



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
FIRST SESSION
2023

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 13 September 2023

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 13 September 2023

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

HON DR JUDYTH WATSON

Condolence Motion

MR R.H. COOK (Kwinana — Premier) [12.01 pm] — without notice: I move —

That this house expresses its deep regret at the death of Hon Dr Judyth Watson, a former member of the Legislative Assembly for the former electorates of Canning and Kenwick; and places on record its appreciation for her long public service, and extends deep condolences to her friends and family in their bereavement.

I begin by paying my respects to Judyth's loved ones and friends who are in the Speaker's gallery today—a gallery of stalwarts and champions! It is great to see you all here. There are many of them, which speaks volumes about Judyth's enormous contribution at both a personal and professional level.

Dr Judyth Watson set a high bar, as both a parliamentarian and a person. Judyth was born in Burton upon Trent in England in January 1940. Her innate sense of fairness and care guided her through her various vocations during her life. Indeed, her career and academic pursuits were dedicated to helping the more vulnerable members of our society and advancing the interests of those in need. It is fair to say that her influence shaped a number of policies adopted by the current WA Labor government, particularly around women's interests, workers' health and safety, Aboriginal affairs and voluntary assisted dying.

Judyth's father, Cecil Watson, was a railway train controller and clerk, and her mother, Hylda Rowland, was a shop assistant. The Watson family left England in the late 1940s and arrived in Perth when Judyth was around nine years old. After attending state primary schools, she earned a scholarship to Perth Modern School. After her schooling, Judyth began training as a nurse at Royal Perth Hospital. She furthered her nursing qualifications interstate, pursuing midwifery, hospital administration and education. She worked in various nursing positions in both Western Australia and the United Kingdom.

In the background of Judyth's nursing career was an Australian nation undergoing immense change—the twilight years of the coalition government's 23-year reign, the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 and the subsequent sacking of that government in 1975. It was this sacking that prompted Judyth to join the Labor Party in 1976—yet another example of her stance on fairness. From the mid-1970s, she worked as a teacher of nurses with community health services. This was also the time that her research work began to take off. In 1977, she finished a Bachelor of Science with first class honours in anthropology, winning the faculty prize in the process. This led to Judyth receiving a commonwealth postgraduate research award that allowed her to undertake a breakthrough PhD on workers compensation matters in Western Australia. She completed her doctorate in 1982—the perfect segue into the union movement.

With a wealth of knowledge from working with patients and her research on injured workers, Judyth was appointed the first full-time occupational health and safety officer for the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union. When the Burke Labor government was elected in 1983, Judyth was appointed as an adviser to the minister for labour. Such was her reputation in the field of occupational health and safety that the federal government appointed her as one of two state representatives on a tripartite steering committee to develop a national approach to occupational health and safety policy. Judyth subsequently became a member of the Interim National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, which was in place while such commissions were legislated and installed at the state and federal levels. This, of course, has gone through various guises over the decades and has been known as Safe Work Australia at a national level. This demonstrates that Judyth's research and commitment had a profound impact on Labor's legislative agenda, even before becoming a member of Parliament. Her impact as an academic, an adviser and a sound policy developer earned her high respect in the WA Labor Party.

In 1986, Judyth was successfully elected to the seat of Canning in the Burke Labor government. In doing so, she became the first woman with a doctorate elected to the WA Parliament—an achievement she shares with Dr Carmen Lawrence, who was also elected at the 1986 election. Judyth was a high-calibre MP who had real-life experience as a nurse and teacher, was an accomplished academic and had experience in the union movement; a person with deep compassion and an unwavering sense of fairness; and a woman who brought much-needed diversity to a Parliament that was in dire need of it. Despite such an incredible CV, matched by strong personal values, Judyth was never at ease in the sittings of Parliament. She admitted after her career that she usually found speaking in Parliament daunting—the masculine, combative working environment; the dismissive scorn and patronising comments endured by many women; and the hours and sitting times. Many of the factors combined told women:

“You’re not welcome.” I truly hope, with this WA Labor government represented by a Legislative Assembly of more than 50 per cent women, that this is turning around. We recognise that affirmative action on boards and in preselections is the way forward, just as Judyth had flagged many years ago. She was at the forefront of many progressive ideas; she was ahead of the curve.

Judyth’s impact as a member of Parliament was immediate. She was appointed to the Public Accounts and Expenditure Review Committee. She then became the first woman to chair a select committee in the WA Parliament. As chair, she oversaw the committee’s inquiry into the Reproductive Technology Working Party’s report, and an inquiry into the national HIV/AIDS strategy white paper. It should be noted that despite her apprehension about speaking in Parliament, her contributions were known for their thorough research, detailed citations and relevant statistics. She pursued her work and beliefs with alacrity. Eventually, this culminated in her appointment to the Carmen Labor government’s cabinet as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs in a reshuffle in 1991. Later, in 1992, she was appointed Minister for Women’s Interests. In this portfolio, she was a tremendous advocate for advancing the state’s understanding and response to domestic violence—a matter that remains a scourge in our community. Judyth was proactive on this issue. Following a spate of murders in 1994, she planned and organised a phone-in for women who had experienced violence. The purpose was to gauge police responses to their calls. Working with a team of volunteers, they took more than 200 calls in one day and produced a report on the feedback received. This report altered the government’s response to such matters. It is one example of so many matters that she undertook as a minister and member of Parliament.

That work continued after her political career. She co-founded two organisations to help the vulnerable. The first was the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees, or CARAD. CARAD remains, and it provides essential services to ensure that all people seeking safety in Australia are able to live with dignity. Since opening its doors in 2000, CARAD has provided support to more than 5 000 asylum seekers, refugees and detainees through its client services and volunteer programs. The second organisation was CASE for Refugees, a community legal service.

I know that towards the end of her career in Parliament, Judyth expressed exasperation about the pace of change, particularly in the areas of domestic violence and women’s interests. Judyth was a force for justice, and when someone is born with that sense of what is fair and what is right, change can seem glacial. Judyth’s legacy is strong. Her policies and research have left an indelible mark on Western Australia, and her influence continues to shape policy today. I know that we are heading in the right direction.

On a personal note, I was particularly saddened to hear of Judyth’s passing. I met Judyth when I was a young volunteer in the Labor Party. She was always friendly, inclusive and passionate, and she was a great guide for young members of the party as we went on our way to play our part in the great service of the WA Labor Party. She will be greatly missed.

Members: Hear, hear!

MS S.F. McGURK (Fremantle — Minister for Training) [12.10 pm]: I also rise to recognise the contribution of Dr Judyth Watson, OAM.

As the Premier reflected, members who were lucky enough to know Judyth remember her kindness, compassion, capability and unwavering commitment to a life of service. Judyth was a fierce supporter of women from all walks of life, devoting herself to uplifting and championing those around her. In her support for refugees, including those she had never met, Judyth was generous with her time, advocacy and support.

It has often been said that Judyth was a trailblazer, and I suspect that is because her life was one of firsts. I would like to reflect on some of those firsts.

Judyth was born to Hylda and Cecil Watson in Burton upon Trent, UK, on 8 March 1940. With her parents, Judyth migrated to Perth in 1949 and settled in Narrogin. In 1952, she won a scholarship to the competitive Perth Modern School. In 1957, after her junior certificate, she began working as a nursing assistant at St Anne’s hospital in Mt Lawley. She then began nursing training at Royal Perth Hospital, and she obtained first place in both her senior surgery and gynaecological exams. In 1961, she completed midwifery training at King George V Memorial Hospital in Sydney. She then went back to the UK to work in various hospitals and obtained her diploma in nursing education from the University of Edinburgh.

In 1976, like so many people, Judyth was spurred on to join the Labor Party after the dismissal of the Whitlam government. She was an active party member in those days, working on policy committees. She went on to complete a Bachelor of Science in anthropology with first-class honours at UWA in 1982. That same year, Judyth became the first full-time occupational health and safety officer at the then Federated Miscellaneous Workers’ Union. In 1983, she set to work developing national OHS policy and legislation.

