant reduction in hardwood harvesting. I better get it right, otherwise it will be 11 years and not 10. The one after that was from 2014 to 2023. We debated the hardwood harvest at 300 000 cubic metres, which at a current level is about 135 000 to 145 000 cubic metres of sawlog. If we had allowed the forest management plan to go through in its normal circumstances, in my view, it would have come in under 100 000 cubic metres, and possibly significantly under 100 000 cubic metres, which would have impacted on the survivability of a number of timber mills at the time.

When I first started writing timber policy, we had four or five large timber sawmills. That has been cut back and we currently have two. The problem we have and why the hardwood debate impacts on the softwood debate so critically is that the proposal by the government to effectively eviscerate hardwood production means the pressure dial is suddenly turned very hard onto the softwood timber industry. I would have liked to have seen the focus on hardwood production based on sustainability; that is, what is the sustainable harvest from the state's forest that can be managed and allows for a well-managed timber system? The harvest would have come down from 135 000 or 145 000 cubic metres. It probably would have been 90 000, but it might have been 80 000 cubic metres. We would have probably lost half of our processing capacity. Instead of two big mills—one in Nannup and one in Greenbushes—probably only one would have survived, but a timber industry would have survived. If the industry had 50 000 or 60 000 cubic metres, the remaining 20 000 cubic metres would potentially have gone to the small millers and the micro-millers—the very small mills or the ones that are two blokes going out with a mobile mill. That is what might have resulted. There would have been a significant cutback, but that is not what the government did. The government could have claimed the high moral ground and been environmentally sensible and said, “We want sustainability”, but that is not what it did. The government was chasing votes, not jobs—votes, not policy. It was chasing votes in the western suburbs and where the Green voters hide. The Labor Party has tried to outgreen the Greens.

Hon Pierre Yang: Are you really serious?

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Absolutely. Hang on, keep listening, because there is a lot of this to come. The government is trying to outgreen the Greens. It could have had a sustainable timber industry, but it did not want to. This is a political decision. It is not an ecological or environmental decision, and it is certainly not an economic decision; this is a purely political decision based on the benefits to the Labor Party in Western Australia, because it could have gone down the sustainability route. Sustainability should have been the mantra of this government in the timber industry. It should have been: this is the level of harvest that we can manage sustainably into the future. But that is not what the government did. That was not the intent of the government.

Let us have a discussion about this, because this is critically important to the bill and the process going forward. The first indications from this government about the level of resource that might be available to the hardwood industry has gone from what might have been 80 000 to 90 000 cubic metres under the *Forest management plan 2014–15* under a sustainable system, to more like 40 000 cubic metres. The government's first indicative numbers are saying that it will come from two sources: harvest from mining tenements and ecological thinnings, and that might be 25 000 and 15 000 cubic metres. We might get 40 000 cubic metres of sawlog coming out. Everything else will basically be the bits and pieces, the tops of the trees and the leaves that fall down. That is not enough resource to sustain two timber mills; it is not really enough resource to sustain one timber mill of size. The government is also surely aware that other industries apart from timber mills take that resource. We have a great company in the south west called Simcoa, which generates silicon. Simcoa uses jarrah as a charcoal base because that chemical process gives it the highest quality silicon in the world, therefore allowing it to get into a marketplace that it otherwise could not, and it does so in competition with America, which is not above taking the opportunity to restrict trade to put pressure on Simcoa to make sure it cannot proceed.

I think it was about 2000 when the then Minister for Forestry, a gentleman called Paul Omodei, put out a press release and said, “It's wonderful; we have now committed to give Simcoa 150 000 cubic metres of jarrah so that it can continue to employ hundreds of people and generate hundreds of millions of dollars for the economy in the south west.” This contract at the time was 150 000 cubic metres. Honourable members, let us do the maths on this. This great company has not got any smaller, and it requires 150 000 cubic metres. The maximum production out of the state timber hardwood production of anything like sawlog is going to be 40 000 cubic metres. Simcoa currently gets

a reasonable amount of its product out of the private sector, let us say a third for rough figures, so if it still needs 100 000 cubic metres of jarrah product to do its job, which is a critical job in the south west, it has a problem. More importantly than that, this government is now going to have to make some significant decisions around this hardwood industry. It is going to have to choose whether it allows one silicon company to survive and destroys everybody else; or one timber mill to survive and destroys everybody else, including a silicon company that employs hundreds of people; or does it just allow a few micro-mills to survive and all of this industry dies? These are the decisions that this government will have to make based on the very political—not environmental, not ecological, not economic—decision made by the McGowan government.

Just in case members think I am exaggerating, I will go to a source that I find myself quoting reasonably frequently, although, I must admit, it is only because he is a minister who has a department behind him that I can have some confidence that what he is saying might be real, because, as I said before, he is in the gold-medal position for lack of performance. Let us take the media statement of Tuesday, 3 September 2019 by the Minister for Forestry, Hon Dave Kelly, BA, MLA. It is a cracker. What does Hon Dave Kelly say about the hardwood timber industry in Western Australia? Let us go to the third paragraph, because it is probably the best one. This is a press release titled “Local timber industry gets a boost as leading miller joins WA”, and it is to celebrate the purchase by Parkside Timber of Nannup Timber Processing and the Greenbushes mill. Effectively, Parkside took over the two major mills, and it was also going to expand into the processing centre in Manjimup. Members might remember that; perhaps they will not. For those members who were not here, the processing centre at Manjimup was closed a couple of years after the Pemberton Deanmill mill shut down. There has been a gradual closure of mills, which is the fault of no government, Liberal or Labor; that was inevitably going to happen. As the resource became more scarce, we needed greater efficiency. I am not going to attempt to blame the government for the closure of those mills.

This is a great press release. It states —

The change of ownership provides investment and employment certainty —

“Certainty” is a word I mentioned a few times this morning. Apparently, we do not like certainty —

and the potential to create local jobs in the South-West region. The native forestry industry injects \$220 million into the Western Australian economy each year and supports more than 800 jobs in the forestry industry.

Just remember that 800 jobs number, members, because we will come back to that in a little while, assuming I get time. I miss the old days of unlimited time frames, Deputy President, but anyway; I will do my very best to get it done in time.

These are comments attributed to Minister for Forestry Dave Kelly —

“The McGowan Government sees Parkside’s investment as a step forward in maintaining a strong forestry industry that supports WA jobs, while still protecting the environmental values of our beautiful native forests.

This is still quoting the minister —

“The native forestry sector is an important employer and economic contributor that supplies our community with sustainable, renewable building materials and other timber products.

Do I need to repeat that, Deputy President? “Sustainable, renewable building materials”, from the minister.

“The purchase follows the release of the McGowan Government’s Djarlma Plan which set out the strategic direction for the future of the Western Australian forestry industry to support healthy forests and WA jobs.”

The Djarlma plan is not perfect, I have to say. I have read it, and, in what seems to be my way, I sent a relatively curt email to the Forestry Industries Federation (WA) and said that although it is not terrible, I think it could have done a lot more things, because for some reason I do not seem to be able to hold back on some of those comments. The Djarlma plan was endorsed by the government; in fact, Hon Dave Kelly claims it. It is apparently a government plan. Do members know what the Djarlma plan talks about? Sustainable hardwood timber industry, people. The plan endorsed by the state Labor Party government—the McGowan government—is all about a sustainable hardwood timber industry. Then, briefly after that, the government killed it off, but what a great thing.

There are 800 jobs in the forest industry. I said I would come back to that, because there is so much to get through and I am not going to get a chance to get anywhere near it. I want to talk about the announcement on 8 September 2021 of the destruction of the native timber industry and the announcement of the \$350 million into softwood, which results in the legislation we have before us today. The Cerberus government media release of September 2021 states —

The 2021–22 State Budget includes a record \$350 million investment over 10 years in new softwood plantations across the South-West, which will create and support WA forestry jobs.

This record investment will provide at least an additional 33,000 hectares of softwood timber plantation. Up to 50 million pine trees will be planted, sequestering between 7.9 and 9.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

It will also create about 140 timber industry jobs,

Far be it from me to speculate on how accurate that is. We are just going to have to take the Premier's word for it—or perhaps the Minister for Forestry's word for it. But it is interesting that a \$350 million investment will create 140 timber industry jobs. The native forest timber industry, according to the Minister for Forestry in December 2019, supports more than 800 jobs.

Hon Shelley Payne: You need to finish the sentence —

It will also create about 140 timber industry jobs, protect about 1,980 existing jobs.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes, it protects some jobs; that is right. I will come to that in a bit. The member is exactly right. It protects some existing softwood jobs. Where do they exist? They are in places like Wespine and other companies that process pine. Having additional pine will protect those jobs; that is exactly right. I will come to the softwood industry in more detail in a little bit. As I said, I am going to run out of time, but that is exactly right.

It was a good interjection, but in terms of the creation of jobs, the government's press release, the government's own material, says that we are going to basically throw away almost all 880 hardwood timber jobs. Yes, the government is going to maintain 1 980 existing jobs. If we have pine, those jobs will be protected. The issue for those jobs is obviously the 30-year delay and we hope that many of those jobs stay in place in the meantime.

We are talking about my patch. This is where I live. I live around Donnybrook. This is about Dardanup and those areas. This is affecting my heartland, so I absolutely want all those jobs in the softwood industry maintained, but the destruction of the hardwood industry will cost most of those 800 jobs. The plantings of the pine industry will, theoretically, create 140 jobs. Where will most of those 140 jobs be created, particularly in the first, say, 22 years? What will happen for the first 22 years? Effectively, the Forest Products Commission will have to put on more people to start negotiating contracts. Those contracts will be for land whether it is on freehold title, and the FPC will have to purchase land to put pine trees on—Hon Steve Martin raised this and, if I get time, I will go through that in more detail, too—or whether it is leased, which I think will be a perfectly valid option. I am a massive supporter of the farming community being able to make those choices.

There are groups of, dare I say it—I am probably there myself; my father certainly is—old farmers who believe that the only people who should be allowed to farm are those who farm in the traditional way in which that land has been farmed forever more. I have never believed that. I have been an avid supporter of the Minister for Regional Development's carbon plans and carbon farming proposals. I think that they are very good. I will probably start another fight, I suspect, with Wilson Tuckey and a few others when I say that.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Or your mate Trev!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: There are a few.

I am a free marketeer. If a landowner can make money out of tourism, ecotourism or carbon markets, why on earth would government want to get in the way of that? As a free marketeer, I do not understand why anyone would stand in the way of someone else making a profit. It makes absolutely no sense to me. That view has created a few enemies for me on my side of politics. Luckily, I am not a shy and retiring character and I am happy to carry that argument. I am all in favour of it.

It will be more economic for the government to lease land from farmers. There will obviously have to be a mechanism to do that because most farmers could not lease their land and wait for the pay-off 30 years after when it is harvested. Most of the blue gum contracts for, I think, hardwood for chipping received annual payments. I think that is appropriate. I am happy to support the government going down that path to find the best outcomes. I think if everybody is clever, they may just find the best outcomes for both government and farmers somewhere down the path of combining some purchases, but, ideally, maximising the potential for leasehold because it will tie up less government money. But how many jobs will that create in the short term? There will be some contract management jobs because somebody has to go out and negotiate these contracts. The contracts are critical, I tell you.

Those good contracts in the blue gum plantations were worth gold, but plenty of people got shafted in the process. There is a reason, apart from just the marketplace, that there are not as many blue gums as there used to be in those mass plantings throughout the regions that start in my electorate and finish in the electorate of Hon Steve Martin in the wheatbelt. There was a time when in the Shire of Boyup Brook the greatest land use in the shire was for blue gum plantations. That has reversed. People are getting out of blue gums and going back to sheep. Obviously, the economics of sheep have improved dramatically. We wish good luck to all sheep farmers out there. Many of them suffered for a long time. I remember years ago when farmers were shooting sheep because they were not worth selling. Good luck to them, and to the cattle producers who are doing better. The timber industry does not have that advantage. There is a reason there have been some shifts. The contracting is critical and we have to get those contracts right. There will be a few jobs in contracting.

What will be the next step along the way? It will be planting. The government might object to this, but the Minister for Agriculture and Food might be able to tell us how many pine planting jobs will be created. I imagine that the process for plantations will take a few years to deliver, bearing in mind that the \$350 million budget is spread over 10 years. To get all the pine plantation out there in the first year, it will have to be accelerated.

They talk about significant numbers in the media statement —

... will provide at least an additional 33,000 hectares of softwood timber plantation. Up to 50 million pine trees ...

I get that the purchase and the planting of 50 million pine trees, less \$350 million, is seven dollars a pine tree. In total costs, that is probably not an unreasonable estimate, but it is put at \$30 million a year. That is probably a reasonable outcome given that it will take a while to plant 33 000 hectares of pine trees. I suspect that if the government is clever—occasionally it can be—it will not want to have all 50 million pines coming in in one year and will try to manage that as a load. It should try to space that over time. I think the budget estimates indicate that it is \$35 million over a 10-year period. It will be a bit lower at the start because it will have to be set up and it will be a bit higher as it goes along. That is perfectly reasonable.

But the question is: how many jobs is it going to create? We need to bear in mind that 750 of the 800 jobs that currently exist in the native hardwood timber will have been knocked off. The government's estimates say 140 will be created. That might be accurate, but I suspect the government might struggle to reach that number, because there will basically be a team. If 50 million trees are to be produced in 10 years, that will require five million trees to be planed every year. Given the way that things are mechanised these days, that will probably be a much more efficient exercise. The government is not going to create anything like the number of jobs it will destroy. The timber industry is still in crisis and a few jobs still need to be created.

The honourable member was right when she suggested that this might save 1 900 jobs in the softwood supply chain. I really hope it does. The industry faces an absolute crisis at the moment, though, and it is about to get worse. I will give the minister a good weapon to whack us with in a few minutes. She can tell us about how it is all our fault, but the reality is this exists. It will take more than a few years to get back to that stage. There will be some planting jobs.

Even when we get to the process, in something like 21 or 22 years, the first significant thinning of the plantation will take place. There might be a little thinning in advance, taking out trees that are not performing very well, but the major thinning is at the 22-year mark, and an attempt is made to thin out the trees so that the best, straightest and most viable trees remain, and then, in the pine industry, the harvest is done at around the 30-year mark. Obviously, it is quicker for blue gums, but a lot slower for jarrah. The ideal turnaround time for jarrah is probably 120 years, and I might look like I am that old, but I have a few years to go yet. That is the sort of turnover we have to look at as a part of this issue. It is a slow process.

As I often do in these debates, I congratulate the government on starting the process. The government will claim credit for the job it is doing, and I will not oppose that. It invested in softwood plantation, and we will have that debate when it comes along. However, it is not an immediate fix. That is good, because too often in government we get bogged down in the immediate fix to get us to the next election, and sometimes it feels like it is about surviving until the end of the week. The reality is that a long-term investment that goes beyond the four-year electoral cycle is good and wise. Well done for that, but there is a long way to go for the pine plantation.

The net job loss throughout the south west is probably close to 700. It has already been said in this debate that the impact on those communities is absolutely devastating for something that was not required. It was always something that the mills would not survive. My gut feeling is that we would end up with one large mill, and a few micro-mills supporting an industry. This will flow through to all sorts of interesting places. Firewood suppliers in Perth are advising people to buy their firewood this year, because they probably will not be able to get any in future years. Such will be the shortage of timber that people will struggle with. The government must make the choice whether to supply Simcoa or a mill, or kill them both off. That is a significant decision.

I want to say a bit about ecological thinnings. A huge proportion of what the government is claiming will come through for the timber industry is ecological thinnings. These are critically important. I am old enough to remember the debates around forest management, when we had a system to encourage jarrah trees to grow as a result of partial thinning. I am trying to remember the name of the system. The minister's adviser will probably tell us later. There is a name for the system of maintaining solid hardwood plantations. Thinning is important, and ecological thinning, in my view, is immensely underdone. I encourage members to drive through the forest that was burnt in the Waroona–Yarloop fires. It is most instructive. I have seen this before in this place. I seem to remember that the original pre-colonisation jarrah forest looked very different from the jarrah forest we have today.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: You will be delighted to hear that I absolutely agree.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: That is good. Does the minister remember what the system is called? It is in my brain, but it will not come out. There were bigger trees, more widely spread, lower density, with some undergrowth. That is what it looked like. Go and have a look at the area where the Waroona fire burnt. It is like a solid, kilometres-thick fence, because of the suckering and regrowth. Where there was one trunk coming up, there are now eight suckers coming out of the stump, each with about an eight to 10-centimetre bole diameter. It is un-environmental, but it is also completely unproductive. The amount of environmental thinning that is required to repair those forests is

immense, and there is no capacity within any government department, including the Forest Products Commission, to deal with it. Ecological thinnings, for the most part, in my view, will be 10, possibly 15-centimetre bole timber. I understand that the government has a definition for this, so I will be interested if the minister could provide a definition of ecological thinnings and the sort of boles we are looking at. It was put to me by the industry that the most we might be looking at is a 20-centimetre bole, including bark, which means that we are looking potentially at an 18 to 19-centimetre actual diameter bole, which is like that. It is tiny. I do not know how many pieces of sawn lumber the government thinks it will get out of ecological thinnings, but it will be next to nothing. By definition, most of those ecological thinnings are too small to be of any value. The government will need to focus on the only thing they might be used for, which perhaps might be the saviour of Simcoa. The government will no doubt talk about the possibility of chipping it all and putting it into veneer and all these other things, but the economics of that are incredibly difficult. I have been around long enough to have seen veneer plants fall over in Albany. It is doable, but it is hard and costly. In my view, it will not be the saviour of the timber industry.

We have a bunch of twigs that ultimately are of very little value to anybody and the occasional decent sawlog that comes effectively only from the harvesting of timber and from mining. That is the only place we will get any reasonable supply of timber. The timber industry must try to deal with this. The Minister for Regional Development did not like me talking about certainty for the business community this morning, but here is another dose of it. I say all the time that business requires certainty. People in the hardwood industry are trying to work out whether they can survive, but the government can barely tell them what the industry will look like. That might not necessarily be the biggest problem, because one of things that we do need to discuss—amongst the many things I will not have time for—is the compensation package the government has put out there.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: This is not a bill about native forest restructuring. I think we are getting a relevance problem here. You're going on to a completely different subject.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Perhaps the government should not have rolled them into the same press release when they were announced. That might have given the minister more credibility in that argument.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: This is about the FPC and the pine plantations.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Perhaps the minister should not have rolled the two issues together to try to conflate them.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: The issues have a connection but this bill is not about the native timber industry.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Trying to separate them for convenience is problematic, minister.

Let us talk more about pine. I have lots of stuff specifically on pine, and I am more than happy to do that. In the very short amount of remaining time, let us discuss some comments about the Forest Products Commission in particular. I think that is interesting. This bill will empower the FPC to hold land and to negotiate various contracts around leasehold production of pines, and that is a good thing. I have always been concerned about the attacks on the FPC. I get very frustrated, particularly about the attacks that say that FPC is not making a profit, and therefore it should be got rid of, which is part of a cunning plan to say the FPC is not effective because it does not make a profit. Here is a big tip for members of the public who have brought that to my attention. My response is always that not many government departments make a profit. The FPC's role is to manage the harvesting of timber. In a good year, the harvesters, transporters and millers make profits. In the same way, the Department of Agriculture does not make a profit, funnily enough. That is not its role, but it helps farmers to make a profit. That is the role of the department. The FPC should not be required to make a profit. The argument could be that it could do its job more efficiently, which is an argument that could be applied to every part of government. It is not there to make a profit. It will potentially be in a better position to do so with the investment that is going into softwood plantations, which is good.

I am going to run out of time.

A member interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Seek an extension? That might be a good idea.

Several members interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Actually, I suspect that might not be a popular move.

The next question of course is where these plantations are going to emerge. I want to make the point that the pine plantation can be useful for not just the production of pine, but also another role. Members who have been around might remember that there was a government proposal to put pine plantations in the Collie catchment. The Collie catchment has had an issue with creeping salinity. For those who remember, probably 10 years ago, the Wellington Dam had a salinity rate of 900 parts per million-ish, bearing in mind that potable water is considered to be 500 parts per million. At 900 ppm, it is potentially stock water, but not for high-producing dairy cows that do not have the tolerance for salt—but wethers could be put on it. My understanding is that the salinity rate is currently over 1 400 parts per million, and it is increasing. There is an opportunity to combine the outcomes of pine plantations with this planting. A major planting was going to occur in Collie. I understand some pine plantings have occurred there, particularly around the east branch of the Collie River. I think that is a good thing, and the government has an opportunity to combine that.

The government is looking for 600 millilitres of rainfall and above, which starts to fall away fairly quickly, particularly in a drying climate. It is an issue for where it could go with this. When I first arrived in Donnybrook 30-something years ago, it was traditionally a 40-inch rain belt, so 1 000 millilitres. The old wisdom of my home territory is that once you hit the Mumballup turn—or the Mumby tavern, for those who have been there—the rainfall drops away an inch a mile over the next 10 miles or so. By the time you get to Boyup Brook, it drops away remarkably quickly. I do not know what the average is at Wickepin, but it is probably about half that. It drops quickly there for a while. I understand that the government is looking in those areas around the Shire of Boyup Brook, the Shire of West Arthur in particular and that sort of territory on the edge of the south west, probably just hitting into that 600-millilitre rain belt. It might go to Kojonup, for example, and a few places in that area. It will be interesting to see whether that is where the government is targeting, because that is the advice that we have been given.

As I said before, I have no objection and I think we should encourage every farmer who is interested in tree farming, or perhaps farming a little less hard, to take advantage of this process. The argument gets put to me that the world will starve if we are not producing food. My answer to that is always that two-thirds of the food that we produce in Australia is exported and we consume about one-third. In effect, it is a commodity on which we are making money. I am in the hard right-wing of politics, so I am happy for farmers to go out there and make money. This is one more version of that, whether that commodity is food or fibre. I do not think that is an issue. Funnily enough, we do not have the same issue around producing wool, which is, in the end, just another fibre. I think it is a reasonable prospect. I would encourage the community to talk in a positive way about the potential to farm timber as much as they would any other product. It is a frustration when I hear it denigrated in some areas, because I would happily go out and say that this is a good tool that farmers can make use of. In the right-wing of politics, we believe in the free market and that is exactly what we should be supporting, so I think that is very true.

There are a lot of things we could have talked about going forward in relation to this bill, but in terms of the carbon market, again, I have been a supporter of the minister's work in the carbon farming sphere. Obviously, the difficult part is that the rules around measurement are probably yet not written. There is still a lot of work to be done. We should allow the farming community to take advantage of that as best we can. We should also note, however, the fourth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and its discussion on carbon and forestry in particular. It says, in no uncertain terms, that a well-managed forest, which is harvested and been allowed to regrow, as long as the carbon when harvested is stored, is one of the best ways to store carbon. That is written in the IPCC report. We should acknowledge that a well-managed forest, which includes harvest and regrowth, should be part of the country's carbon response. The advantage of pine is that some of it is structural pine that sits for a long time. Unfortunately, particularly if it is treated with chemicals that we do not necessarily like very much, the more arsenic and stuff put in it, the longer it keeps.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes. There are probably better options coming again.

Untreated pine is an issue, but we probably use less structural pine than we should. It is a good way to lock up carbon into the future—so is structural jarrah, by the way. We do not use much jarrah anymore. My dining room table is a jarrah board that used to be part of the back wall of a barn in Balingup. That carbon has been locked up for 100-plus years. Harvesting out of the jarrah forest is also a way of sequestering carbon. I think we lose track of that debate as well. The issue is, of course, the rules around that, how it is measured and whether it can be claimed under international rules, and that becomes a problem. But if we are looking for the best outcomes for the planet, as a part of the problem that should also be a part of the debate.

We want to support the timber industry—both the pine timber industry and the native hardwood industry. They are both worthy of support; they both deserve a future. Unfortunately, we are in a position in which we have chosen one over the other. That is the saddest part about the debate before the house today. We are effectively saying, “We choose you, softwoods.” We needed to choose softwoods; it was very important for the investment. The opposition is happy to let the government to go through with this bill, because we think there will be good outcomes, but we did not have to destroy the native hardwood timber industry as a part of that process. When the McGowan government puts out a press release that does both things in one press release, it is pretty hard to avoid.

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [3.27 pm]: I rise today to support the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. When this bill was being read in, it was heartening to hear Hon Minister MacTiernan acknowledge the role that this bill will take and the climate impacts of it, specifically acknowledging that climate change is here, it is already impacting our community, and this bill would be part of the solution. It would be fair to say that most weeks I get up and talk about climate change in one form or another, and I am certainly keen to see us act with the urgency that was made clear in the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report and others. I think this is a good bill and we will start to see some of those key parts flow through. We are so very keen to support it for that reason.

The Greens also support this amendment bill and the government's move to expand the function of the Forest Products Commission to allow it to trade in carbon assets associated with forest products on plantations. Plantations and farm forestry could potentially meet the overwhelming majority of Western Australia's timber needs while delivering

multiple social, economic and environmental benefits. Expanding plantations on to previously cleared land and developing the farm forestry sector will ensure the availability of sustainably and locally produced timber while—if, hopefully, done well—improving water quality, capturing and storing carbon and protecting soils.

I think it is important to comment on the government's \$350 million investment to expand the state's softwood plantation industry. The reality of climate change and the impacts of decades of unsustainable logging practice must be dodged and we need to complete the transition of the industry to a sustainable base.

This bill and the government's investment in softwood plantations is an important part of recognising the role that plantations and farm forestry can have in sequestering atmospheric carbon to help mitigate climate change. We support the move to have more plantation timber, and it will continue to support jobs, importantly, in the timber sector.

One issue that came out, and this is perhaps something that the minister in reply can respond to and perhaps explain. There has certainly been some discussion that I have not fully understood. I note the comments from Hon Dr Steve Thomas about hardwoods having a very long life of up to 120 years before they are useable.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You can use them a bit earlier but in terms of sustainability, that is the sort of rotation you are looking at.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: The ideal time is 120 years.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Yes.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: There has been some discussion between me and others who are certainly interested in this space about acknowledging that softwood is a very important step. Why are we not looking at a broader range of species, including other timber types? I appreciate it is a long view to take if we are planting for a 70-year or 120-year plan, but why is there not also a plan around hardwood plantations, noting —

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: They exist in the private sector, hardwood plantations, so there are people doing it.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: For Hansard, the comment was they exist in the private sector. It feels to me like there would be great value in making sure that we have a variety of woods. My reading of this bill—I would appreciate being corrected—is it will be predominantly pine. I have no argument against that, but my sense is that it is always good to diversify what we do and I thought a variety of timbers might add to the long-term sustainability and kinds of timbers that we might need going forward.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Have you got any specifics?

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: For Hansard, the question was about whether I have any specifics. I do not know what the answer is because it is not my area of expertise, but the question is: why does the approach of a major investment contemplate a variety of wood types, both hardwood and softwood, and species types? There may be very good reasons for that and I do not have the expertise to appreciate, but certainly it would seem to me that we do not want to get to a point at which we are importing hardwoods from other countries. That would be a perverse outcome.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: That exists now. It has existed for a while, from Indonesia.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: Exactly right. The comment is it has existed for a while. I think it is something we would like to see phased out over time. I appreciate it is slow growing. I have a house made out of jarrah and recycled jarrah boards on my front deck. Ultimately, it is a pretty spectacular wood to use and it is very hardy, so we would like to see our grandchildren using it as well.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: It might just be the best timber in the world, but you can't stop imports and stop harvesting. You've got to choose which one you will do. You're either going to increase imports because you have stopped harvesting here or you don't stop harvesting here. There is no alternative to it.

Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT: I am not arguing against that point. That is self-evident. My question is: taking a long view, why would we not start looking at planting hardwoods, noting that we might not be harvesting them in any of our lifetimes, but they will sequester carbon in the short to medium term and, ultimately, form structural timber in the long term? That was a bit of the feedback that I thought was an interesting part of the debate. There is no doubt that this is a really important bill and a really good step in the right direction. It will need to be executed well. We do not want to see plantations or the wrong kinds of timbers being planted in the wrong places or being used on land that could be better used for other purposes or the wrong kinds of timbers being planted in the wrong places. But I think there is some good ambition in this legislation that we will have some good outcomes in terms of jobs and both socio-economic and environmental outcomes generally so I am very happy to support this bill.

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Regional Development) [3.37 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contributions and their support of the Forest Products Amendment Bill 2021. I do not intend to range widely over all the issues in native forestry because this bill is essentially not about that, but I want to acknowledge the issues raised around the degree of challenge and difficulty for many of those who are involved in the native timber industry to date, particularly for those people who have businesses in the hardwood industry.

I do not think any of us would want to paint over in any way the challenge for those people. I want to put that on the table. I know that is why the Minister Kelly is negotiating about what the compensation package will look like, because we absolutely accept that this is a very challenging thing that the industry is being asked to do.

As we know, the Leader of the Opposition is a great supporter of our work in the *Collie's Just Transition plan!* I was being slightly ironic there. We absolutely recognise the need for a just transition process. We are not being in any way cavalier about this. We have confidence in the jobs; the economy in Collie is very strong. There are many opportunities for diversification in the south west. We have a massive expansion of the Greenbushes project and massive expansion of the timber industry. We see the emergence of new industries and value-adding that is continually going on in the region. We certainly think that with employment we will get there, but we recognise that business owners are facing a challenge and we are trying to work through those issues. I am not going to dwell at length on the whole native timber policy.