In 1986, she was elected to Parliament as the member for Canning. In 1989, she transferred to become the first member for the newly created electorate of Kenwick. On 15 November 1988, she became the first woman to chair a select committee here in the Legislative Assembly when she was appointed chair of the Select Committee on the Human Reproductive Technology Act 1991 working party’s report. With Dr Carmen Lawrence, she shares the

distinction of being the first woman with a doctorate elected to the WA Parliament. Her parliamentary career included being Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, Women's Interests and Seniors, and shadow Minister for Women's Interests, Disability Services, Children's Policy, Seniors, Housing and Consumer Affairs. Judyth narrowly lost her seat in 1996, following electorate redistribution and the creation of the new electorate of Southern River.

Much work and many accolades followed, including being WA Senior Australian of the Year in 2014 and awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in 2019.

Although these points illustrate her impressive career, as members will know, Judyth was a fierce supporter of women, both inside and outside the Labor Party. She was relentless in her campaigning for equality for women and for their reproductive rights, and she strongly believed in championing women into leadership positions, particularly in politics. In her 1995 Parliamentary reflections, Judyth lamented the lack of women in Parliament, writing —

In June 1995 I moved in the Assembly that a Select Committee of both Houses be appointed to identify impediments to women standing for Parliament and to assess how Parliament itself might be a hindrance to women. The intention of the motion was to inquire into Parliament as a working environment for all women who work there. Had the motion been fully debated and the committee established, we would have explored the motivations of women who aspire to a parliamentary career.

Although that committee never eventuated, she went on to say that she remained committed to encouraging women to be elected, believing that a career in Parliament would be easier for women once the critical mass of 35 per cent was achieved. I know that, in the years since she made those remarks, Judyth was pleased that more women are now in this place than men. I am pleased that we have well and truly passed that critical mass. With the recent success of Magenta Marshall, who was elected as the member for Rockingham, this place now has more women than men for the first time in history. Judyth was ever ready to support women in their campaigns. She gently guided and cheered on Lisa O'Malley in her first campaign, and continued to offer advice and a warm chat to anyone who needed it on the hustings.

She championed women in Parliament and politics, and she was just as tireless in her support of those outside politics. In 2000, Judyth became a founding member of the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees, or CARAD—as the Premier mentioned—and she went on to support many Afghan refugees. One Afghan family was Zubida's. Zubida's family, after the murder of her father, came by boat to Indonesia and was then taken to Christmas Island and placed in a detention centre. In 2000, Zubida, her mother and her four siblings, some of whom are in the chamber with us today, were released and sent to Perth. It was there that they met Judyth, whose presence would change their lives as much as they changed Judyth's. In a newspaper article, Zubida reflected on the first time she and her family met Judyth —

A tall, mature woman with white hair and blue eyes met my family. She spoke to us in a foreign language, English, which none of us understood. She was the volunteer who had been delegated by a community group, CARAD (Centre for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Detainees), to help us settle into a house in Beaconsfield.

She was kind and friendly, she wasn't there to lock us up again. Her warm, friendly smile said it all.

Judyth would go on to be a mainstay at events in the children's lives—birthdays, sleepovers and school assemblies. It is no surprise that Judyth, after a shocking diagnosis, was able to spend her last months surrounded by family and friends, because she herself was a friend to so many.

Some of these insights highlight Judyth's career, but I know of many more examples of her quiet and effective contributions and her very practical way of helping to change people's lives. Early on, in my capacity as the member for Fremantle, I remember her work as a reader-helper, supporting children at Palmyra Primary School. I know many in this place have their own memories of Judyth.

She was a fierce believer in women's reproductive rights. When Judyth was elected in 1989, she blamed the lack of discussion on abortion, saying in this place —

Reproductive issues and rights must be recognised as a critical part of overall general health and a key element of health care ... Abortion should be decriminalised ...

Unfortunately, Judyth will not be here to see our government's historic abortion reform become law, but I am told that in her final months she was pleased to see us introduce it to this place.

In 1994, Judyth released a book called *We Hold up Half the Sky: The Voices of Western Australian ALP Women in Parliament*. It is fair to say that Judyth helped many of us. She will be missed.

MRS L.M. O'MALLEY (Bicton) [12.19 pm]: Judyth Watson's contribution to the Parliament of Western Australia was immense, and her contribution beyond this place immeasurable. She was untiring and unwavering in her efforts to better the lives of those who came to this country to seek refuge and for many others who needed help to overcome disadvantage. She was a champion of many, and opened her heart and her door to those in need.

I first met Judyth far away from this place, at Palmyra Primary School, around 2012. Judyth was a classroom volunteer and I was a “Pally Primary” mum. I recall a tall, elegant woman who brought her natural calmness, kindness, warmth and patience into the classroom as a reader helper assisting and encouraging generations of students, including my son, to gain confidence in their reading and in themselves. Judyth extended this same generosity to me many years later when I was running for the seat of Bicton. When I felt so very out of my depth in what was then a very foreign political world, she was always there with a kind word and a cup of tea in her lovely cosy home in Palmyra. I would like to share the following words of Palmyra Primary School teacher Kellie Kerr —

Judyth was an extremely dedicated member of the Palmyra community. She volunteered in my classroom at Palmyra Primary for over 10 years. During this time, Judyth would come once a week (rain hail or shine) to support children with the development of their reading skills. She worked with a variety of children including those who required additional tuition to master their phonics knowledge and ran a ‘book club’ those who required extension and discussion around content and vocabulary.

Judyth also helped to enlighten many students about the plight of refugees coming to Australia and the need to be empathetic. She allowed the children to interview her, and this helped them understand the background of many of our refugees. Judyth particularly liked it when the children would stop and say hi to her when they saw her at the local shops or in the street! During our time working together Judyth and I formed a great friendship. I loved our chats, cherished her wisdom and enjoyed her sense of humour immensely. Judyth only stopped coming due to COVID.

I personally extend my sincere condolences to Judyth’s family and friends, and thank them for the support, love and care they gave Judyth throughout her life and particularly in her final weeks.

Vale, Judyth Watson.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [12.22 pm]: I rise to support the Premier’s motion of condolence for Dr Judyth Watson, OAM, distinguished member of this Assembly and an exemplary servant of the state.

Born in Burton-on-Trent, England, in 1940, Dr Watson made Australia her home at the tender age of nine. As a product of Perth Modern School, and with roots as a nurse, she later pursued academic excellence, earning both a Bachelor of Science degree and a PhD focused on workers compensation.

Her political journey began in 1986 when she was elected for Labor to represent the electorate of Canning in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly. Notably, she, alongside Dr Carmen Lawrence, made history as one of the first female members of this Parliament to hold a PhD. Dr Watson’s commitment to representing and advocating for her constituents was evident in her continued service, transitioning to represent the electorate of Kenwick after the dissolution of Canning, and subsequently standing for the electorate of Southern River. Dr Watson’s leadership extended beyond the confines of the electorates she served. In 1991, she was entrusted with the portfolios of Aboriginal affairs; multicultural and ethnic affairs; and seniors, serving under Premier Carmen Lawrence. She further championed women’s rights and concerns when she was appointed as Minister for Seniors and Women’s Interests in 1992, a testament to her dedication to equity and justice. Beyond her political career, her contributions to the community of Western Australia and her unwavering dedication to social justice were recognised when she was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2019.

Today, as we reflect upon her life and achievements, we honour not just a politician, but a trailblazer, an advocate and a cherished member of the Western Australian community. Our thoughts extend to her family, her friends and her colleagues here today and all those who had the privilege of knowing her both personally and professionally. Judyth Watson, OAM, leaves behind a legacy of service, commitment and dedication to the people of Western Australia. May her memory inspire us all to serve with the same passion and purpose.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [12.24 pm]: I also rise to contribute to the Premier’s condolence motion regarding Dr Judyth Watson, OAM. Dr Judyth Watson made a significant contribution to Parliament over three terms, including two years as a minister in the Lawrence government, and devoted her working life and retirement to the nursing profession and to the causes in which she so strongly believed. As we have already heard, the community of Western Australia and the broader community are clearly better for it.