I agree with the honourable Leader of the Opposition about the need for us to be very realistic about ecological thinning. It is disappointing that many in the green movement think that any time we talk about ecological thinning, it is just a guise for trying to continue the hardwood timber industry under another name and I think that we really have to understand how we manage our forests. I say this very sincerely. A number of us, including Jane Kelsbie, the member for Warren–Blackwood, and I will take a field trip with Stephen Hopper through the forest in the next couple of weeks to really understand this matter. I was with Lynette Knapp and Carol Pettersen at Warriup lake recently, and Carol is now 80, and she was saying that when she was a four-year-old, she would go with her grandfather and drive sheep from Warriup all the way to Albany. I said, “Well, how could you do that? The forest is there. How would you get the sheep through there?” She said, “Well, the forest was not like that. This is not what the forest used to look like.” Notwithstanding some of the manipulation of the work of Brian Pascoe, I think drawing our attention to those issues and really looking at the first contact literature and understanding what the landscape was like is very important.

I digress a bit here, but I just want to tell this one story. I can remember when I started art appreciation at school and we were shown all these paintings of the Australian bush and told that these European artists used to come out and paint these things and they made them look like parks and European landscapes. We thought that was just them being Eurocentric. Over time, work like *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines made Australia* by Bill Gammage has told us that they were right and we were wrong and that once the kukurntjarri came in, that changed the landscape pretty quickly. We have an enormous amount to learn about the forests. I would like Hon Dr Brad Pettitt, who I know is a decent and committed person, to get on board with understanding this so that we do not get this doctrinaire thing: “You’re just trying to clear the forest because you want to keep the wood industry.” No; we want to make sure that those forests work as they should be working.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes, “silviculture” is the word generally. I understand that that is the general word for the management of forest.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: Yes, which involves that thinning process.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Silviculture does not just refer to thinning; it is about overall forest management. I am getting a few nods from the advisers, so I think I am right. I am not going to talk any further about native timber.

It is interesting that Hon Steve Martin and Hon Dr Steve Thomas came from different directions.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: No. I am probably a little bit between the two, but, fundamentally, Hon Dr Steve Thomas is right. If plantation timber is a product that can be farmed, just as carbon can be farmed, why would we get on our high horse about farmers doing that?

Hon Steve Martin interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I do not think that is accurate. I do not think there is anything in here that suggests that. I know that Hon Dr Steve Thomas does not like us to talk about the embarrassments of the previous government, but it is important to understand what has happened. Indeed, the previous government made the decision that it was going to get out of sharefarming. I think Hon Jackie Jarvis has talked about some of the things that went on during that time. It made the decision to stop sharefarming. We have not made a decision to stop sharefarming. Within the plan as we go forward, we anticipate that there will be some sharefarming and that there will be some instances when farmers determine that they have some land that is not suitable for their venture and that economically it makes sense for them to engage in some pine plantations. We are not saying that we are not going to be sharefarming; indeed, we anticipate that we will be doing some, but we see the benefit in ensuring that we have a supply by purchasing land. At one stage, Hon Steve Martin implied that there was some concern about rotational planting. Certainly, we know that some of the expectations about having three rounds of blue gum plantings, and even two rounds in some places, did not eventuate, as they did not produce a crop of great quality. I am advised that it is quite different with pine and that we are very clearly on the second and third rotations in some areas and we have been able to sustain that. It is important for us to do this.

The question is: why is the government doing this rather than this being left to the private sector? It is a market failure, and it stems from the fact that you have to be in there for the long haul. Most farmers produce things. If they produce crops, they get their crop within a year. If they produce sheep and meat, they might keep some of their sheep for six or seven years—a good regenerative farmer may even keep them for eight years—and still get a productive crop from them. But investment in plantation timber usually requires a commitment of up to 30 years, and that often predicates against people being prepared to make that sort of decision. That is part of the reason those managed tree farm schemes emerged, which, unfortunately, ended up being manipulated and became tax havens. The principle of encouraging people into private sector plantations through some tax advantage had merit; it was just that in many cases the cowboys and shysters got involved and it did not necessarily end well.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: You are right that it is a market failure, and that is why they have been traditionally under state agreement acts. That is a good demonstration. It is market failure and that is why we need a state agreement act to cover the production of good pine. That is right. I agree.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We are going to try to have some plantations of our own, but we are also absolutely open to the idea of sharefarming. It is important to understand the scale of what we are talking about. We are talking about an aspiration of around 30 000 hectares. On the issue of blue gums, we were talking about in excess of 400 000 hectares. There was a real hollowing out of a number of communities because of that. It is certainly not something that we want to see. The aspiration in this area is smaller.

Hon Steve Martin was concerned about taking land that could be used to grow food, but we also need housing. I do not think any of us are suggesting that we live on bread alone. We need shelter and, as has been acknowledged by Hon Dr Brad Pettitt and Hon Dr Steve Thomas, wood is a very good construction material and it allows us to absorb carbon and safely store it. It is a very good use of our land. I also point out to the member—pines might not have the highest level of virtue in this regard—that there is evidence that if vegetation can be intensified, the strategic planting of trees has some real prospect of helping restore some of the small water cycle. The member talked about the decline in rainfall in this target area. There are some well-argued positions that not all of the decline in rainfall in the south west land division can be accounted for by carbon pollution and that land clearing and loss of intensification of vegetation has contributed to that. It has been the loss of the small water cycle. The government is trying to work on to what extent can we start turning around some of that loss of rainfall if we increase the level of vegetation and have strategically placed tree planting. In a bigger picture, these pine plantations together with the carbon farming initiatives, when we encourage farmers to build their soil carbon and their forestry carbon, will in fact be beneficial and we will not just be passive recipients of what climate change has to offer, but we might be able to do something about it.

I did say I would not spend a lot of time on the native timber issue, but I note that Hon Steve Martin got stuck into the absolutely admirable member for Kalamunda, a very good friend of mine, and suggested that he had not been accurate in some of the figures he gave about the performance of the FPC. I think what the member for Kalamunda in the other place was referring to was the operational loss that had been endured by the FPC for its native forest operations, which I understand under the latest forest management plan, at least up until 2020, had been a loss in the order of \$2.6 million. There was an operational loss from that. Although we do not expect all government agencies to operate at a profit, and sometimes there is a good reason for us to provide taxpayer assistance to the industry, I think taxpayers have a right to understand that they were subsidising the harvesting of that timber by \$2.4 million.

Hon Steve Martin: There was no line from Treasury though, was there?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Not specifically on that. I think that is why a lot of people used to argue that the books might have been cooked. What is going to be different going forward, when we start talking about silvicultural practices and ecological thinning, is that there will be a great deal of clarity about what is being expended, because it will clearly be expended in order to protect and maximise the ecological sustainability of the forest.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: That \$2.4 million is a one per cent subsidy on the industry.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It is important that it is transparent and I think that is all the member for Kalamunda was drawing attention to.

I am just not sure where Hon Steve Martin is coming from. Does he not want us to go down this path? Clearly, we have a considerable shortage of softwood. All members would know people in the building industry who tell them just how completely challenging this is.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas wanted to know what had been planted under the Gallop and Carpenter governments. In that seven and a half years of government, almost 12 000 hectares were planted, and during the eight and a half years of the Barnett government, 1 500 hectares were planted—12 000 versus 1 500. It is the lack plantings during some of these years that is bearing fruit now, or not bearing fruit, because the first thinning of the pine plantations is done after 10 years. That first thinning goes to providing a range of things, including fencing posts, veneers and manufactured timber products. There is then a second harvest that is done at 18 years, and some of that is used for structural timber. A final harvest is done between 25 and 28 years. Members can see that from 2009 we have had a go-slow and that from 2019 it started to play through some of the challenges. Notwithstanding that, it is clear that we now have this problem and we need to have a quantum leap forward. Almost 6 000 hectares were planted

over the first term of the McGowan government, but we really now want a step-change increase on that and take that up to add a further 30 000 hectares over the next 10 years. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that we would not be planting any this year. We are not planting as many hectares as we would like because the problem has emerged of whether we can purchase land. For this year, 500 hectares are planned. We will use Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and Water Corporation land to do that. However, obviously as soon as we can get this legislation through and have clarity, and have it noncontroversial, and actually purchase land, we will be able to accelerate that. The member asked for more detail about the 140 jobs. Trees do not just spring out of the ground.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Trees do not grow on trees! This is an issue we have with carbon farming: where are we going to get the seedlings from? The nursery activities are, obviously, the planting, maintenance of the plantation, management and production. In those early years, getting up that nursery capability to have that ability to accelerate the rate of planting will be done at the same time as there will be an enormous private sector requirement for trees for carbon farming. That will be a growing area of activity.

Hon Dr Brad Pettitt provided strong support for the bill but also asked why we are limiting ourselves to pine. We are certainly not limited to pine in this legislation; we are focusing on softwoods because that is where the immediate shortfall is. I think everyone is aware that it is very hard to have plantations of jarrah because, if I have this right, its lignotuber nature creates difficulty and it is not often done because the lead times are so extraordinary. I think when either Cambridge University or Oxford University was built, it planted an oak plantation so that in 500 years' time it would have new oaks to repair and restore the university. Hopefully, we can start thinking long term like that.

I have one other thing to add. There are enormous opportunities in the softwood industry. I am not sure whether members are familiar with Accoya timber. I came across this timber down at Mike Hulme's Witchcliffe Ecovillage, where all the external furniture had been built with this treated pine. It is treated with a wood vinegar process, and the warranty that comes with this wood is that it will last for 50 years outdoors and 25 years if it is standing in water. At the end of that time, it is totally compostable because this treatment has no contaminants. It uses a wood vinegar process, which is an interesting process that I think we should look at developing here in Western Australia. Perhaps part of our Just Transition plan could develop that process to treat our pines with wood vinegar.

With that, I know that members have some questions. I thank them for their support. Everyone can see that this is an overwhelmingly positive initiative, and we are very keen to get on with this business.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Committee

The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Peter Foster) in the chair; Hon Alannah MacTiernan (Minister for Regional Development) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I thank the minister for the number of points she clarified in her reply to the second reading debate. One point that added some confusion is the minister's comments on the freehold versus sharefarming debate. In the other place, the minister was very clear about this. I will read a quote from *Hansard*. It states —

... the intention of the government is to buy land so that trees can be planted so that we get not only one rotation for that money but can continue to plant rotation after rotation because we own the land ... the government buying land is to ensure very much that in 20 years' time, when the first crop of trees is cut down ... the private landowner does not decide, "I want to do something else with my land."

That is the minister's quote. I will couch my question around the modelling that would have been done on the number of hectares versus the dollars. I believe the 33 000 hectares that was mentioned is now 30 000 hectares. Are those hectares all freehold or is there a 70–30 split? If not, the minister would not have arrived at that number of hectares. Can I have some clarity about—again, I apologise for going over it—freehold versus sharefarming and the modelling that was done in the initial discussion about it? Let us say it is 30 000 hectares and that will cost us \$350 million.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It is 33 000 hectares. I think I had said 35 000 hectares and I got a signal that I interpreted as 30 000, but it was actually 33 000 hectares. Let me make that very clear: the aspiration is still 33 000 hectares. I made clear that the reason the government's preference is for purchase is that we can hold the land and have multiple rotations. I set that out quite clearly. But I also said that we are not ruling out sharefarming. Obviously, we want to get the trees in the ground—that is our priority. As we are looking for land, it may well be that sensible early opportunities come up that involve sharefarming. We will not just go out and pay whatever it takes; as I understand it, business cases will be put around each acquisition. We are anticipating that some propositions will come forward to government that will involve the leasing of land or sharefarming, and if they make sense, we will certainly look at them. Our preference is to purchase land, but obviously we are not compulsorily acquiring land, so we will be subject to what the market dictates and we will not reject an opportunity such as sharefarming if it makes sense.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Going back to the point of the modelling, though, some work must have been done around what the \$350 million will buy. The minister told us it will buy 33 000 hectares, so was there a split? Was there a 70–30 split? That would vastly affect the total number of features available if it is based on an outright purchase price of —

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: Not necessarily, because the farmer would still be expecting the same return on capital, so I don't think it would vastly impact over that period because you would be entering into lease agreements as opposed to buying it. You would be paying lease payments.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: We can haggle about the maths, minister. If the government intends to buy X number of hectares this year at \$20 000 or \$30 000 a hectare versus a lease payment of some hundreds or small thousands of dollars a hectare, of course, that will affect how much it can buy. Getting back to my point, was modelling done on what the cost will be based on sharefarming?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Our aspiration is to go beyond the 33 000 hectares. We want to build the resource. The financial modelling was done on the purchase of 33 000 hectares, but we are saying that it is possible that we will end up going beyond that by entering into lease agreements. We are keeping that flexibility. There is nothing in this bill today or in the aspirations of the Forest Products Commission that says it will not look at any lease of land until such time as it has purchased 33 000 hectares of land. The plan provides the opportunity to purchase 33 000 hectares; it does not preclude at the same time also entering into share farming arrangements.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Apparently some financial modelling was done, which is good. What average purchase price per hectare was put in that financial modelling?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: For the reasons I think the member himself identified, that information is commercial-in-confidence. We have an obligation to protect the interests of the state in that regard.

While I am here, I forgot to respond to an issue the member raised about the Shire of Cranbrook, which concerned me. I think it was a planning issue. The status of that land and whether it was owned or leased by FPC was irrelevant. The member might want to consider the truth of the proposition that it only withdrew from planning. The fact the shire did not know there might have been some question about the legal capability of FPC to hold that land did not impact upon its planning and its right to challenge it at the State Administrative Tribunal under the planning legislation. The member might want to ask himself whether a more likely explanation is that council's planning officers had advised it that, indeed, it was compliant. That might be a more logical explanation for why that SAT proceeding did not continue.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I thank the minister for that explanation. I might return to that under clause 8 if that is okay. Can the advisers give me any indication whether the method for purchasing land was discussed? Will FPC, for example, be entering into open auctions? Will it be a private treaty? Has there been discussion around that or will that be entirely up to the commission and/or the minister?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: There has not been any determination on that. FPC will use the full range of commercial opportunities that it normally has.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: The figure of 33 000 hectares has been mentioned a couple of times. Is any of that land available through crown land, or does that 33 000 hectares refer to purchased land and there may be crown land opportunities?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We will not be purchasing crown land but there will obviously be a cost in establishing plantations on crown land. For example, the 500 hectares we are doing this year on various crown-owned assets of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and Water Corporation have a cost associated. Those funds can be used for the establishment of that plantation on crown land assets. Generally speaking, we will not be purchasing crown land, although there may be circumstances under which crown land will be available to be disposed of that might be purchased.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I will follow up on a point the minister just raised. The minister mentioned that some of the money will be used to establish plantings on that Water Corporation and DWER land. Does the \$350 000 million include establishment costs and purchase costs?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes, it does include establishment costs.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Do we have a breakdown of roughly what the split will be for establishment versus purchase costs?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: No. We are not going to provide that level of information because we are going to be operating in a marketplace and we do not want to destroy the competitiveness of our processes.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I do not have a large number of questions I want to ask. I just want to run through a couple of bits and pieces. We talked in the second reading debate about annual expenditure. It is a \$350 million program. I imagine it is a bit lumpy. Does the minister have any indication of cash flow out through the forward estimates? I would be interested to see what that might look like, even it is provided at some other stage.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It will be spread evenly across the forward estimates, but there is an agreement with Treasury that we will have the ability to bring forward, or to take back, expenditure depending on the availability issue. If there are good opportunities that cannot be satisfied within that even spread, there will be the capability to bring forward expenditure.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I think flexibility will be pretty important so that is a good thing. In the first couple of years, will the focus be on seedling costs? There is discussion out there in the marketplace about farmers who might like to get into plantations basically being gifted their seedlings to go forward. I assume that would be part of a contract and that there will be significant reasonable set-up costs around production. The other part of that question is: how much of that will be provided by the private sector, and if the private sector does not sell seedlings to FPC for that process, where will they come from?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: There is capability to scale up the Manjimup nursery. The Forest Products Commission has its own nursery. It is able to increase its production rate and its personnel, so it will not need to go out into the private sector. But can I assure the member that there will be more than enough work for the private sector as we try to deal with carbon farming and tree reforestation as part of the carbon farming plans. Farmers will actually be able to get seedlings free of charge for up to 50 hectares of plantation. I will just check whether there will be an obligation at the end of that. How good are we to farmers! The granting of those seedlings will be totally obligation free. Hopefully, we will have some way of ensuring that they are not just on sold, but are actually planted. Farmers who want to produce up to 50 hectares can get their seedlings free of charge. That probably offends the member's free marketeerism!

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Only up to a point! I would be interested to see how many pine trees might be planted in, say, 50 hectares or 120 acres. I imagine that it will be a few thousand.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: It is 1 200 seedlings per hectare.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: Yes; 1 200 seedlings per hectare times 50 hectares is 60 000 trees at a few dollars a pop. That is a pretty generous scheme, to be honest. I guess the farmer has to go through the process of planting, maintaining and watering it et cetera. That is interesting to know; I thank the minister for that.

I just have two or three other questions. I will try to do everything under clause 1 and get it out of the way, and then Hon Steve Martin can have a go. I refer to the impact on FPC staff. There must have been some impact already and there will be some future impact. Can the minister give an indication of the additional staffing that will be required, I guess, in the contracting sector, and the more direct staff that will be required as well?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: There might need to be some small increase in staff in terms of the contractual arrangements, but we do not see that as being massive because it is not a massive change in direction. Obviously, we anticipate that more short-term staff will have to be brought in as we are scaling up the nursery, but they would be jobs of a seasonal nature.

Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS: I thank the minister. I might be able to roll the last couple of questions into one. Manjimup will basically be the one centre for the production of seedlings as that scales up, so that is fine. I thank the minister for that. The FPC—I thank the minister for that. When we get to the planting section, particularly if someone is planting on government-held land, how will the government manage that? Is the government going to contract the plantation out? That is the labour-intensive part, particularly when someone gets to 30 000 hectares; that is a pretty big volume. I am interested in that. Those that are happening on private property might be different, but can the minister give us the run-down on how leased land and government land might be managed? This is my last question; I might as well roll it together. Particularly on state government land, will the government need to provide land managers? Obviously, there are fire risk and biosecurity issues and all those things. That land—bless us all—in many cases might be almost unmanaged. Whether it is Water Corp, Main Roads or anything else, there is a lot of land out there that does not get managed. It might be unallocated crown land or whatever it is. If someone is putting pine trees on there, I imagine that someone, presumably the Forest Products Commission, will have to manage that, so I presume there will be a role for workers to be involved in that process as well. Can the minister give us an outline of both the seeding and planting component, and then the management after that, including fire management? That would just about see me out and just about get us to question time.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: The department contracts out the planting, so private sector people are engaged to do the labour-intensive job of planting. I understand that a lot of the 140 jobs will come from that increase. As we had that big hiatus period of very little planting, these new plantings will not create an additional load. There is not going to be a massive expansion of the estate, because we have forest coming to the end that is being logged. My understanding of the advice is that the department is going to be able to manage this estate with the resources it currently has. There was a period of decline, so contracts have come to their natural end, and because there was an extended period when there were really no plantations, the existing personnel that we have are going to be able to do the fire management of these new plantations that will come onstream.

Hon Dr Steve Thomas: A minor variation of that is not a huge issue.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: The minister mentioned the very generous offer of seedlings for 50 hectares for farmers. Will those farmers keep the carbon credits?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes, they obviously will need to apply to their Clean Energy Regulator to get their project recognised, but certainly they will be entitled to keep the carbon credits. They obviously will have to have a registered scheme, certainly, to get Australian carbon credit units. They will need to have a scheme that is recognised.

The ACTING PRESIDENT (Hon Peter Foster): You have one minute, honourable member.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I will be quick. I refer to the issue of local government rates that was talked about at the briefing.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes, that is a good question. As a matter of principle, the Forest Products Commission has always paid its rates. Although it is not legally required to, there is no financial advantage for it not to, because if it does not pay its rates, under competition policy rules, it is required to pay a tax equivalent to Treasury. Being a good corporate citizen, it has always paid that sum, and there is no financial disadvantage for it to continue to do so.

Committee interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 1404.]

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

SOUTH WEST COACH LINES — COLLIE–BUNBURY SERVICE

244. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the cessation of the South West Coach Lines bus service between Collie and Bunbury on 1 February 2022 and to question without notice 216 asked yesterday.

- (1) On what date was —
 - (a) the Department of Transport first notified that the bus service would be withdrawn by South West Coach lines; and
 - (b) the minister made aware?
- (2) Will Transwa amend the timetable for the bus service connected to the *Australind* train as an interim measure to provide better connections between Bunbury and Collie?
- (3) If yes to (2), when will this start?
- (4) If no to (2), why not?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(4) As stated in the answer provided to the member yesterday, the state government understands the importance of reliable public transport to the Collie and south west community, and it is disappointing that South West Coach Lines made the decision to end its service. The Minister for Transport and Transwa will work with the member for Collie–Preston and the community to discuss their public transport needs and whether any potential improvements can be made to provide better links between Collie and Bunbury.

TIMBER HARVEST PLAN

245. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Minister for Forestry:

The Leader of the House could have just said ditto!

I refer to the government's announcement on 8 September 2021—how timely—on the ending of most native timber harvesting in Western Australia and to question without notice 26, asked on 16 February 2022.

- (1) Further to answers provided to question without notice 26, why is the minister unable to provide jarrah sawlog production figures per calendar year in tonnes given that this is what the question asks for and the Forest Products Commission's jarrah sawlog sales are in tonnes?
- (2) Why are the jarrah sawlog volume figures per calendar year provided in the answer to question without notice 26 approximately 100 000 cubic metres less over the seven-year period than the jarrah sawlog figures per financial year as shown in the Forest Products Commission's annual report?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for question. The Minister for Forestry has provided the following answer.

- (3) The jarrah sawlog production figures requested in question without notice 26 represent the sawlog proportion of deliveries as available under the current forestry management plan 2014–2023. The FMP reports volume in cubic metres and it is standard practice to provide FMP equivalent volumes in cubic metres.
- (2) The Forest Products Commission's annual report showed delivered volume of log grade not FMP equivalent delivered volume. Delivered log grade includes both sawlog and other bole volume.

POLICE — OPERATION REGIONAL SHIELD

246. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the minister's response to question without notice 196.

- (1) How many arrests have been made in relation to Operation Regional Shield?
- (2) In what circumstances are juveniles identified as at-risk normally referred to the Department of Communities?
- (3) In relation to the 322 at-risk juveniles identified in (2) of question without notice 196, on what basis were the 40 identified as requiring referral to the Department of Communities selected?
- (4) Were attempts made to refer any of the remaining 282 at-risk juveniles to the Department of Communities; and, if no, why not?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of this question. I answer on behalf of the minister representing the Minister for Police. The following information has been provided by the Minister for Police.

- (1) There have been 66.
- (2) Where police have concerns for the ongoing safety or wellbeing of juveniles, the Department of Communities is formally advised.
- (3) It was based on when police moved juveniles to a safe place and held ongoing concerns for their safety or wellbeing.
- (4) Although 40 formal referrals were made, the details of the remaining juveniles engaged during Operation Regional Shield were provided by police to the Department of Communities.

COMMUNITIES — CHILDREN WITH HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS —
RESIDENTIAL CARE — REVIEW

247. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Independent Review into the Department of Communities' policies and practices in the placement of children with harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings*, tabled on 15 September 2021, and note that on page 19 it states —

Communities has developed a draft *Framework for Guiding Responses to Harmful Sexual Behaviours in Children and Young People in the WA Child Protection Service System*.

- (1) Has the framework been finalised?
- (2) If yes to (1), when did this occur?
- (3) If no to (1), when will it be completed?
- (4) Will you table a copy of both the draft framework and the finalised framework?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) No.
- (2) Not applicable.
- (3) It is anticipated that the framework will be available for public release in the second quarter of 2022.
- (4) The finalised framework will be tabled when it is completed.

CORONAVIRUS — COMMUNITIES — FOSTER CARERS

248. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Child Protection:

- (1) Since the current outbreak of COVID-19 began in December 2021, how many foster carers have reached out to the Department of Communities—child protection and family services—to request help in managing the spread of the virus at home and protecting members of the household who have tested negative when one or more householders has a positive case of COVID-19?
- (2) If yes to (1), how many requests for assistance has the department received?
- (3) What advice has the Department of Communities provided to foster carers for managing the spread of COVID-19 at home?
- (4) What support has the Department of Communities provided to foster carers whose households have confirmed cases of COVID-19?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) There is no differentiation between requests for assistance from foster carers and other members of the community. Any additional supports provided on top of the standard welfare response are recorded on individual case files and not collated centrally. Emergency welfare support is provided to eligible people with COVID-19 or those required to self-isolate. This emergency support is subject to a welfare assessment.
- (3)–(4) The *Casework practice manual* provides policy and practice direction for managing COVID-19 in the home, which is regularly updated in accordance with health advice. Communities also provides advice to carers to support children dealing with isolation, including a dedicated section on the WA government’s website titled “COVID-19 coronavirus: Out of home care”. There has been ongoing liaison with the Foster Care Association of WA to gain information on any concerns being raised with it by carers and for those concerns to be addressed by Communities. If the carer is too unwell to provide care, Communities will source alternative arrangements, firstly, by a natural support—friends and family—then through formal avenues, that is, another carer, and will maintain contact with the carer. In 2020, \$3.6 million in one-off COVID-19 support payments were made to assist foster carers with buying essential items and covering additional expenses to ensure children remained safe, healthy and connected to school as part of the WA recovery plan.

CYCLONE SEROJA — WESTERN POWER — GENERATOR ASSISTANCE PAYMENT

249. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the media statement issued on 3 June 2021 entitled “Funding and new power solutions for Cyclone Seroja recovery” and question on notice 459 asked on 14 December 2021.

- (1) Has the \$280 000 promised for the generator assistance payment been fully distributed to impacted customers?
- (2) How many customers applied for the generator assistance payment and how many were approved?
- (3) Given 634 customers applied for the generator assistance payment as at 15 February 2022, will the minister extend funding to support all eligible customers required to pay for their own generator fuel while awaiting reconnection?
- (4) Noting comments from the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Regional Development that small businesses should purchase their own generators to avoid outages, will the government deliver a generator subsidy payment to support small businesses during future outages?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The following information has been provided to me.

- (1) Western Power has paid \$245 000 to eligible customers.
- (2) Western Power has received 644 claims and paid 254 claims. Ten recent applications are under review.
- (3) All eligible customers have been approved.
- (4) The minister advises that he is not aware of the comments to which the member refers.

COMMUNITIES — POLICE RAID

250. Hon PETER COLLIER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Community Services:

I refer to the raid by the Western Australia Police Force on the home of a female Aboriginal public officer employed at the Department of Communities and to the minister’s repeated comments that the complaint to WA police concerned the alleged leaking of 5 484 emails containing 2 646 documents, 151 presentations and 332 spreadsheets.

- (1) Will the minister confirm that all the 5 484 documents were allegedly leaked by the one female Aboriginal public officer?
- (2) If no to (1), how many of the 5 484 documents is the female Aboriginal public officer alleged to have leaked?
- (3) If yes to (1), how many documents in total were allegedly leaked by the eight public officers employed by the Department of Communities that were reported to WA police for allegedly leaking documents?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(3) The Western Australia Police Force conducted a criminal investigation and questions regarding the outcomes should be directed to the WA Police Force. The Department of Communities alleges that 5 484 emails were sent from a senior public officer’s Communities email account to a private Gmail account.

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — WAIT TIMES

251. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to child development services provided by the WA Country Health Service. What is the current median wait time for children in the primary years of schooling to access paediatricians and clinical psychologists?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. To allow for a fulsome and accurate answer, I ask that the member put that question on notice.

POLICE — FIREARM OWNERSHIP

252. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the minister representing the Minister for Police:

I refer to the picture displayed in various recent media reports of the Minister for Police and Premier with a .50 calibre rifle when announcing planned changes to firearm legislation.

- (1) How many .50 calibre rifles are registered in Western Australia?
- (2) Can the minister advise of possible legitimate uses for .50 calibre rifles in Western Australia, and if they include the control of feral camels?
- (3) Can the minister advise where the police sourced the .50 calibre rifle that he was pictured with?
- (4) Has the Western Australia Police Force ever purchased a .50 calibre rifle; and, if so, when was the most recent time such a firearm was purchased?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

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

- (1) There are 20.
- (2) There is no legitimacy to any proposal that a .50 calibre rifle is required for the destruction of feral camels. Expert advice has outlined that the largest firearm required to deal with feral animals in WA is a .308 calibre rifle.
- (3) A licensed firearm dealer within Western Australia.
- (4) Yes, on 24 February 2022.

TOURISM — *THE PROJECT***253. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Tourism:**

I refer to the minister's refusal to answer to my question yesterday about funding provided to producers of *The Project*.

- (1) How much state government funding was provided to *The Project*?
- (2) What is the expected return on investment for that funding?
- (3) Was the decision to enter into this contract unanimously supported by Tourism WA?
- (4) Did the minister approve the agreement; and, if not, when was the minister advised about it?
- (5) Will the minister table the agreement; and, if not, why not?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. I answer on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services. The following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Tourism.