Born in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, in Britain in 1940, daughter of a railway employee, Judyth Watson migrated to Western Australia with her family in 1949. Clearly a bright student, she completed her education at Perth Modern School to the age of 15, and worked as a nursing assistant before training as a nurse at Royal Perth Hospital from 1957 to 1960, topping the exams in senior surgery and gynaecology. She gained further qualifications at London’s King George VI Hospital and the Australian College of Nursing, also gaining a certificate in nursing education from the University of Edinburgh from 1971 to 1973. Returning to the Royal Perth Hospital School of Nursing from 1973 to 1974, Judyth then worked in community health services and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital until 1977. From 1976 to 1977, she gained a Bachelor of Science degree, with first class honours from the University of Western Australia. From 1978 until 1981, she was a part-time tutor and PhD student at the University of Western Australia’s department of anthropology, gaining her doctorate in 1982 from a thesis on workers compensation in Western Australia.

Having joined the Australian Labor Party in 1976, Judyth worked as the health and safety research officer for the Hospital Service and Miscellaneous Workers' Union in 1982 and 1983. After the election of the Burke government in 1983, she served until 1985 as ministerial adviser to Hon Des Dans, MLC, Minister for Industrial Relations. She deserves much of the credit for the adoption of the new occupational health and safety legislation in 1984, despite reported bureaucratic resistance. In 1987, the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Amendment Bill was finally passed.

Judyth Watson successfully gained Labor preselection for the district of Canning at the 1986 election, a seat formerly held by the late Tom Bateman for 18 years. Canning had covered different parts of the southern metropolitan area for over 80 years, and by then comprised the suburbs of Ferndale, Lynwood, Langford, Cannington, Beckenham and Kenwick. Dr Watson retained Canning with a majority of 5 447 votes, a 65.8 per cent result equalling that of the popular retiring member.

In 1986, both Judyth Watson and Carmen Lawrence were the first women with doctorates to be elected to the Legislative Assembly. In her first speech she stressed the importance of employee participation in creating a safer working environment and the great value of a multipurpose community house in Langford. A redistribution renamed the seat Kenwick, shifting it eastward and northward for the 1989 election. In a tighter overall climate, Judyth was re-elected with a majority of 2 324, at 56.9 per cent. For two years from February 1991, she served in the Lawrence government as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Seniors; Multicultural Affairs; Assisting the Minister for Women's Interests before becoming the minister in 1992. At the 1993 election she retained Kenwick by 1 500 votes, at 54.0 per cent of the total.

In opposition she was shadow minister for several portfolios, notably disability services and women's interests, campaigning for a stronger response to domestic violence. Earlier in 1990, she had organised a cross-party women's network for Amnesty International, drawing urgent attention to the persecution and killing of women who had spoken out against oppressive regimes. In the mid-1990s, she organised practical assistance for female Bosnian refugees.

A more extensive redistribution replaced Kenwick with the new district of Southern River, pivoting from Gosnells and Huntingdale, west and south to Canning Vale, Jandakot and Oakford. At the December 1996 election, a further swing of 4.1 per cent resulted in her loss of this now-marginal seat by 660 votes, or 48.5 per cent.

On leaving Parliament, Judyth returned to her role as a health educator, with three contracts with the Hepatitis Council. She spent five years heading the Council of Official Visitors, protecting the rights of involuntary patients, before retiring from paid work in 2008. She continued to devote her voluntary efforts to the advancement of women in public life, and to the welfare of refugees from 2000. She was a founder of the Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees. In 2002 she helped found the community legal service CASE for Refugees, serving as a board member of the Refugee Council of Australia from 2009 to 2013. She gave of herself most generously in assisting Afghan and other refugees on their path to citizenship.

In retirement she volunteered to assist with literacy and numeracy at a local primary school, which was allied to her continued efforts to encourage girls to undertake higher education and professional careers. She was a finalist for the Western Australia Senior Australian of the Year in 2015, and in 2019 she was awarded a Medal in the Order of Australia for service to the community of WA and for social justice.

We express our deep sympathy to the family, the many friends of Judyth Watson in the Labor movement and the wider community, to whom she made such a generous and unselfish contribution. She leaves an extraordinary legacy, which we can all learn from.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.31 pm]: I rise to acknowledge the passing of and life service of Hon Dr Judyth Watson, OAM. Judyth was my friend and mentor, and the first Labor candidate to stand for Southern River. She was our member of the Legislative Assembly at a time of incredible growth and transformation. What was one seat then, now covers at least 10 Legislative Assembly districts across the south east corridor, including Cannington, Armadale, parts of Darling Range, Thornlie, Riverton, Forrestfield, Jandakot and Southern River. I stand on her shoulders as the local member, continuing the work she began.

She loved Lisa O'Malley as a local member and was very proud when Lisa came doorknocking at her door as a candidate. We hosted Judyth here in the previous term of Parliament, and she was happy to come to question time and see the 40 members of a Labor government then in this chamber. I had a lovely message from her the day before the 2021 election and she was overjoyed to see 53 Labor members in this chamber. Interestingly, the 2021 election was the first time since 1996 that her electorate was fully represented by Labor members. I acknowledge the former MLAs and community leaders in the Speaker's gallery today.

Judyth always helped everyone. This began well before she had an office as a member of Parliament. It continued when she was the MLA. Her office was open to everyone. That help did not stop when she was no longer a member of Parliament. Her continuous advocacy for any vulnerable person and any person who needed guidance through public policy and bureaucracy is a lesson to every MLA about what the core business of our electorate offices, staff, and our role as a members of Parliament should be. She never stopped advocating. The power of a letter and the power of a written request to help someone else should never be forgotten.

She understood, and certainly taught me, the power of a letter as a query from a concerned citizen or an MLA to a minister or director general or a parliamentary liaison officer, and how it can make a difference. There were letters for state housing, for migration and humanitarian visas, medical support, access to education and TAFE courses for citizens and new migrants and refugees, and access for those who cannot always access what they need. Those were regularly written for 40 years, not only during the 10 years that she was the MLA for my community. No-one was turned away; no case was too hard. Judyth genuinely tried to help each person, each constituent and each family with each issue.

Judyth was a Perth Modern School graduate—many of the families in my electorate aspire to go to Perth Modern—and then a nurse at Royal Perth Hospital, like many people in my electorate. She served in many roles. I found out at her funeral that she was on same ship from the UK as Yvonne Henderson, another Gosnells MLA, as ten-pound Poms many years ago.

She worked for the Missos, now the United Workers Union, fighting for her future constituents as our union's first full-time occupational health and safety officer. She showed a lifelong commitment to social justice, combating domestic violence, promoting public policy action on combating tobacco and asbestos companies, and directing what governments and departments should do. She fought for reproductive and abortion rights for families. In my recent speech on abortion law reform I said, and will say again, that the health bill that has gone through our chamber and is now in the upper house, continues the work begun many years ago by Judyth and her proud colleagues.

Judyth wrote and published her thoughts as a guide for all of us to follow in her absence. I acknowledge our Parliamentary Library which holds all the documents I am about to go through, for future generations to access. Her groundbreaking 1981 thesis was about the work she had done on workers compensation. She then worked for the federal Minister for Industrial Relations, tirelessly promoting how less disease and fewer accidents and injuries can keep people safe—an odd concept then. In the 1970s and 1980s she advanced that companies investing in their workforce and safety was in their business' interests. This is part of the story of why workers compensation is an accepted standard in Western Australian workplaces today.

In 1995, as the shadow Minister for Disability Services, she wrote the report *We do without*. The report discusses the additional costs for a person with a disability and their family. Many of those ideas have been progressed, but there is still more to do. Judyth compiled and edited the 1994 book, *We hold up half the sky*. The book celebrated and emphasised the contributions of all women in Parliament, and the progressive cause. In her introduction, she wrote —

This book provides information about all twenty two of us —

So far —

who have been privileged to be endorsed by the Australian Labor Party and then elected to represent our constituents. It should be regarded as a text book and a history ...

As this book goes to press Carmen Lawrence is contesting the Federal seat of Fremantle and Michelle Roberts is contesting the state seat of Glendalough in by-elections. We trust their speeches will start a second and substantial volume of *We Hold up Half the Sky*.

There could be many more volumes because of the work that she has done. As Premier Cook stated, David Black and Harry Phillips gave one of the best compliments and endorsement that an MLA can receive, which is —

An active parliamentarian who spoke on many issues, her speeches were invariably the product of exemplary research involving a scrutiny of relevant reports and all known literature on each topic, and with the statistical soundness of assertions being carefully evaluated.

That is something I continue to aspire to. Her 1999 reflections stated —

Parliaments are not representative of the community, the most glaring deficiency being gender imbalance. My view that the working environment of Parliament is most woman-unfriendly is shared by many men as well as women. The sitting times and hours, as well as traditions, preclude participation in intelligent and rational debate...

The structure, traditions and ethos of the WA Parliament remain masculine and resistant to change, or even to review...

There are no issues that cannot be addressed by a woman. As a woman member one does not, and could not, deal exclusively with women's issues. But, in my view, women have a duty to bring our perspective, style and experience to our work; to policy development, to decision-making and to working with individuals and communities. This will serve men as well as women and children better.

She continued —

In June 1995, I moved in the Assembly that a select committee of both Houses be appointed to identify impediments to women standing for Parliament and to assess how Parliament itself might be a hindrance to women.

...

Increasingly, girls and young women see politics as a legitimate career ... and are structuring their education and work decisions accordingly. Despite my reservations and my perceptions of the Parliament and its processes, I think women who are prepared to work on issues important to the community are well able to make a difference.

I conclude this part with Judyth's words —

I remain committed to encouraging women to be elected and I believe that once the 'critical mass' of 35 per cent is achieved, a parliamentary career will be much easier for individual women.

In this chamber today, as the minister said, the election of the member for Rockingham has achieved one more goal of Judyth's, with 50 per cent of women serving in this chamber—more women than men for the first time.

Judyth established a cross-party women's network of Amnesty International in the Western Australian Parliament, a parliamentary friends group that the member for Bicton and I are talking about resurrecting and continuing in Judyth's name. She was the Senior Australian of the Year in 2014 as a refugee and health advocate. She volunteered at schools, reading to children. Each day counted and she made every day of her life mean something to the people who needed her. I acknowledge Seaforth Primary School in the public gallery today, which was one of her primary schools and is now one of mine.

Judyth passed away peacefully in her home. She asked to die with dignity at home and she got her wish. We all played a part in this chamber when the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2019 was voted on and passed. That work began when Judyth Watson helped to progress the 1990s Right to Die Bill, which was introduced into this chamber by Ian Taylor. Judyth led that debate, but it did not proceed to a third reading or to the Legislative Council because of the issues of that era. It was said at her funeral that when she had her final diagnosis, Judyth was not concerned that her life would conclude. She was worried about the families that she was supporting and what would happen to their cases and their support. I offer my office and my support whenever it is needed.

Judyth's funeral was well attended by many members of the community and people from around Western Australia, including her friends and family, as well as WA government Labor ministers serving and retired—a true progressive and Labor royalty list, as well as an amazing reflection of the diversity of the people whom she served and helped every day. On all their behalf, we say thank you to Judyth. We hope to make you proud as we now carry on the work that you began and have shown us how to follow. On behalf of a grateful community, we say thank you, Judyth.

Members: Hear, hear!

MS M.M. QUIRK (Landsdale) [12.42 pm]: I will be very brief. The member for Southern River is a very hard act to follow, but I want to make a couple of comments about Dr Judyth Watson. As we have all heard today, over the years, she has selflessly touched many lives. I got to know Dr Watson personally as a policy officer in the Dowding government—then, of course, through the party, and finally, I had contact with her in her voluntary work as a local member covering Girrawheen, Balga and Mirrabooka at the time, which all had a very high migrant and refugee population. I also acknowledge Judyth's former colleagues who fought shoulder to shoulder with her in the good fight. It is a testament to how much she was valued and respected that they are all here today.

Dr Watson was someone of great dignity and great style. She had a fierce intellect but at the same time had a humility that is somewhat uncharacteristic in our profession. We have also heard, of course, that she was a person of great compassion and kindness. I have to say that her commitment to refugees and migrants was very evident in my dealings with her. Of course, she also had a great love and respect of and commitment to First Nations people. I am just thankful that she is not around to hear some of the mean-spirited debate that we are having to endure at the moment.

Judyth was a person of unwavering dedication and commitment, as we have also heard, and she will be fondly remembered.

Vale, Judyth Watson.

Members: Hear, hear!

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [12.44 pm]: Judyth Watson was one of the most remarkable, intelligent and compassionate members that I have had the privilege to serve in this chamber with. She touched the lives of so many. She saved the lives of so many. I do not say that lightly. She saved and touched the lives of people whom she knew well and got to know well, but she also saved and touched the lives of so many other people through the work that she did, be that her work in occupational health and safety or her absolute dedication to dealing with children and women in situations of domestic violence and danger. She worked out systems to change the law. The member for Southern River alluded to her work in occupational health and safety. I got to know more about that work when I worked in that agency back in 1993, before I became a member of Parliament. It is hard to understand now, but it was a really novel concept to have employees sitting at the table with employers, talking about safe systems at work and about preventing death, injury, illness and disease in the workplace—all things that were eminently preventable. Today, we have had another reminder of a death in the workplace. But if we look overall at the rates of death, injury and disease in all kinds of workplaces right across our state now compared with what they were

a decade or two or three ago, we see those changes. The results are there to be seen. Lives have been saved. There are people who have not been injured in the workplace because of the work of people like Judyth, who had that novel idea: let us put the workers at the table. Let us put the employees at the table. Let us sit with them and work out how we can get safer systems and protections in place. We are able to do that in every workplace.

My first seat in this chamber was somewhere near where the member for Hillarys is sitting. It was between Judyth Watson and Fred Riebeling. Yes, Fred liked a joke. Although we are being very serious about Judyth today, Judyth liked a joke, as well. Judyth was a lot of fun. She was an incredible woman. I was very fortunate to have had that as my first seat in this place, and to sit next to Judyth, who was truly remarkable. I already knew Judyth well before then, having been kind of foisted onto our East Metropolitan Region campaign, and having to then take leave from the public service in order to campaign for East Metro. Hon Nick Griffiths and I spent a fair bit of time on about three separate East Metro campaigns, including going doorknocking with Judyth. Our only problem doorknocking with Judyth was that she found it difficult to have a short conversation with people. She could not just be businesslike, give them a card, win their vote and move on to the next door. She was so intensely interested in people that Nick and I might have doorknocked the rest of the street before she got three houses in! We had to give her a bit of encouragement to perhaps take a note of the issue and go back and deal with it at length after the election, we suggested, so that she could do some more doorknocking!

I have talked about how Judyth touched the lives and had the respect of so many people. The member for Southern River alluded to it. There was an enormous crowd at her service at Fremantle Cemetery. People spoke about Judyth. We often learn more about someone at their funeral. I certainly learnt more about Judyth's early life at that point. The celebrant at her funeral was none other than Ann Carnley, the wife of former Archbishop—if you do become former; I am not sure—Peter Carnley, who did the final commendation. It was no surprise to me to see so many current and former colleagues, current and former ministers, and, indeed, former Premiers there.

It was certainly no surprise to see former Labor Premiers there, but sitting alongside me was former Liberal Premier Richard Court. I think that speaks volumes about Judyth and the respect she held right across this chamber and Parliament. On top of that, it went from the highest levels of Parliament and society down to people who arrived in our country with nothing very recently. Judyth was there for those people and those people were also there for her service at Fremantle Cemetery.