- (1)–(5) Tourism Western Australia has advised there is insufficient time to assess the media partnership arrangements against its internal policy and guidelines for the release of information that is commercial in nature. Therefore, the Minister for Tourism asks the honourable member to place this aspect of the question on notice.

NARROGIN AND WICKEPIN BUSHFIRE — WESTERN POWER NOTIFICATION

254. Hon STEVE MARTIN to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the investigation referred to in question without notice 13 asked on 15 February regarding the Narrogin–Wickepin bushfire that occurred on 6 February.

- (1) Has the investigation been completed?
 - (a) If yes, when was it completed; and
 - (b) if not, when is completion expected?

- (2) If yes to (1), has the minister been made aware of the findings?
 (3) If yes to (1), will the minister please table the findings of the investigation?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I am sorry, member. I do not appear to have that. I will just ask my office, who are hopefully listening, to see what has happened to that one.

Hon Samantha Rowe: Was that 268?

Hon Steve Martin: Yes, 268.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Yes. Problem solved. It is to the minister representing the Minister for Commerce, correct?

Hon Steve Martin: No. It is to the minister representing the Minister for Energy.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Okay. Anyhow, I will read the answer that we have been given.

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

- (1) No. The investigation is still ongoing.
 (a) Not applicable.
 (b) No date has been set.
 (2)–(3) Not applicable.

CORONAVIRUS — STATE OF EMERGENCY — PLANNING

255. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Planning:

- (1) How many decisions have been made under regulation 78H of the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 since it came into effect on 3 April 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic?
 (2) How many of those decisions could not have been made without regulation 78H?
 (3) Who or what body made those decisions —
 (a) an officer of the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage under delegated authority of the Western Australian Planning Commission;
 (b) as part of a joint development assessment panel decision; or
 (c) by the Western Australian Planning Commission on the recommendation of the state development assessment unit?
 (4) Would the minister please list the decisions by project and proponent for each category above?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(4) Regulation 78H of the Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015 enables the Minister for Planning to issue a notice of exemption from planning requirements in a state of emergency. The minister issued such a notice on 8 April 2020, and an amended notice on 30 April 2020. As local governments administer development control under their local planning schemes, including any proposals exempted under the 78H notice of exemption, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage does not keep records of such decisions.

STATE ECONOMY

256. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the minister representing the Treasurer:

I am sure that the Minister for Emergency Services will miss his Thursday!

I refer to the release of the Standard and Poor's update for the Western Australian economy released on 21 March 2022, and to the Treasurer's responding media release yesterday.

- (1) Does the Treasurer agree with page 2 of the report that "in fiscal 2021 (year ended June 30, 2021) royalty income surged by a remarkable 44% to \$A12.2 billion"?
 (2) Does the Treasurer agree with page 2 of the report that the fiscal economy "since mid-2020 has propelled broad-based revenue growth, including in transfer duties and payroll taxes"?
 (3) Does the Treasurer agree with page 2 of the report that the state "is now benefiting from top-up GST grants worth an estimated \$A3.7 billion over fiscal years 2021 and 2022"?
 (4) Why does the Premier's Statement not acknowledge revenue growth at all but hides the truth of booming income, when the S&P report it is based on highlights it all the way through the report?

Hon SAMANTHA ROWE replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question and provide the following answer on behalf of the Minister for Emergency Services representing the Treasurer.

- (1) Royalty income in 2020–21 was \$12 181 million, as outlined on page 63 of the 2021–22 *Government mid-year financial projections statement*. The McGowan Labor government's efforts to keep the COVID-19 virus out of the state paid massive dividends for the state. If our state had had the very long lockdowns experienced in New South Wales and Victoria, we would not have been able to take advantage of the high iron ore price. Part of the reason for the high iron ore price was that our competitors, including Brazil, had significantly reduced shipments due to the impact of the pandemic.
- (2) Western Australia's domestic economy has been the strongest in the country throughout the pandemic, growing by 7.2 per cent in annual average terms between 2019 and 2021. The strong economic activity has translated into significant growth in revenues for transfer duty—also supported by the McGowan Labor government's building bonus—payroll tax, vehicle licence and insurance duty.
- (3) The McGowan Labor government's efforts to campaign constructively to the commonwealth won a fairer share of the GST for Western Australia, including calling for a review by the Productivity Commission. This is unlike the previous Liberal–National government that failed for years to achieve a better GST deal for Western Australia, but spent billions on the state's credit card as if a deal had been done.
- (4) Iron ore prices are highly volatile. Given this inherent volatility, the McGowan Labor government's budgets are based on a prudent iron ore methodology. The McGowan Labor government's responsible management of the state finances has reversed the reckless economic management of the previous Liberal–National government.

ESPERANCE PORT — IRON ORE CAPACITY

257. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Ports:

I refer to the minister's response to question without notice 172.

- (1) Are the projected iron ore tonnages to be exported through the port of Esperance for the financial years 2021–22, 2022–23 and 2023–24 tied to a single company or multiple companies?
- (2) If the tonnages relate to multiple companies, can the minister please provide a breakdown of the tonnages per company?
- (3) What specific safeguards does the Southern Ports Authority have in place to avoid capacity banking at the port of Esperance?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) The projected tonnages are based upon an assessment of demand from current and prospective iron ore exporters in the region.
- (3) The award of any export licence includes confirmation of mine plans, regulatory approvals, and supply chain agreements as necessary. Total allocated tonnage is maintained within the capacity of the iron ore circuit. The Southern Ports Authority has a strong commercial imperative to maximise the full capacity of the port on behalf of all current and future exporters and importers.

COMMUNITIES — CHILDREN WITH HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS —
RESIDENTIAL CARE — REVIEW

258. Hon NICK GOIRAN to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's *Independent review into the Department of Communities' policies and practices in the placement of children with harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings*, tabled on 15 September 2021, and note finding 2 —

The information and knowledge management systems of the Department are not fit for purpose and impede decision making for children and young people and organisational accountability.

Further, at page 41 the review notes —

The Review was not made aware of plans by the Department to address the concerns identified in relation to its current IMS.

- (1) Is the minister aware of any plan to address this finding and the commissioner's concerns?
- (2) Will the minister table the plan or any other document relating to any briefing the minister has received on the plan?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(2) Yes, the Department of Communities has internally prioritised funds to progress the development of a business case to replace the current case management system. This work includes seeking advice from independent information and communications technology research and advisory consultants and other Australian child protection jurisdictions on contemporary approaches to legacy application modernisation. Based on this advice, Communities will undertake a three-phase approach to replace or enhance the existing functional capability of the case management system.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT — STATIONS — SOLAR PANELS

259. Hon Dr BRAD PETTITT to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the media statement “McGowan government rolling out solar panels on train and bus stations” of Tuesday, 15 June 2021.

- (1) To date, how many train stations have had solar panels installed?
 (2) To date, how many bus stations have had solar panels installed?
 (3) Is the government on track to reach the full rollout of solar panels installed at 50 train stations by mid-2022?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1)–(3) A total of eight train stations and eight bus stations have had solar panels installed. The state government will continue to deliver its commitment to install these solar panel upgrades across the state.

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES — PAYMENT SCHEME

260. Hon MARTIN ALDRIDGE to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the media statement issued on 23 March titled “Christmas power review release and outage payment increased”.

- (1) Has the state government completed its investigation into the extended outage payment scheme as outlined by the minister in correspondence to me on 8 March?
 (2) If yes to (1), will the minister please table any report recommendations or correspondence relating to the findings of this investigation?
 (3) Will the minister ensure households that experienced extended outages between 29 and 31 December are also made eligible for this increased payment, noting that this time frame falls between the special Christmas outage payment of 24 to 28 December and the increased payment commencing from 1 January?
 (4) If no to (3), why not?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

The Minister for Energy has provided the following information.

- (1) Yes.
 (2) This information is cabinet-in-confidence.
 (3)–(4) Customers during this period will receive \$80, which is the amount provided under the previous Liberal–National government in these circumstances.

ABORIGINAL OUTCOMES DIVISION — STAFF

261. Hon PETER COLLIER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Community Services:

- (1) When was the Aboriginal outcomes unit established within the Department of Communities?
 (2) What was the total FTE upon the establishment of the AOU?
 (3) What was the number of Aboriginal people in total in the answer to (2)?
 (4) What is the current total FTE of the AOU?
 (5) What is the number of Aboriginal people currently employed in the AOU?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) The Aboriginal outcomes division was established in name on 1 July 2021, with the finalisation of the structural change in the HR system completed on 30 August 2021.

- (2) The total FTE was 31.8 FTE—that is, 32 employees—as at August 2021.
- (3) The total number of FTE self-declared Aboriginal employees was 13 as at 30 August 2021.
- (4) The total FTE of the AOU is 40.2—that is, 41 employees.
- (5) There are 15 self-declared Aboriginal employees, or 14.8 FTE.

METROPOLITAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICE — WAIT TIMES

262. Hon DONNA FARAGHER to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the metropolitan Child Development Service. What is the current median wait time to access a physiotherapist through this service for children in their primary years of school?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

It is 9.2 months.

CORONAVIRUS — RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS

263. Hon JAMES HAYWARD to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to the WA government’s commendable decision to provide free rapid antigen test kits to the Western Australian community.

- (1) Of the 30 million RAT kits that the government has received to date, how many have not been distributed at this point in time?
- (2) What are the approximate expiry dates for the RAT kits currently held by the government?
- (3) When will the government receive the additional 80 million RAT kits it has ordered?
- (4) Is the government concerned it may have overestimated the community demand for RAT kits?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

The Department of Health has acquired rapid antigen tests for use within the WA health system. Questions regarding RATs acquired by the government should be directed to the Premier.

MINES, INDUSTRY REGULATION AND SAFETY —
FRONTLINE STAFF — PROJECT APPROVALS

264. Hon TJORN SIBMA to the minister representing the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the 2021–22 state budget allocation of a \$120 million package to recruit “150 frontline officers to speed up project approvals” across five agencies, including the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.

- (1) Prior to the budget announcement, how many frontline officers, by FTE and headcount, at DMIRS were primarily performing approvals tasks?
- (2) As at today, how many frontline officers, by FTE and headcount, are performing approvals tasks at DMIRS?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question.

The Minister for Mines and Petroleum has provided the following answer.

It is not possible to provide the information requested in the time required and therefore I ask the member to place the question on notice.

DEVELOPMENTWA — LAND SUPPLY — KALGOORLIE

265. Hon NEIL THOMSON to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Lands:

I refer to regional land supply.

- (1) How many developed lots have been finalised for sale by DevelopmentWA in Kalgoorlie for the calendar year 2021 and separately since 1 January 2022?
- (2) Of those lots brought onto the market by DevelopmentWA respectively for 2021 and 2022 —
 - (a) how many have sold; and
 - (b) what was the average time on the market?
- (3) Does the minister have plans to increase lot supply in Kalgoorlie; and, if yes, what number of lots are expected to come onto the market by the end of 2022?

Hon SUE ELLERY replied:

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

- (1) In 2021, eight lots were available at the beginning of the year and a further 31 new lots were released in October. No new lots have yet been released in 2022 as all stock was released in 2021.
- (2)
 - (a) There were 38.
 - (b) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, demand across the state has seen significant change. All lots available at the beginning of 2021 had been on the market for five years. The 31 lots released in October 2021 were sold within five months. These are still under construction.
- (3) Yes. Planning and design for further stages are proposed for future release as part of the GreenView estate, with the number and timing of lots being released subject to contractor availability and statutory and project approvals.

CORONAVIRUS — PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL MEASURES

266. Hon Dr STEVE THOMAS to the Minister for Regional Development:

I refer to today's media release by the Premier about the easing of public health measures from Thursday, 31 March, which I note was an hour or two after the minister berated the opposition for daring to debate emergency management measures. Given the motion moved by Hon Tjorn Sibma, will the minister now apologise to him for the debate that she engaged in, particularly when she told him that today was a terrible day to debate emergency measures in relation to COVID?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

Obviously, Hon Dr Steve Thomas lives in a parallel universe! I started my contribution by acknowledging that it was appropriate that the opposition raise these issues.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Members opposite have completely misunderstood their own motion. They wanted to cease the emergency powers. They were not asking for the removal of the level 2 restrictions; they were asking why we had the emergency restrictions under the Emergency Management Act and the Public Health Act. That is what they were arguing. I pointed out the actual reasons. I addressed that foursquare. I talked about the vaccinations that come under the public health provisions. I then talked about the whole range of directions that are in place, and that will remain in place for some time, to give us the power to control COVID. It was not a motion about removing level 2 restrictions. It was a motion asking why we had not ceased to have the state of emergency under those two pieces of legislation.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Members opposite do not even understand their own motion. They have conflated all these provisions.

WA RALLY VEHICLE REGISTRATION SCHEME*Question without Notice 225 — Answer Advice*

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [5.04 pm]: I will start by making this point: no-one on this side needs to be rescued, least of all the Minister for Regional Development my friend!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would like to provide an answer to Hon James Hayward's question without notice 225 asked yesterday, which I seek leave to have incorporated into *Hansard*.

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

-
- (1)–(3) The Department of Transport has worked collaboratively with Motorsport Australia to define and clarify the general requirements and administrative procedures for rally vehicles in Western Australia and will re-engage with Motorsport Australia in due course.
-

QUESTION ON NOTICE 568*Paper Tabled*

A paper relating to an answer to question on notice 568 was tabled by **Hon Alannah MacTiernan (Minister for Regional Development)**.

FOREST PRODUCTS AMENDMENT BILL 2021*Committee*

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. The Deputy Chair of Committees (Hon Jackie Jarvis) in the chair; Hon Alannah MacTiernan (Minister for Regional Development) in charge of the bill.

Clause 1: Short title —

Committee was interrupted after the clause had been partly considered.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: If the minister does not mind, I might ask a few of the carbon-trading questions under clause 1 as opposed to some of the specific carbon-related clauses. Just before question time, the minister mentioned that individual farmers will keep the carbon credits and will have access as long as they go through the process and register for the scheme. Is there a minimum scale of carbon farming enterprise that can be registered? Is five hectares a scheme? Is 10 hectares a scheme?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: Obviously, it is a federal scheme and it sets the rules. We understand that there is no minimum, but the cost associated with setting up a scheme and putting it in place normally determines a size. I know that organisations like Carbon Positive Australia, for example, which is a not-for-profit in this space, will not look at projects under 10 hectares. I suppose that, as some sort of guide, that might be the scale one would need to make this economically viable, but there is nothing stopping an individual from covering the cost to set it up for a lesser area.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I thank the minister. I assume that the Forest Products Commission will trade, if that is the correct term, in the Australian carbon credit units scheme or a variety of schemes.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: At this point, the FPC is dealing only in ACCUs, the Australian carbon credit units. Theoretically, it could look at some other standard. I know that in terms of the carbon farming schemes that we have been running, we have set the bar at ACCUs rather than some of those other schemes. I am sure that will be a consideration when FPC looks at which schemes it might participate in, but there is generally a lifting of the bar.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Excuse my ignorance, but do other government enterprises have experience in carbon trading?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: All I can say is that the Forest Products Commission works with Synergy on its offsets program, but I cannot say definitively that any of the other energy agencies do not have some programs. I am not sure about Horizon Energy, for example; it may well have some experience. This bill relates to the FPC and we can say that the FPC deals with Synergy and its carbon offsets.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: Can we get some indication from the advisers around any modelling that was done? We heard the discussion in the other place about the lucrative carbon market. How lucrative is it? Has any modelling been done on what the impact of this will be for Treasury?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I suppose we could do modelling, but the price at this point is so volatile. We know that generally it is moving up. The Australian carbon credit unit price went up from around \$20 per tonne to \$55 per tonne, and then there were some strange manoeuvrings with the federal government and it collapsed back to about \$40, but the trajectory is upward. We have not predicated anything on a particular price. We simply want to make sure that we can avail ourselves of this in the future. We can be assured when we look at what is happening elsewhere around the world that those prices will be increasing.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: What is the mechanism by which the funds will be raised through carbon trading? Will they be ploughed back into the FPC, for example, or will they go to Treasury?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: We have not done it yet so we have not decided on the mechanism of how that will be done. When the FPC is in a position to start purchasing ACCUs and to potentially trade in ACCUs, which will be some time down the track, a decision will be made about that. Obviously, there will be a range of options to allow some of that money to be either retained by the FPC or used by the FPC to fund other operations, but those decisions have not been made yet. This is simply enabling legislation.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I appreciate that this is outside the scope of this bill, but will that require another piece of legislation? Will it be a matter of ministerial discretion or will it be up to Treasury?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It would not need legislation. It would be simply a government decision.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am ignorant of how the ACCUs work. The minister mentioned in her second reading reply that there are various options to claim carbon credits. A person can take money annually in advance of when the 25-year time line is due or they can take a lump sum payment at the end.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: I am not aware I said that.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: I am sorry. I assume that up-front payments will be made in advance of when the carbon reaches its maturity date. Is that being considered and when does the carbon mature? Do the trees have to be in the ground for a certain number of years before a person can claim a carbon credit?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: In general ACCUs, there is a minimum requirement of 25 years for the project to get a first payment after five years, subject to verification, and then subsequent payments up to 20 years. The member may be confusing this with our land restoration fund, which we will use to purchase some of those ACCUs up-front to assist farmers entering into carbon farming. But in terms of a participant like the FPC, with the general trade, the way the ACCUs work will be that the first payment is after five years.

Hon STEVE MARTIN: If we were to plant X number of hectares today, what percentage would make it to 25 years? I assume we do not get paid for the thinnings along the way, so what percentage would the minister expect to get through to maturity?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: I think this is really going beyond the bill, which is just enabling legislation. There are a variety of methodologies, and the methodology used by the FPC is one that has the thinning regime built into it. The silviculture that is particular to the plantation timber is accounted for in the whole way that carbon credits are counted.

Clause put and passed.

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

PURPLE DAY

Statement

HON MARTIN ALDRIDGE (Agricultural) [5.18 pm]: I rise this afternoon to recognise that this Saturday is wear purple for epilepsy awareness day or Purple Day. Purple Day is a global initiative dedicated to raising epilepsy awareness, dispelling myths and increasing support to those affected. Founded in 2008 by nine-year-old Cassidy Megan in Canada, the Purple Day concept was born out of Cassidy's own struggles with epilepsy, her motivation to get people talking about the condition and her desire to let those impacted by seizures know that they are not alone. Cassidy named the day Purple Day after the internationally recognised colour for epilepsy being lavender. Since that time, Purple Day has grown into a much-loved and supported national awareness day with thousands of people across Australia rallying their communities to raise much-needed awareness and funds for those affected. In 2021, people in more than 85 countries participated in the day. Each year, landmarks all over the world light up purple on Purple Day to show support and help bring awareness to those suffering with epilepsy. This year I am told that a record 42 Western Australian landmarks will light up purple for Epilepsy WA across the state. I pause there to recognise the exchange of letters that we have had this week and, hopefully, in future years, Parliament will be one of those landmarks that will light up for the occasion.

Epilepsy is caused by electrical disturbances in the brain resulting in seizures of various types. It can be confronting to people who do not understand what is going on, which has led to many unnecessary assumptions about the disease and the capabilities of those who live with it. Studies show that one in 25 people will be diagnosed with epilepsy at some point in their life and one in 10 people with epilepsy will suffer a seizure-related injury, many of them life threatening.

In Australia, epilepsy is in the top five causes of avoidable deaths in young people aged five to 29 years and is the fourth most common neurological disorder after migraines, strokes and Alzheimer's. Those living with epilepsy and their loved ones experience significantly high rates of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder compared with the general population. People living with epilepsy have a mortality risk that is two to three times higher than the general population. The risk of sudden and unexpected death is approximately 24 times higher.

I draw members' attention to a media statement and report that was released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare titled "National report shines light on epilepsy in Australia". I would like to quote a couple of short paragraphs, which say this —

According to the most recently analysed data, there were more than 31,000 hospital admissions associated with epilepsy in 2018–19, two-thirds of which recorded epilepsy as the primary reason for admission.

Additionally, there were over 20,700 epilepsy-related emergency department presentations in 2018–19, with over half of these presentations requiring admission to hospital.

'The majority of epilepsy-related emergency department presentations were triaged as urgent (seen within 30 minutes). A small proportion of presentations required resuscitation.'

In its 2020 report, Deloitte Access Economics calculated the economic burden of epilepsy to be \$1.27 billion per annum to Western Australia alone. I draw members' attention to the Epilepsy Association of Western Australia, which is more simply referred to as Epilepsy WA, that works tirelessly to enhance the wider community's understanding of the condition, fight against stigma and discrimination and improve seizure management confidence. Epilepsy WA has been supporting the Western Australian community since 1963. I know that Hon Kate Doust has spoken on several occasions in this place about the important work of this organisation. It provides many services, including raising awareness, training, information and support networks for more than 27 000 Western Australians currently living with epilepsy and their families. It currently does this with no government funding and relies solely on the generosity of the community to continue its activities, which are many and varied.

Yesterday, during question time I asked a question of the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health. The first two parts read —

- (1) Has the state government completed its review of community-based neurological organisations in Western Australia?
- (2) If yes to (1), can the minister please table the review; and, if no to (1), when will the review be complete?

The answer I was provided with was —

- (1) No.
- (2) The internal review of community-based neurological services is scheduled for completion early May 2022.

That gives me some hope because something else happens in early May 2022, and that is the handing down of the state budget. I hope that it is not just a sheer coincidence that these two events are aligning in May of this year.

I want to read in the personal experience of a mother of a child with epilepsy. Together with the Premier and several other ministers, in October last year I received a letter from Sharon Schryver. She said this —

I am writing to you as a concerned parent, approx. 6 years ago my daughters life was turned upside down through no fault of her own;

You see she was assaulted at school, another student who had previously been a friend when they were in Primary School, decided to listen to a rumour; instead of speaking to Taylor she walked up behind her and grabbed her hair, and proceeded to ram her head into a brick wall.

This unprovoked attack resulted in a 1 day suspension from school – Yep one day, as Education Dept policy doesn't allow for students to be suspended for more than the conclusion of term, this occurred the day before the 2 week break, so she received one day; while Taylor has ongoing effects.

After numerous medical appointments, scans and missed school; Taylor was finally given a diagnosis she now has Epilepsy ; finally we had reason! For the “headaches” the “vagueness” the tiredness.

However this has meant her teen years, and now her early 20s have been held hostage by all of this, she is unable to drive, she is unable to attend normal social gatherings with friends, her social network has decreased dramatically, she struggled to find employment—all due to acting impulsively and destroying someone else's life over a rumour.

Taylor's lifeline through this recently has been the support network she has and the one she is developing with the assistance of Epilepsy WA—Emma and her staff including the volunteers are amazing, we attended a Conference on the 22nd October—Did you know that this valuable resource to the Epilepsy community is not receiving funding from the state Government. One of only 2 such organisations in the country that is not, in a state like WA this is not good enough !

1 IN 25 West Australians are going to be diagnosed with this condition , it is stressful, it is stigmatised, the patient and their loved ones experience PTSD—Something I never took into consideration since Taylor's diagnosis, but makes perfect sense, imagine for a moment the worry you have when your child goes out partying/socialising and the concern that hits regarding their safety and them getting home ok.... NOW my life exists of this worry every moment of every day, Taylor could fall to the ground and have a seizure and stop breathing, she could DIE and she hasn't left home, or she is at work, or she is with me and just gone to the bathroom!

And yet the Government in WA the one with the most advantageous budget in the Country doesn't deem my daughter and others like her worthy of helping!

Taylor would benefit so much from funding to Epilepsy WA—they have had to cancel support groups in our local area as they can't be funded and supported; imagine the difference it makes when you can speak and interact with people who understand, and know where you are coming from; they know your pain; they know your confusion; they understand your frustration; they care !

Hopefully someone within the government can look deep within themselves and help ! put yourself in our shoes—We never know when or if a seizure can hit (Epilepsy WA has the largest range of detection devices in the COUNTRY which they loan to people so they can determine if these devices may give them peace of mind or even that few moments of notice of a seizure ! something that will cease if they don't get help)—We don't sleep properly, we are constantly on guard trying so hard to protect and assist our loved ones—and all we are asking is for someone to listen and to help us to help them..

I do not think I could have said it as well as Ms Schryver did in that letter to me and the then Minister for Health and the Premier. Ms Schryver makes the really important point that we are one of only two states in Australia that

does not provide support by way of funding to our epilepsy association. Given the prevalence of this condition and the likelihood that many Western Australians will be diagnosed with and impacted by epilepsy, I use this opportunity this afternoon, ahead of the government receiving the review in May and a budget being handed down, to ask the government to give some consideration to supporting this very important community organisation.

HARMONY DAY

Statement

HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan) [5.28 pm]: Sorry; the glasses have to come off before the mask comes off these days.

Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to participate in the debate on the motion Hon Martin Pritchard moved yesterday to acknowledge Harmony Day, so I want to make a few comments and reference a couple of fantastic organisations in my electorate of South Metropolitan Region.

During my time in Parliament, one of the things I have thought has been missing in my region is appropriate services and resources for migrants. There were services in Fremantle a long time ago but they were perhaps not up to the level required by migrants and refugees currently coming to our state. For a number of years, I have been talking to organisations and councils about the opportunity to establish a facility in the electorate. Fortunately, about two years ago, the then CEO of the City of Canning, Arthur Kyron, listened. He picked up the idea and took it to the council. The council purchased a property in Hill View Place, in Bentley. He then sought additional funds from the City of Canning and other places and they have expanded and updated the building.

On 25 February this year, the facility was opened. It is called the Hillview Intercultural Community Centre, which is a bit of a mouthful. It is a fantastic facility and it has been funded by the council. It cost about \$6 million to get up. They have revamped this building and upgraded the street. They have redesigned and redeveloped the little park across the road, which is fantastic. I used to drop my kids off to after-school care there, although that does not exist now. The whole area has been beautifully upgraded. There has also been money from the federal government to upgrade the road and from the state government, via Hannah Beazley, the member for Victoria Park, who was able to get a state government contribution of \$285 000 to install a communal kitchen, some furniture and audiovisual and IT equipment. The RAC and Lotterywest also made commitments.

There are meeting rooms, computer training rooms, a significant hall and communal kitchens where community groups can come in and cook up a feast for their various events. There is the capacity for dance classes and language classes. There is an anchor tenant to provide advice and support to migrants and refugees throughout that area, and I think that is a significant change.

It is the only place of its kind in the south metropolitan region, so I wanted to acknowledge the work that Arthur Kyron did and thank Mayor Patrick Hall for pushing it through. Two of the senior staff there have been integral to this change and the community engagement that they have conducted over the last six to 12 months to get feedback and ideas from the community. I think there were about 76 programs ready to roll out in this facility before they even opened the doors, so Sarah McQuade and Sarah Janali from the council certainly deserve to be acknowledged for this great resource.

Initially I would have liked it to be a facility just for women, but it is now for everyone, and that is great. It means that those people who traditionally would have had to catch a bus or driven up to Mirrabooka no longer have to do that. If they live in the south metropolitan region, they can go to Bentley and access this facility seven days a week. There is also a children's library on the ground floor. Over an extended time, it will provide an exceptionally great service to the south metropolitan region and I acknowledge the contribution that the City of Canning has made. It is leading the pack in my region in respect of how it addresses these issues for its ever-growing communities and provides that level of support.

Given that it is Harmony Week, I also acknowledge William Langford Community House. Both Hon Pierre Yang and I are members of the board. William Langford Community House has been around for more than 20 years and provides a very wide range of services to both migrants and refugees who live in the area. The services range from computer services, languages, arts and crafts, cooking, and support services. Maria Cavill and her staff and volunteers do a cracking job. Even with the complications of COVID, they have continued to deliver a wide range of programs and are tackling the challenges of doing online work.

These are two exceptionally good organisations in the south metropolitan region delivering on a daily basis for people from a wide range of ethnic communities. Those are the types organisations that we should acknowledge and celebrate for the work they do to provide that support.

Harmony Week, of course, is a time when we celebrate the diversity in our state and acknowledge the strength it gives us as a community. Sadly, there is always a flip side, and I want to say that even this week there was a report from Diversity Council Australia that referenced the incidence of racism at work and talked about how about nine in every 10 Australians have experienced some form of racism at work. This is a conversation we need to have as a broader community. It is good to celebrate our diversity, but we cannot ignore the fact that there are still problems.

I know that Rio Tinto also acknowledged in a recent report that it has significant issues of racism in its workplaces and is seeking to address that. We had a great debate yesterday, but I hope that perhaps some time in the future we might have debates about what we can do to reduce these levels of racism that sadly still exist in pockets of our community.

I will give members an example of a recent experience that I had to deal with. During the election last year, I was fortunate enough to work very closely with my good friend Dr Jags Krishnan and help him become the member for Riverton. As members know, Dr Jags is from India. He is a fantastic guy. Since he has been here, he has raised a lovely family and grown his business. He has contributed to his community and will continue to do so. Particularly on the pre-poll, which went for three weeks, as members all recall, almost on a daily basis —

Hon Sue Ellery: On a daily basis.

Hon KATE DOUST: On a daily basis—thank you, Leader of the House—Dr Jags was abused. He had people come up to him and say, “We don’t want you here; you’re Indian; go back to where you come from; you’re not up for this.” Some of it was absolutely vile stuff.

Hon Sue Ellery: It was one of the most disgraceful things I have seen in more than 20 years of campaigning.

Hon KATE DOUST: Thank you, leader; I agree with you.