One of the various challenges faced and Judyth's compassionate talking with people was evident in 1994. I was elected in March and I think it was in about August or September because it was cold in here. We had no air conditioning. I saw Yvonne Henderson sitting in the gallery. Yvonne wore UGG boots in here on occasion, very discreetly. Our female Hansard reporters were required to wear skirts or dresses. They were not permitted to wear trousers. An edict went out but I think one or two of them wore trousers to take the *Hansard*. It was cold. It made sense to me. They were elegant trouser suits, with matching jackets. The then chief of Hansard said that the dignity of this place meant they must wear a skirt or a dress. It was difficult for people in that position to take up the issue, so Judyth took it up. She spoke to all of us along with other members at the time and women across the Parliament. Judyth and others organised us all to wear trousers to work on a particular day as a sign of solidarity. It was mainly Labor members, but I also remember Cheryl Edwardes on the Liberal side. There was probably about a dozen of us and we all stood on the front steps in our trousers. Now I think: how can it be just 29 years ago we were even having that kind of argument?

I added that just to give members a bit of a sense of the levity and fullness of Judyth Watson's character. It is another testament to her really having a genuine empathy with other people and taking up issues on their behalf. I sincerely say that she really was one of the most remarkable women and most intelligent and compassionate women whom I have met, and certainly one of the most remarkable, compassionate and intelligent members of Parliament to have served in this place.

Vale, Judyth Watson.

My sympathy to all her friends and family. I am sure they all know that they are very blessed to have had Judyth in their lives.

I request all members to rise for one minute's silence in order to carry the motion.

Question passed; members and officers standing as a mark of respect.

PAPERS TABLED

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

AUSTIN "OCKER" ROBERTSON JUNIOR — TRIBUTE

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [12.55 pm]: I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to a true legend of Australian Rules football, the late Austin Christopher Robertson Junior, affectionately known by his nickname "Ocker". Ocker was one of the last true characters of football and I echo the sentiments of the football community in recognising him as one of Western Australia's greatest ever footballers.

Austin Robertson Junior was born in 1943 in North Perth, and sadly departed us last week at the age of 80 years. His journey in football was nothing short of extraordinary, leaving an enduring legacy that will be remembered forever. A son of the renowned South Melbourne great bearing the same name, he managed to surpass even his father's stellar accomplishments.

Playing primarily as a full-forward, his agility and speed were unmatched, allowing him to make blisteringly fast leads to open spaces with finesse. He is the West Australian Football League's all-time leading goal kicker, kicking 1 211 goals for the Subiaco Lions over 251 matches, and he won the Bernie Naylor Medal eight times as the WAFL's leading goal kicker. On six separate occasions, he kicked over 100 goals in a season; in 1968, he kicked 157 goals. It was a time when I was a strong supporter of the Subiaco Football Club—it was before Peel Thunder—and I spent many hours at Subiaco Oval. I distinctly, as a very young fella, remember the 1973 grand final—Ocker's only grand final in 13 seasons—when 46 000 people watched Subiaco beat West Perth by 32 points.

Ocker also played for the South Melbourne Football Club, and in 1966, booted 60 goals in 18 games during his short stint in Victoria. Astute judges and legends in their own right, Graham "Polly" Farmer and Neil Kerley regarded him, when at his peak during the late 1960s, as the finest full-forward in Australia. In 2015, Robertson was rightfully acknowledged by being inducted into the Australian Football Hall of Fame.

Robertson retired at the end of the 1974 season. In his post-football career, he became an influential figure in the establishment of Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket and was the player manager of Shane Warne. Earlier this year, Robertson told the ABC he suspected he was suffering from chronic traumatic encephalopathy and wanted to donate his brain to science once he passed. He leaves behind a trail of records, memories and inspiration that will continue to motivate aspiring footballers and remind us all of the heights that can be achieved through passion, perseverance and skill.

I recognise the contributions of Ocker, or Austin Robertson Junior, to football in this country and pay my respects to his family and friends.

Vale, Austin Robertson Junior.

CINEFESTOZ FESTIVAL — BUSSELTON

Statement by Minister for Culture and the Arts

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Culture and the Arts) [12.58 pm]: I would like to inform the house of my recent attendance at the CinefestOZ Festival in Busselton. Now in its sixteenth year, CinefestOZ has consolidated its position as the premiere destination film festival event in Australia. It is proudly supported by the state government through Tourism Western Australia, Lotterywest and Screenwest. The festival is presented by a small, dedicated team supported by a workforce of over 200 red beret-wearing volunteers who warmly welcome over 20 000 filmmakers and visitors to the beautiful south west region. Over time, the event has attracted many outstanding Australian filmmakers to see firsthand what our beautiful state has to offer. Running for over six days across 30 venues, the festival not only screened new Australian and French feature films at its red carpet and community screenings, but also included a two-day industry program, IndigefestOZ, as well as schools and community outreach programs, delivering social and economic benefits to the region. Over 250 creatives engaged with the festival's industry conference and skills workshops as part of the industry program.

Since its inception, the Cinesnaps schools program has engaged over 52 000 students with over 50 excursions and incursions taking place this festival. The IndigefestOZ program celebrates First Nation stories through the Deadly Shorts and Community Day. The festival's much-anticipated red carpet gala event was held at the rustic Sabina River Farm near Busselton. In recognition of his decade-long support for CinefestOZ and patronage of the Cinesnaps schools program, actor and director Myles Pollard was named the 2023 Screen Legend. The announcement of the 2023 film prize of \$100 000, the largest prize for Australian feature films, was awarded to *Shayda*, written, directed and co-produced by the multi-talented Noora Niasari. This outstanding and compelling film also won the audience award in the world cinema dramatic competition at the Sundance Film Festival and was recently announced as the official Australian submission for best international feature at the 2024 Academy Awards.

It is an exciting time ahead for our screen industry. Plans are underway to stimulate screen production and support the development of the industry in Western Australia over the next 10 years. This includes the state government's commitment to attracting national and international screen productions to our state, continuing to support Western Australian filmmakers, and bringing film production into the regions, boosting our local regional economies.

I would like to commend CinefestOZ for another magnificent festival, and congratulate all the filmmakers, volunteers and community members who make this such an important event for our screen industry and our south west region.

EXPLORATION INCENTIVE SCHEME

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [1.00 pm]: I would like to update the house on round 28 of the Cook government's exploration incentive scheme. Applications for round 28 of the EIS and series 6 of the energy analysis program closed on 1 September 2023.

The Cook government recognises exploration is the lifeblood of our mining sector and we are committed to continuing to support exploration activities in Western Australia through the EIS. The latest co-funded drilling round follows the state budget 2023–24 funding increase of \$1 million a year. A total of \$7 million is now available across the two rounds each year. Recent success stories include Caspin Resources, which received EIS funding in 2021 for exploration at its Mount Squires project. Drilling found a significant molybdenum–lead–copper–gold geochemical anomaly. The company received further EIS funding earlier this year to continue exploration at Mt Squires, including drilling its Duchess East prospect, where earlier work uncovered near-surface rare-earth elements mineralisation.

Meanwhile, Norwest Minerals utilised its EIS support to find significant shallow mineralisation of rare-earth elements from its maiden 20-hole drilling program at its Arunta West project in the Pilbara. According to the geological survey and resources strategy division at the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, the new discoveries reported for the period 1 January to 30 June 2023 reflect strong exploration activity across Western Australia, particularly for critical minerals. During this time, EIS funding has assisted Dreadnought Resources make two rare-earth element discoveries at its Mangaroon project in the Gascoyne. In addition to Dreadnought’s discoveries, there were 11 other new discoveries and 17 new zones of mineralisation reported between 1 January to 30 June 2023.