Hon Alannah MacTiernan: He won the election and he proved them all wrong!

Hon KATE DOUST: That is right. It got to the point at which I think he was in shock, because he had never had to deal with this in his line of work, his community or his temple, and a couple of times I had to actually pull him away when people got right in his face to have a go at him. I told him to walk away. It was so distressing for him. It reminded me that, sadly, we still have people in our community who cannot see beyond colour or language and have to have a go. They forget that other than our Indigenous friends in our state, we are all the children of migrants or refugees, and we should all acknowledge that we come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and have no right to be critical of or attack anyone else because of where they come from.

I think it would be helpful at some point for us to have an open debate about these things. I know that another good friend of ours on the Labor team, Sam Lim, is running for the seat of Tangney. He is an outstanding candidate. Sam is of Malaysian Chinese heritage, and I genuinely hope that he does not have to deal with the same vile attacks in the same sort of areas as he strives to hopefully become the member for Tangney come the election.

I have only one more minute. I want to acknowledge the work that the Parliamentary Friends of Refugees has done in both the last term and this term. A number of members—Hon Dr Brad Pettitt, Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, the member for Victoria Park and myself—have come together again during this term to work with the refugee community and to provide support and assistance to them. I encourage members to get involved. I know there are issues around visas. I met with about 16 Afghan refugees not long after the fall of Kabul. To listen to their stories about their concerns and fear about what was happening to their wives and children was mortifying. They still cannot get their visas resolved, they cannot get permanency and they cannot bring their families out. One man said, “What do I do? My wife has been injured. Do I get myself deported to go home to Kabul and look after them?” That sort of choice—a choice between someone maybe not seeing their family again, or going home even though they may not live—is a tough choice that none of us has ever had to make. There is a lot of work that we, as state members, can do to provide support to that community or put pressure on the federal government to relieve those problems and provide additional support.

SOUTH WEST GROUP OF COUNCILS

Statement

HON DR BRAD PETTITT (South Metropolitan) [5.38 pm]: I thank Hon Kate Doust for her acknowledgement. I think it was a really important statement.

I also want to acknowledge the work being done by a local group in my area of the South Metropolitan Region, and that is the South West Group of councils. I do not know if members know about this group. Of course, the Leader of the House and the other members of South Metropolitan know about the really good work that it does. The South West Group, which is made up of Cockburn, East Fremantle, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville and Rockingham councils, represents over 420 000 people. The group is doing some really great work on collaboration, and I think it is worth bringing that to the attention of this house because it crosses some of those usual political divides.

I was inspired to talk about the work that the South West Group of councils is doing. It does a range of things to bring economic activity into the area and supports a range of really good initiatives and advocacy. It wrote to many of us in this house this week about some work it has been doing for some time around encouraging the state to start planning for dedicated second-tier mass transit systems. That sounds like a mouthful. The first tier is heavy rail, which is trains, and the third tier is buses. In between those two is the second tier, which could be light rail, trackless trams—an emerging new technology that operates in a few places, including China—or rapid bus, which has dedicated lanes. Perth is currently missing that second tier. It is really important. The South West Group is

advocating for it because it will start to connect our city. Metronet has done a really good job of expanding our city and linking areas but it does not help us get density into the heart of our city and link up those key activity centres. I would argue—this may be a controversial thing to say—that if we do not get the second-tier transit in addition to Metronet, Metronet will start to encourage urban sprawl and will not create the kind of urban form that we want; it will encourage people to move further and further out to the edge. We need this second-tier stuff as well.

I know that this government knows it is a good idea because it made a commitment during the 2017 election to start work on this. I appreciate that that work has started but it has not progressed very far at this stage. I guess that is why the South West Group has written to us, saying that it is a really good opportunity. It highlighted three routes in the South Metropolitan Region. There is a link down South Street, for people who know the area, from Murdoch University and the Murdoch activity centre and down in Fremantle. That has been worked up into quite a lot of detail and is available on the website. Another option is a route through Fremantle, the Cockburn coast and Cockburn Central. Another route was recommended down in Rockingham, around the city centre.

It is not just about the South West Group focusing on its area. It has started to partner with 15 metropolitan local governments to develop a plan for the whole metropolitan area, which is really exciting. It is working with the Cities of Bayswater, Canning, Cockburn, Nedlands and Stirling, the Town of Victoria Park and also the South West Group members that I highlighted earlier. It is not a big ask. We are talking about planning that would happen across future financial years costing between \$5 million and \$10 million. The reason that planning is really important is that it starts to give developers certainty around where that second-tier transport will happen, to get those nodes that we want happening and ensure that we do not plan it out. There is a danger that if we do not know where that second-tier transit will occur, we may start to build other roads or developments and it could be a real problem. This is a huge opportunity. I thought it was really worth highlighting that work. This is something that I am really keen to see happen. This government has talked about it previously. I encourage everyone to look at the work that the South West Group has done on that and that it is doing with the councils. The Inner City Group is also doing something similar. There is the Knowledge Arc around second-tier transit. If we start to link all these up, we will have a pretty amazing centre that will give the type of transport we need for a twenty-first century city, one that is not sprawling and one that gives people transport choice. At the heart of this, it ultimately helps us to transition to a city that is more sustainable, meeting those net zero goals that we have talked about, and being a city that is ready for the twenty-first century. I want to finish by once again congratulating the South West Group of councils for the great work that it is doing and I encourage everyone to engage with it.

CORONAVIRUS

Statement

HON STEPHEN PRATT (South Metropolitan) [5.44 pm]: I want to take the opportunity to share my family's experience with COVID-19 over the past week and a half. Last week my wife tested positive to COVID. Despite the increasing record number of infections in the community, it still came as a huge shock to both of us and to our children. As some members in this house may be aware, Elena is pregnant with our third child. We had been doing everything we could to keep ourselves safe, including limiting our outings and interactions with others, sanitising our hands regularly and wearing masks at all times.

We are both fully vaccinated and she received her booster during the second trimester of her pregnancy. Despite all these efforts, at the 32-week mark of her pregnancy, Elena contracted COVID-19. It made us realise that this virus can impact you and your family at any time. It is an experience that I am sure thousands of Western Australians are sharing at this time. It reinforced how grateful we are that she is fully vaccinated.

Just days before the positive result, we had taken our eldest daughter, who recently turned five, to get her virus vaccination. Like many parents, we initially were a bit reluctant, especially given the past traumatic experiences that she had had with needles, but we knew deep down that it was the right thing to do. Now that the virus had become a daily reality for us and was in our home, we were more grateful than ever that she is on her way to developing immunity against it. This was reinforced when, on the same day that my wife received her result, we were informed by our daughter's school that there had been a positive case in her class. The virus was well and truly surrounding us.

My wife is also asthmatic and, unfortunately, became quite unwell and experienced the majority of COVID-19 symptoms. As concerning as this was for all of us, she received a lot of support and reassurance from the relevant health professionals. I cannot highlight enough the cohesive way in which these services worked together to care for Elena during this time. After registering with the WA COVID care at home program, she received a number of calls during her isolation, and she spoke at length each day with a team member about her symptoms and health history. When required, they also passed on her details for further follow-up. This came in the form of another lengthy consult with a nurse at Fiona Stanley Hospital's COVID clinic and a local general practitioner. They were able to let my wife know what treatment options might be available if required.

Late on Thursday evening, this was required. As the virus started to severely impact her chest, in the space of just a few hours late on Friday afternoon, the GP was able to write a script and send it to our local pharmacy and, despite their rounds being finished for the day, they were able to deliver it to our front door, which was greatly

appreciated. Elena was able to take that inhaler on that evening. There were also multiple calls from her employer, the South Metropolitan Health Service, to check on her welfare and to provide her with any relevant support. I know that the daily messages from friends and work colleagues were greatly appreciated. There was also a check-in from her obstetrician at St John of God Murdoch Hospital, who spent time talking to her and providing her with the necessary reassurances, along with contacts and resources for more information.

Working in communications in the public health sector, she knew all too well how important these messages of reassurance are for people in the community during this time. All the words she had written previously to help patients navigate their way through COVID-19 had taken on new meaning as she faced these new challenges herself. Although it may feel like you are all on your own during isolation, plenty of COVID support services and relevant resources are available to help you during this time. You are never alone. I found it interesting that when I asked Elena which websites were the most useful, she actually pointed to the WA government website, which has been the object of criticism in this chamber on a few occasions.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. It also takes one to get through COVID isolation. While my wife quarantined separately in the house, I was also in isolation with our two young daughters, as all household contacts were required to stay home for seven days. In the end, my wife was in solitary isolation for 10 days, as her symptoms continued to linger. Although she definitely struggled at times, she also knew she was lucky to be surrounded by a number of support networks. We would have been lost without the support and generosity of our family, friends, colleagues and neighbours who delivered an endless stream of meals, coffees, medical supplies and activities to keep the kids occupied. We were honestly overwhelmed by offers of help and we will never be able to thank everyone for the kindness that they showed us.

Amongst all the stress and anxiety, there were some silver linings. In a normally hectic family household, we were given the very rare gift of uninterrupted time together. Even though my wife was separated from us, the girls slid artworks under the door and sat outside her window for daily chats and crafting sessions. I am almost fluent in Spanish after watching *Encanto* on repeat; I am committed to finishing the 1 000-piece puzzle of Olaf from *Frozen*; and I have a greater appreciation of how often children request to be fed. My wife's symptoms have all but dissipated and, thankfully, neither I nor the girls have been infected. As we slowly return to normal family life—or the new normal—the mental toll weighs just as heavily as the physical on us all. Although this is not an experience we will forget any time soon, we know we are among some of the luckier ones. We were fortunate enough to isolate in the comfort of our own home, and were separated for only just over a week, unlike those in the community who have spent extended periods of time without seeing their loved ones. Originally, I liked the idea of doing a bit of a hotel quarantine, but now I have a much different view of that and of how difficult it must have been for those who have done the hard yards over the past two years.

Following our experience, and watching as the number of cases in WA reaches its peak, our advice would be to make sure that you are prepared. This virus can hit at any time. Make sure you have contingencies in place for remote working and online learning for your kids, as well as making sure you have all the necessary supplies that you would need, including plenty of rapid antigen tests—we are very thankful for the McGowan government's leadership in this space in making them available to people in WA—N95 masks, hand sanitiser, cleaning products, which you go through a lot of; required medications; non-perishable foods; and a few arts and craft supplies are also handy to keep kids occupied. Moving forward, we will spend the next few weeks preparing for the safe arrival of our newest addition and will continue to do everything we can to protect our family. What a story we will have to tell the kids when they are older. It may at times sound cliché but now more than ever we really are in this together.

CORONAVIRUS — RESTRICTIONS

Statement

HON TJORN SIBMA (North Metropolitan) [5.52 pm]: On the back of the statement from Hon Stephen Pratt, whom I have missed as a colleague on the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs—welcome back to the chamber—we are all relieved to hear about Elena's recovery. We very much felt your experience throughout what would have been quite a distressing, I would have thought, 10 days or so, particularly with a heavily pregnant wife. We obviously look forward to sharing with you the joy of your soon-to-be newest member of the brood. Congratulations.

I thank you genuinely for sharing that story, because it gives us a good sense of perspective and proportion about this invidious and insidious virus, which is manageable. Reassurance, clarity and perspective are absolutely required.

I also want to reflect on the excellent contribution made by Hon Kate Doust and particularly her reference to the member for Riverton, Dr Jags Krishnan. I want to reflect on that quickly, because it was my privilege to represent the opposition today at a formal lunch for the visiting High Commissioner of India, along with Yaz Mubarakai, the member for Jandakot, and Kevin Michel, the member for Pilbara. I want to reflect on the contribution that each of those three people of Indian ethnicity bring to this Parliament and the advantage that provides for Western Australia and Australia re-engaging with India and entering into a new phase of not only normalising but also deepening that critical trade relationship, which is unexplored.

I want to reflect on the spirit of perspective proportion and to a degree of optimism that Hon Stephen Pratt brought, because it is consistent with a couple of messages today from the Premier. I am not normally one to laud the Premier, as members will be well aware. The Premier made a significant announcement today around lunchtime concerning the easing of public health measures from next Thursday. It is often the way in communications in the modern age that we communicate in multiple channels in real time. The formal doorstep was given and the media statement went out, but also a tweet to announce the decision and the particulars.

A quote attached to that tweet recognised the high number of recorded COVID cases, and I put to members that it is a serious underestimation of what is likely to be the case. We are all swimming in a sea of it, and I expect the real figure of 10 000 was probably reached earlier in the week, but that is an aside. The Premier mentioned —

While that number is high, it is also cause for optimism.

It was with that spirit of optimism, circumspection and restrained confidence that I moved a motion today that called upon the government to explain the situation. It was not to condemn the government. In fact, I lauded the government. I asked for it to provide an explanation and some clarity about the necessity of still using these very strong instruments, and to indicate the path ahead. I was informed that today was not the day to have that debate. I am sorry; we can never accept that proposition in this house. We can have untimely and uncomfortable debates and discussions in this house.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon Alannah MacTiernan interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Minister, order!

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Unfortunately, the minister did her government a disservice with the quality of the argument she brought forward, and her whole proposition was undermined 90 minutes later.

Several members interjected.

CHAMBER ETIQUETTE

Statement by President

THE PRESIDENT (Hon Alanna Clohesy) [5.56 pm]: The time for members' statements has concluded. Members, before I go to messages, I want to remind you that some of you who are not in your regular seats probably have not had cause to look at your standing orders lately. I remind you to refresh yourself with the standing orders during the next week's recess and, in particular, the chamber etiquette guide, which is contained in the front pocket of your standing orders. That is just a handy hint.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION (WESTERN AUSTRALIA) AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Returned

Bill returned from the Assembly without amendment.

RAILWAY (METRONET) AMENDMENT BILL 2022

Receipt and First Reading

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

Second Reading

HON SUE ELLERY (South Metropolitan — Leader of the House) [5.57 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

Before I commence the second reading of the Railway (METRONET) Amendment Bill 2022, I am required by section 18A of the Transport Co-ordination Act 1966 to table a report by the director general of Transport on the planned construction of a railway line from Claisebrook station to Mundijong, known as the Armadale line and Byford rail extension, and by section 96(2) of the Public Works Act 1902 to table a map showing the course to be taken. I table this report and map.

[See papers [1180](#) and [1181](#).]

Hon SUE ELLERY: The McGowan government is committed to transforming our public transport network through Metronet and we are delivering on a suite of major projects. The purpose of this bill is to implement the legislative authority for the construction of the Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal and the Byford rail extension projects on the Armadale line, supporting thousands of jobs for Western Australians in the process. The line will run from Claisebrook station and proceed along the Armadale line railway in a generally south-easterly direction for 20.9 kilometres before continuing in a southerly direction for a further 21.2 kilometres to Mundijong.