It is no surprise that we are seeing this level of success in WA, with the state accounting for two-thirds of Australia’s exploration investment. It is initiatives like the EIS that will continue to encourage exploration in the state. Record-breaking investment was committed to exploration in 2022—a total of \$2.54 billion in fact, with \$800 million alone dedicated to the search for critical minerals. Western Australia’s critical minerals sector will play a crucial role in the world’s decarbonisation efforts, while new discoveries have the potential to become new mines, meaning jobs and wealth creation for all Western Australians. The Cook government remains committed to supporting initiatives like the EIS for us to achieve this ambition.

WA ELECTRIC VEHICLE NETWORK

Statement by Minister for Energy

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): This will be first of many I hope.

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Energy) [1.03 pm]: Here we go. I am pleased to inform the house that our state-owned energy companies are making excellent progress in rolling out the WA electric vehicle network. The WA EV network is part of the Cook Labor government’s \$43.5 million investment in EV infrastructure in WA, aimed at boosting EV uptake to support our journey to net zero emissions by 2050. Synergy and Horizon Power are installing 98 new electric vehicle charging stations across 49 locations—from Kununurra in the north to Esperance in the south and Eucla in the east. Our state-owned energy companies are installing these chargers along key travel routes, averaging less than 200 kilometres apart. The WA EV network will span 7 000 kilometres, making it the longest in Australia. It will unlock the state for EV drivers and their families, thereby driving EV uptake.

Last week, the Minister for Climate Action joined me at Kings Park to cut the ribbon on the first WA EV network charger in Perth. The EV charging site is on May Drive, opposite Zamia Cafe. It represents the central node of the WA EV network, linking Perth to regional towns throughout the state. Kings Park hosts six million visitors every year, and now they will be able to top up their EVs in as little as 20 minutes. We opened the Kings Park charging station on Wednesday last week, and since then we have added another in Carnarvon.

The member for North West Central joined Horizon Power at the launch of its latest charging site at the Carnarvon Visitor Centre. I thank the member for North West Central for her support for this Cook Labor government initiative. The Carnarvon charging site was the tenth to come online since April this year, joining Broome, Northampton, Geraldton, Lancelin, Manjimup, Williams, Walpole, Albany and Kings Park. The communities of Exmouth, Karratha, Esperance and Denham will join the WA EV network imminently, with Horizon Power well advanced in delivering those charging stations.

The Cook Labor government’s WA EV network is already opening up the state for EV drivers and their families. There have been more than 1 500 charging sessions along the network since the first charging site went live. The WA EV network is giving EV drivers the confidence to explore our state without range anxiety. Together with other charging infrastructure, the network is facilitating tourism and enabling EV drivers to support regional economies. The Cook government’s WA EV network is part of our electric vehicle action plan, which is helping to drive EV uptake and steer WA towards a clean energy future, Acting Speaker—with an electric vehicle yourself!

BEACONSFIELD TAFE SITE — REGENERATION

Statement by Minister for Lands

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Lands) [1.06 pm]: I rise to update the house on the revitalisation of the former Beaconsfield TAFE site. This urban regeneration project will deliver up to 150 new homes, including social and affordable housing, and incorporate landscaped public open space. I am pleased to announce that the state government, through DevelopmentWA, has now lodged the local structure plan with the City of Fremantle. The

3.8-hectare site holds great potential for transformation, and the plan has now been released for public comment. This plan outlines the design and planning framework for the site's redevelopment, aiming to align it with community aspirations and needs.

The City of Fremantle will oversee a 42-day public comment period, allowing locals to review DevelopmentWA's local structure plan. The plan was shaped by an extensive community consultation process conducted by DevelopmentWA. This process garnered valuable input through over 100 submissions within a three-week span. The City of Fremantle's Heart of Beaconsfield master plan also served as a guiding vision for the area. What emerged from this feedback was a strong emphasis on sustainability, the creation of new public open spaces, the preservation of mature trees, and improved security and safety in the vicinity. The resulting local structure plan reflects these priorities by promoting a diverse range of dwelling options, including social and affordable housing. It will mainly feature a medium density, climate-responsive residential development, with a mix of low and mid-rise apartments and townhouses.

The incorporation of social and affordable housing is an important priority of our government, aligning with our \$2.6 billion commitment to deliver 4 000 social dwellings. The site redevelopment also places a focus on sustainability, incorporating elements such as water-sensitive urban design and climate-responsive building design. The state government will continue to update all stakeholders on the progress of the redevelopment, including timing of construction commencement and sale releases.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the work on engagement with the community and stakeholders throughout this project and look forward to the development being delivered and providing a valuable asset to the Fremantle community.

SOCIAL HOUSING — KUNUNURRA

Statement by Minister for Housing

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [1.08 pm]: I rise to inform the house that the Cook government has successfully completed refurbishments on a spot purchased social housing complex in Kununurra, which will make 16 one-bedroom units available for social housing in the region. The units have been repurposed to create an Aboriginal elders residential complex, which is set to make a significant impact on the lives of Aboriginal seniors in the East Kimberley community.

Last week, I took the opportunity to visit Kununurra and personally opened the \$1.8 million complex. Redevelopment initiatives like this represent more than just bricks and mortar; they embody our commitment to cultural connection, reducing isolation and providing culturally appropriate housing for our First Nations peoples. I am confident that this complex will be a great support in the East Kimberley region. As noted, the complex's acquisition was made possible through the state government's spot purchase program, which is designed to address the housing needs of Aboriginal seniors on the public housing waitlist. Kimberley-based Aboriginal building group MGC Building and Maintenance undertook the substantial refurbishment works. The result is not just housing, but a community-oriented space, featuring an indoor community room and an outdoor community meeting space.

Our government has worked closely with a reference group and engaged in a genuine partnership to create protocols for tenanting, servicing and managing the complex. This approach ensures that the complex aligns with the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal community it serves and also supports the tenants who live there. By involving Aboriginal stakeholders in the setting-up process, we are ensuring that the complex becomes an integrated part of the community, keeping residents connected to vital services and their wider community.

Thank you to the East Kimberley regional manager of housing, Jane Murphy, and her team for their hard work and dedication. I also personally thank the reference group that was a vital part of setting up this complex. The redevelopment of this complex stands as a great example of our dedication to providing suitable social housing options for Aboriginal elders and fostering real and positive social change.

SENIORS WEEK AND SENIORS AWARDS 2023

Statement by Minister for Seniors and Ageing

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Seniors and Ageing) [1.11 pm]: The Cook government, through the Department of Communities, has once again made funding available to support WA Seniors Week 2023 and the WA Seniors Awards.

WA Seniors Week runs from 12 to 19 November and is a high point in the annual calendar for seniors in Western Australia. The Seniors Week community grants program provides financial assistance to local governments, registered not-for-profit organisations and community groups to host exciting events and activities throughout the week. Funding of up to \$1 000 for individual organisations or \$3 000 for a consortium provides the opportunity for them to design, plan, implement and evaluate place-based activities that recognise and thank seniors for their contributions to the community; promote intergenerational activities linking seniors to the community; facilitate artistic, cultural and celebratory expression within the community; and engage seniors in a variety of activities and initiatives that encourage active ageing.

Last year's grants funded events across the state, including morning teas; art workshops and games; information sessions on health, wellbeing, online safety and planning for the future; and excursions. Individuals, local governments, businesses, community groups, local members and not-for-profit organisations are all invited to provide nominations across the five categories for awards: WA Senior Metropolitan, WA Senior Regional, WA Age Friendly Business, WA Age Friendly Local Government, and WA Seniors Advocate. The grants program and the WA Seniors Awards are coordinated by the Council on the Ageing Western Australia, in partnership with the Department of Communities and Lotterywest.