The Victoria Park–Canning level crossing removal project is Perth’s first major elevated rail project and is designed to remove increasingly congested level crossings, improve safety, provide modern train stations and precincts, create public open space and improved cycling and pedestrian connectivity under the elevated rail line, and increase the future capacity of the Armadale line. Five level crossings will be removed along the Armadale line by raising the rail over the road at Mint Street, Oats Street, Welshpool Road, Hamilton Street and Wharf Street. New, modern elevated stations will be built at Carlisle, Oats Street, Queens Park and Cannington stations. Welshpool station will close, with Oats Street and Queens Park stations providing improved passenger facilities.

The Byford rail extension, a key 2017 state election commitment, will extend the Armadale line approximately eight kilometres south to the new Byford station, removing level crossings at Armadale Road, Forrest Road, Church Avenue, Byron Road, Eleventh Road and Larsen Road, with work already underway at Thomas Road. The suburb of Byford is growing rapidly and it is important that we deliver the infrastructure for the future now.

Armadale station will be rebuilt as an elevated station, easing road congestion and improving safety and connectivity around the town centre. Building a rail line to Byford will increase the connectivity of the public passenger rail network, alleviate urban congestion, and ensure efficient travel times are provided for those accessing jobs, services and amenities.

This comes after a lack of investment on necessary transport infrastructure throughout the corridor in the past. This project will enable the residents of Serpentine–Jarrahdale to connect to the Perth CBD in around 42 minutes. Metronet is all about creating an integrated and coordinated public transport network for the future.

Modern public transport connections enhance local communities and provide invaluable links to the wider metropolitan area. Extending the Armadale line to Byford was a key election commitment, which the state government is proud to be delivering.

We want the communities of Byford and the surrounding suburbs to experience the benefits that access to our public transport network can bring. We also want to see the existing network better utilised. By developing attractive station precincts throughout Victoria Park and Cannington, we will revitalise the corridor, make catching public transport a more attractive option, and upgrade the future capacity of the rail line to accommodate six-car trains.

We acknowledge that this transformation of the Armadale line will bring significant disruption. A temporary shutdown of the Armadale line for up to 18 months has been announced and consultation has commenced to help plan for replacement services. We understand that the rail shutdown will be inconvenient for many people, businesses and the broader community and we apologise in advance for that. A number of options were considered, but this style of shutdown was chosen as it will allow this to be done more safely and quickly.

The Railway (METRONET) Amendment Bill 2022 is the latest milestone in the delivery of the McGowan government’s program of job-creating Metronet projects.

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

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

[See paper [1182](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

SOIL AND LAND CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL 2021

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by **Hon Alannah MacTiernan (Minister for Agriculture and Food)**, read a first time.

Second Reading

HON ALANNAH MacTIERNAN (South West — Minister for Agriculture and Food) [6.03 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Soil and Land Conservation Amendment Bill 2021 will amend the Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945. The act is the principal legislation in Western Australia that addresses the conservation of soil and land resources and the mitigation of the effects of erosion, salinity and flooding. The act established a Soil and Land Conservation Council to guide the work needed to protect these soil resources. However, between 2003 and 2019, the council lapsed. It was re-established in 2019 as part of a concerted effort to elevate the focus on soil and landscape systems.

Much has changed in the field of soil and land resource management policy since the act was first developed in 1945. There is not only a growing understanding of the need to prevent or reduce land degradation, but also a strong desire to address issues relating to soil health more broadly. This broader interest reflects an increasing awareness

by the community of links between healthy soils and the nutritive value of food produced in those soils, thereby strengthening the foundations of our agricultural industry. Land degradation affects both the quality of life and economic viability of the community relying on the land for agricultural produce.

The government is committed to improving soil health to boost agricultural and pastoral production and help address climate change across regional Western Australia. This includes future actions in line with the 2017 report by the Auditor General into salinity management in the south west agricultural zone.

The establishment of the council is prescribed by section 9 of the act and it consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor on the nomination of the minister. The council provides an important function in advising the Minister for Agriculture and Food on the condition of soil and land resources, as well as making recommendations on policy and activities relevant to soil and land conservation, such as the preparation and implementation of the Western Australian soil health strategy. The council coordinates, monitors and reviews land use and soil and conservation policies and programs. The council also assists the Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation with her functions under the act.

Following a review of membership of the council in 2018 by the soils ministerial advisory committee, it concluded that the council could better serve its function if its membership represented wider community interests in soils, with appointments made on a skills basis rather than representatives of particular groups or interests. A modern, skills-based council will bring a broader, more innovative approach to developing policies rather than having a purely regulatory focus.

The bill will make three key amendments. Firstly, the bill will revise section 9 of the act so that it is consistent with contemporary legislation in jurisdictions around Australia for the selection and management of members of councils, committees and boards. In particular, the bill will —

- replace the current stakeholder-nominated council memberships with up to 10 ministerial appointments based on expertise and experience for up to three-year terms and potential reappointment. The Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation is a member of the council, and the Minister for Agriculture and Food will appoint up to nine members who must have, between them, expertise and experience in the areas of agricultural production, environmental conservation, land management, local government and planning, managing pastoral land, soil conservation and soil science;

- provide that the Minister for Agriculture and Food designate a chairperson and deputy chairperson of the council;

- provide that council positions become vacant in circumstances consistent with modern schemes;

- provide that the Minister for Agriculture and Food may remove a member of the council on grounds of neglect of duty, misconduct or incompetence, mental or physical incapacity other than temporary illness that impairs the performance of the member's duties, and for any other reasonable cause;

- provide for an extension of a term of office for six months or until the vacancy is filled when a member's term of office expires by the effluxion of time;

- provide for alternative members to be appointed and act temporarily when a council member is on leave;

- provide that members of the council be paid remuneration and allowances as determined by the minister, on recommendation of the Public Sector Commissioner;

- provide for the remote attendance of council members at meetings; and

- provide for disclosure of material personal interests by council members, including council procedure and quorum when a material personal interest has been disclosed.

Secondly, the bill will repeal part VA of the act and all references to the Landcare Trust, which was wound up in 2002. The repeal of part VA will remove the formal requirement for annual reporting.

Thirdly, the bill will amend the language throughout the act to make it gender-neutral.

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

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

[See paper [1183](#).]

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 6.10 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

ABORTION — INDUCED**489. Hon Nick Goiran to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

For the calendar year, from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021, what was the number of:

- (a) induced abortions;
- (b) induced abortions over 12 weeks gestation;
- (c) induced abortions for women under the age of 20;
- (d) approvals given by the Ministerial Panel for abortions at 20 weeks or later;
- (e) induced abortions at 20 weeks gestation or later; and
- (f) medical abortions using mifepristone and misoprostol?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) 8,182
- (b) 565
- (c) 632
- (d) 78
- (e) 77
- (f) 3,063

ABORTION — TRISOMY 21**490. Hon Nick Goiran to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

How many abortions were performed at 20 weeks gestation, or later, with the justification for the abortion given as “Trisomy 21” between 1 January 2021 and 31 December 2021?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

The answer to this question will not be provided due to patient confidentiality.

ABORTION — INDUCED**491. Hon Nick Goiran to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to the cases of babies who show signs of life after an abortion procedure, and I ask:

- (a) what is the total number of these cases between 20 May 1998 and 31 December 2021;
- (b) how many of these cases were induced abortions at 20 weeks gestation and later;
- (c) how many of these cases were induced at abortions at 23 weeks and later; and
- (d) in how many of these cases was medical intervention or resuscitation provided?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) 31
- (b) 25
- (c) Data is not available for this gestation period.
- (d) In Department of Health routine data collections, there is no record of medical intervention or resuscitation in these cases.

WA COUNTRY HEALTH SERVICE — CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — WAIT TIMES**544. Hon Donna Faragher to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:**

I refer to child development services provided by the WA Country Health Service, and I ask, will the Minister advise the current median wait times for children in the primary years of schooling to access a paediatrician, audiologist and clinical psychologist in each of the following health regions:

- (a) Kimberley;
- (b) Pilbara;
- (c) Midwest;

- (d) Goldfields;
- (e) Wheatbelt;
- (f) South West; and
- (g) Great Southern?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a)–(g) The method of delivery of audiology and paediatric services in country WA varies and may be provided by WA Country Health Service (WACHS) employed clinicians or external services contracted by WACHS.

In some areas audiology and clinical psychiatry services are provided by Aboriginal Medical Services or Non-Government Organisations. Wait list data for these providers is not held by WACHS.

The median waiting time for children (5–11 years) for therapy services (days) from receipt of referral for child development services to attendance at the first appointment is provided in the table below.

| Region | Audiology | Clinical Psychology | Developmental Paediatrics* |
|----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| Kimberley | 47.5 | Data not captured separately | Data for referrals to developmental paediatricians is not captured separately to other paediatrician referrals. |
| Pilbara | 76.5 | 344 | |
| Midwest | 139 | 67 | |
| Goldfields | 41.5 | 123.5 | |
| Wheatbelt | Data not captured separately | Data not captured separately | |
| South West | 77 | Data not captured separately | |
| Great Southern | 207 | 167 | |

CLIMATE ACTION — CARBON CREDITS

563. Hon Tjorn Sibma to the minister representing the Minister for Climate Action:

Throughout the 2021 calendar year, I ask:

- (a) how many carbon credit units were purchased by Western Australian Government departments, agencies and trading enterprises, and at what overall cost; and
- (b) of the above, what proportion of these units were purchased domestically, and how many on foreign markets?

Hon Stephen Dawson replied:

- (a)–(b) The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) have not purchased carbon credit units in the 2021 calendar year.

Under the *Procurement Act 2020*, greenhouse gas emissions from the State's vehicle fleet are required to be minimised, so far as practicable, and residual emissions are required to be offset. As offsets for the State vehicle fleet are purchased by the Department of Finance, information on the units purchased or the overall cost should be sought from that agency.

CORONAVIRUS — PATIENTS — REGIONS

567. Hon Martin Aldridge to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Health:

I refer to comments from WA Country Health Service to ABC Mid-West and Wheatbelt on 20 January that critically ill COVID-19 patients in regional Western Australia would be sent to Perth for treatment, and I ask:

- (a) how many regional Western Australians are anticipated to require transport to Perth as a result of COVID-19;
- (b) if the Royal Flying Doctor Service or St John Ambulance are required to facilitate these transfers, what additional resources is the State Government providing these organisations to ensure they can maintain current service levels;
- (c) what specific measures has the State Government undertaken to ensure metropolitan hospitals are properly resourced to manage this influx of patients;
- (d) why has the State Government chosen not to properly resource regional hospitals so critically ill patients can receive care close to their homes;
- (e) is the State Government considering or has it entered into any agreement or contract with any other organisation to provide inter-hospital patient transport services; and
- (f) If yes to (e), please provide details?

Hon Sue Ellery replied:

- (a) The overwhelming majority of country residents with COVID-19 will be able to remain in their homes or be cared for in country hospitals.
- (b) The State has provided non recurrent grants totalling \$3.8m to the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to support COVID-19 preparations and service viability. Additionally, annual contract funding for recurrent patient transport services demand, driven by secondary COVID impacts, provided by RFDS has been increased by 11.1% from 2019–20 to 2021–22. The State has funded St Johns Ambulance to provide more than 26 additional paramedics in country areas over the past two years.
- (c) Specific measures undertaken are:
- Investment in a total of 530 additional beds across the health system supported by the recruitment of 1,375 nurses and midwives and 1,491 doctors (comprising 438 Resident Medical Officers and 629 interns) since January 2021, with an additional 1,200 graduate nurses expected to be employed in 2022.
 - A \$2 million local, national and international advertising campaign is underway to recruit more healthcare staff.
 - Additional ventilators to increase intensive care unit (ICU) capacity (to a total of 634 Group 1 ventilators across the system).
 - Developing services to care for COVID-19 patients outside of the hospital setting where suitable and necessary through the COVID Care at Home (CC@H) service, a partnership with Calvary Medibank Solutions.
 - Implementation of the Patient Flow Coordination Centre (PFCC).
 - Ongoing sourcing and distribution strategy for personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - Investing in and strengthening telehealth services to reduce the need for patients to attend outpatient clinics whilst still accessing timely specialist care.
 - Implementation of the System Alert and Response (SAR) which provides overarching, scalable guidance for public hospitals to manage and mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19 transmission.
 - Development of guidelines on high-risk exposure in a workplace setting and health care furlough processes (leave of absence) that applies to WA public sector clinicians, private health providers in hospital settings, general practices and pharmacies.
- (d) Over the course of the pandemic, the State Government has invested almost \$50 million into the direct COVID–19 response in the regions, funding the costs of vaccinations, COVID-19 testing, additional PPE for staff and other response and preparedness related costs. These functions have been supported by an estimated 80 staff employed across regional areas.
- As part of the Government’s \$206.8 million investment in 270 new beds to increase system capacity in response to COVID-19, a 30 bed modular ward facility will be delivered at Bunbury Regional Hospital.
- (e) The State Government has two contracts for the delivery of inter hospital patient transport services, one for the Perth Metropolitan Area and one for Country Health Services.
- (f) The Department of Health (DOH) is currently negotiating with the preferred Service Providers, and due to probity requirements is unable to disclose any further details.

WESTERN POWER — OUTAGES — PAYMENTS**568. Hon Martin Aldridge to the minister representing the Minister for Energy:**

- (1) I refer to question without notice 46 asked on 16 February 2022, in relation to regional power outages, and I ask of the 1,820 customers that live in regional areas and are eligible for the double extended outage payment, how many are:
- (a) business customers; and
 - (b) residential customers?
- (2) Of those identified in (1), please identify the breakdown by locality?
- (3) Has the Government review of the extended outage payment scheme rate been completed and, if so, please table the review?
- (4) Who undertook the review mentioned in (3), and what were the terms of reference for the review?

- (5) Noting the independent review into outages on the South West Interconnected System between 24 and 28 December 2021 is due to report to you by Monday, 14 March 2022 will you now table the final report?
- (6) What regional locations will be examined as part of this independent review?
- (7) Has the Minister for Energy outlined his expectations to the Chair of Western Power in relation to the review and, if so, please table any relevant correspondence?

Hon Alannah MacTiernan replied:

- (1) Western Power does not distinguish between business and residential customers when applying for Extended Outage Payments.
 - (2) Not applicable.
 - (3)–(4) The Government has increased the EOPS rate from \$80 to \$120 for all eligible customers from 1 January 2022 onwards.
 - (5) The Independent Review was tabled in Parliament on 23 March 2022.
 - (6) The Review examines and reports on the reasons for outages that impacted all communities serviced by the South West Interconnected System (SWIS). The SWIS stretches from Kalbarri in the Mid West, Ravensthorpe in the South, and Kalgoorlie in the East.
 - (7) The Minister outlined his expectations to the Chair of Western Power in a letter dated 27 January 2022. [See tabled paper no [1179](#).]
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