I invite all members to spend some time during WA Seniors Week meeting with wonderful older Western Australians and participating in the wide range of activities and events planned. I also encourage everyone to visit COTA's website to find out more about the grants and nomination process.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND TECHNOLOGY HUB — BUNBURY–GEOGRAPHE

Statement by Minister for Regional Development

MR D.T. PUNCH (Bunbury — Minister for Regional Development) [1.13 pm]: I am pleased to advise the house that on Tuesday, 5 September 2023, I announced that the state government had awarded the contract to deliver a detailed feasibility study and business case for an advanced manufacturing and technology hub—AMTECH—in the Bunbury–Geographe region. This honours our 2021 election commitment to the south west region, and I would like to acknowledge the considerable work undertaken so far by a range of stakeholders to progress the AMTECH proposal. This piece of work will investigate the preferred model, location, structure and services for AMTECH.

Deloitte will work with industry, enterprise, higher education providers, entrepreneurs and all tiers of government to develop a comprehensive analysis that includes stage gates for stakeholders to analyse, refine and fully scope the viability of the preferred design. A steering committee has been formed to support the delivery of the work. The steering committee is independently chaired by Hon Clive Brown, a former Minister for State Development, and includes representatives from the South West Development Commission; the Department of the Premier and Cabinet; the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation; the Department of Treasury; the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development; DevelopmentWA; and the Southern Ports Authority. The work will focus on core industry areas underpinned by the region's comparative advantages, aiming to unlock the region's potential to support the renewable energy sector through advances in wind and battery technology and access to high-value critical minerals.

The state government has identified technology and advanced manufacturing as a priority to grow and diversify the economy, create sustainable jobs and secure the state's future. Globally, advanced technologies are shaping the future of manufacturing to increase competitiveness and drive economic prosperity. The development of an advanced manufacturing hub will create a high-tech environment that integrates research and development, education and commercialisation to build resilience across the manufacturing supply chain.

FOOD ORGANICS AND GARDEN ORGANICS

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [1.15 pm]: I have news for all members who have an interest in FOGO—food organics and garden organics—in their communities or who want to encourage councils to take up that option in their communities. It is very interesting information.

I recently had the opportunity to view the results of a remarkable trial showing how our poor sandy soils can be significantly improved, increasing water retention, nutrient availability and, ultimately, plant growth. The findings have substantial implications for agricultural practices and land management.

In May this year, the Western Australian and Australian governments announced investments under the food waste for healthy soils fund totalling \$11.25 million for three organic recycling infrastructure projects. The projects will divert up to 270 000 tonnes of Western Australia's food organics and garden organics waste from landfill each year and convert it into compost.

GO Organics processes organic waste into soil conditioners, mulches and potting mixes for our soils and received \$3.5 million in co-funding to expand its existing facility near Gingin. The funding will enable GO Organics to increase its processing capacity of organic waste by 75 000 tonnes a year to up to 124 000 tonnes a year, producing rich materials to benefit our soils. A pot trial conducted by Murdoch University, with support from CSIRO, has used GO Organics compost products combined with clay and achieved impressive results in improving the water and nutrient-holding capacity of Gingin's sandy soils. The benefits of compost and clay amendments in agriculture and horticulture were shown clearly through this trial, presenting a potential sustainable and cost-effective solution for enhancing productivity.

The value in our food and garden waste is clear, and improving the health of our sandy soils is enormously beneficial to our wellbeing and productivity. Importantly, diverting FOGO from landfill also prevents the generation of a significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions.

The state's *Waste avoidance and resource recovery strategy 2030: Western Australia's waste strategy* contains a target for all local governments in Perth and the Peel region to offer a three-bin kerbside collection system that separates and recovers FOGO by 2025. The Waste Authority administers a \$20 million program to assist local governments with the cost of rolling out this system. The increase in GO Organics' processing capacity will help to support the FOGO rollout. It is imperative that we recover the value that is in our waste, and the recovery of FOGO is vital to our soils and to our climate. I might just add that in Gingin, non-arable land was converted to productive land by this trial.

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

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 September.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [1.19 pm]: I note at the outset that we support the bill, although it has already been done by the Leader of the Opposition, who is the lead speaker on this bill. Given the breadth of comments made by members on the other side, I thought this was an opportunity to talk generally about the issue.

It would appear that this initiative will at least encourage people to build build-to-rent apartments. There is obviously a significant need in a community for more rental accommodation. I think rental availability is less than one per cent. There is clearly a crying need for it. I have children who rent and they find the availability of rental properties a very perilous situation. I might say that I hope that the outcome of this bill is that we see more significant high-rise rental properties built across the whole metropolitan area as opposed to what is happening at the moment. A disproportionate majority of high-rise buildings are being built in my electorate or in the electorates immediately adjacent to mine. It is basically high-end housing for wealthy people; it is not actually helping to provide the sorts of housing that we need across the whole metropolitan area. It is particularly not helping with the provision of affordable housing. I hope that the ultimate outcome of this bill is that we will see more affordable accommodation across the whole metropolitan area and not just a concentration on high-end apartments in the community that I live in and surrounding communities.

I noted some of the debate from other members. I might say that I thought the attempt from the member for Mount Lawley to goad me into commenting on what I can only call his jibes directed at me in this place was rather tawdry. However, I did think that he deserved some response. I am genuinely concerned. I have heard in a number of forums and in this place from the Minister for Planning, Minister for Housing and member for Mount Lawley about the fact that we need to somehow reduce building standards, approval processes and the involvement of communities because of this building crisis. I am extremely disturbed. I attended a conference of an environmental nature on the east coast a few weeks ago. I pretty much heard the same comments word for word, that to somehow solve this building problem we are going to have to just accept reduced standards and the bypassing of community consultation in what we do in their areas. I will certainly be keenly looking at that in this place and outside as well. I am really concerned that, from what I can see, this will only help people who are already making significant profits from building these apartments to make more money. It is not going to lead to any more housing; it is just going to improve profits. I believe the idea that developers will only develop when they can do whatever they want wherever they want is a profoundly flawed strategy that is to the detriment of our society and community.

What developers really need is clear standards. Constantly changing standards are a problem, but if there are clear standards, the developers will rapidly adjust to them. I have said in this place that I was very disappointed to see the Minister for Planning back down on the legislation that the government proposed to apply certain standards to building regulations. Developers need clear standards. Once they are clear, developers will adjust to them, build them into their plans and get on with it. They need certain approval paths. That does not mean that local communities will not be involved in approvals, but that there will be certainty for developers in what they have to go through and that it is time-bound and not never-ending.

The government and government agencies also need to provide their services in a timely manner. We have heard that it is now taking Western Power up to a year to connect new developments to the grid. That is adding substantial delay to properties coming into circulation. It is stopping those properties from being occupied by people and those developments going ahead in a timely manner. I think things to give developers certainty are laudable. However, I think to say that we should just reduce standards and abandon any effort to apply even the most basic amenities standards is wrong.

One of the things that I also want to see is proper choice. It has been put that more apartments offer more choice. That is appropriate, but it is rapidly becoming the case that the only choice, in particular for many young people, is apartments. They actually do not have a choice. In many cases, an apartment might be an appropriate choice for very young people who are not going to live there for a long period of time. Some people may choose to live there for their whole lives, but most people actually want to have a house, especially when they are having children. There are a lot of people in my area who want to move to an apartment when they retire because they do not want the effort that goes along with maintaining a house, yard and the like. However, we are unfortunately reaching the point at which people do not have a choice. I might say that in terms of apartments, they are not appreciating assets in

many cases; they are depreciating assets. The basis of wealth for most young families is that they buy a house that then gradually improves in value over time. However, that is not the case for apartments and there are substantial costs that go with apartments.

I was talking to someone who has a small apartment in Perth. Their corporation fees are over \$8 000 a year on top of all their other amenity fees. Those are very high costs. I hope that, on top of this, we will see that people have real choice and opportunities outside of other apartments. I might also say, and I hope that this is something that the government takes on, that we need a much stronger focus on developing regional communities. One of the problems leading to a housing shortage in Perth is that so many people are staying in Perth, rather than going to the regions. In fact, there is a situation now with the fly-in fly-out culture that has developed in which we have tens of thousands of people working in regional communities, but their families are living in Perth. Many of these people would live in regional communities if suitable housing was available. As I said, I support this proposal from the government. The parliamentary secretary is here dealing with this legislation. I support this attempt to try to at least improve the supply of rental accommodation, but I think in terms of taking the pressure off Perth, there needs to be a really serious effort around developing not just small amounts of housing, but significant amounts of housing in regional communities.

I have probably said in this place, and certainly in other places, that today in Kalgoorlie, there are 3 000 jobs for people who have no formal qualifications. Most companies in Kalgoorlie would prefer that their workforce lived in Kalgoorlie, the reason being that they tend to stay in their jobs longer when they live in the community where they work. I think there has been an enormous missed opportunity to let people have the chance to live in those regional communities. There are a number of practical things that go along with that. We need much more land made available in the larger regional centres, but there also needs to be help for councils with headworks. The cost of headworks is a significant impediment to the development of new properties in those regional communities.

The other thing is that families need to feel safe in order to live in those communities. People will not live in those communities if they do not feel safe. They need to have access to first-rate health services as well as first-rate educational services. I appreciate that that is outside the scope of this particular bill, but I think there is an opportunity for the government to put much more focus on regional housing development as a way of overcoming the housing shortage. Otherwise, I commend the bill to the house.

DR J. KRISHNAN (Riverton — Parliamentary Secretary) [1.29 pm] — in reply: I would like to thank members for their contributions to the second reading debate on the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023 and take the opportunity to respond to some of the issues raised. Before I go to my response, as I always do I would like to share my personal experience of looking for rental properties at various stages in my life. I was fortunate, growing up in my hometown, that my parents owned three different houses, so I could choose where I wanted to stay. But then when I moved from one state to another for my university education, I had to look for a rental; I was fortunate enough to find one that suited me.

Following graduation and getting married, I joined the corporate sector where housing was provided as part of my employment. I was given a five-bedroom house with five bathrooms. When my wife moved to the city to live with the kids, I was left alone in that large house by myself. Eventually, when I tried to move to the city with my wife, I again moved from that position to start looking for a rental.

When I moved to the UK I shared a two-bedroom apartment with five others. In one of the large bedrooms there were two bunk beds, where I had someone sleeping above me. Again, renting was difficult. After moving to Perth, the practice I joined was very nice, and I am grateful that we were provided with accommodation for the first three months after we arrived. We found a rental property but then the owner had to sell it, so we had to move to another rental property. Before we were told that we would have to move again, we decided that we would buy a house. We eventually ended up buying a house and thought, “No more renting!” But then the kids had to go to high school, so we moved closer to the city and ended up buying a practice. I could not afford to buy a second house, so it was back to a rental property again. We eventually bought a house and started living in it in 2013. However, my election campaign got really dirty because I did not live in Riverton. I had to again rent, in Riverton, to show that I was there with the community of Riverton.

That happened to me. There are constant changes in life circumstances that result in people looking for rental properties. I acknowledge that there is currently a strain on the availability of rental properties. That is why the Land Tax Assessment Amendment (Build-to-Rent) Bill 2023 is designed to encourage and promote investment in build-to-rent options. The eventual aim is to have more rental properties available for people to access when they need them.

I come now to my reply to members who contributed to the second reading debate. Firstly, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his support for this bill. I can confirm that the government consulted with the Property Council and the Urban Development Institute of Australia. They both fully welcomed this land tax exemption legislation, which will provide significant financial support for developers in the emerging build-to-rent industry. The Leader of the Opposition asked about the financial impact of the exemption on the state. It is difficult to estimate the future cost of the exemption, simply because the build-to-rent industry is in its infancy in Perth, with very few projects

currently under construction and long lead times for development. The estimated cost is likely to grow over time, with the cost of the exemption ultimately determined by the success of the industry. Although the effect on the state's land tax revenue is not expected to be significant, the exemption will provide significant support for each build-to-rent development.

The Leader of the Opposition also asked why the exemption is 50 per cent, and whether that will be sufficient to support investment in the sector. The 50 per cent rate is consistent with all other states that have introduced a build-to-rent exemption. The exemption applies to the reduced value of the land, rather than to the tax that applies based on the value of the land. The 50 per cent exemption on land value will result in a tax reduction of more than 50 per cent because of the progressive land tax scale. For example, a 50 per cent tax exemption on a \$10 million property or piece of land will reduce the tax payable by 59 per cent. To give members an example, if the land value is \$10 million, it is estimated that the tax exemption will be about \$107 000 every year for the next 20 years, totalling a cost benefit of more than \$20 million.

The Leader of the Opposition asked what other measures could be implemented to encourage developers to take up build-to-rent developments. The commonwealth government has already announced two tax incentives for build-to-rent developments. From 1 July 2024, the withholding tax rate on managed investment trusts will be reduced from 30 per cent to 15 per cent on income from newly constructed build-to-rent properties. This announcement came after the former state Treasurer wrote a letter to the federal Treasurer, along with the other state Treasurers, requesting consideration of this change. The capital works tax deduction rate will also increase from 2.5 per cent to four per cent for eligible new build-to-rent projects on which construction commences after 9 May 2023. This will effectively reduce the time taken to recover these costs to tax deductions from 40 years to 25 years. These two tax incentives are additional incentives put in by the commonwealth government to boost investment in the build-to-rent industry.

The Leader of the Opposition also commented on the number of builders undertaking build-to-rent developments in Western Australia. There are currently around seven new build-to-rent developments in Western Australia at various levels of planning and development, and three are currently operating. These projects are all located in the Perth metropolitan area and will provide in total around 2 000 dwellings, increasing the availability of rental properties. I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has also written to the Minister for Commerce about housing indemnity insurance and has received a response. I once again thank him for his support.

The member for Thornlie acknowledged that build-to-rent developments, which are supported by this new exemption, will increase the diversity of housing available. The member for Cockburn noted that we need more apartments in Western Australia, and this new exemption is a good solution for addressing that problem. As the member for Mount Lawley observed, the government committed to bringing forward legislation that will stimulate activity in the housing sector, and that has the financial capacity to reduce land tax for new build-to-rent developments. I thank the member for Bicton for noting that the bill will help people seeking affordable rental accommodation, as well as increasing the diversity of housing supply in Western Australia. The member for Southern River observed that the introduction of this build-to-rent land tax exemption will assist families in accessing a wider range of rental properties. The member for Joondalup observed that we cannot continue to develop only on the urban fringes. This bill will support the varied housing needs of a diverse population. I thank the member for Mirrabooka for acknowledging the specific criteria a development must meet to receive the exemption. These criteria will ensure that developments provide high-quality accommodation for tenants. Introducing the structured fit-for-purpose exemption will help increase both the density and diversity of housing in Western Australia.

I also thank the member for Bassendean for highlighting the requirement that dwellings in build-to-rent developments must be available for a three-year lease term. This requirement will help provide long-term security for tenants, providing the certainty of longer lease terms for tenants who desire it. The member for Bassendean also queried whether developers could defeat the three-year lease requirement by only renting to tenants who are prepared to accept a lesser period than the three years offered. RevenueWA conducts regular compliance activities to ensure that people who receive land tax exemptions continue to meet their eligibility criteria. It is expected that this will allow any concerns about build-to-rent exemptions to be monitored and responded to appropriately, where needed.

The member for Churchlands commented that encouraging greater density and infill across existing suburbs is beneficial for the environment and that the build-to-rent land tax exemption is another lever to limit urban sprawl. I think the member for Cottesloe touched upon overall developments, but I am thankful he is supporting land tax exemption for build-to-rent developments. Again, I thank all members for their contributions and support for the bill.

Finally, I make members aware that I will introduce an amendment to the bill during consideration in detail. After the bill was introduced, a small technical error was identified, with proposed section 39F(1)(c) inserted by clause 5. I will introduce an amendment in committee to correct this error and ensure the exemption achieves its policy goals.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Consideration in Detail

Clause 1 put and passed.

Clause 2: Commencement —

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am a bit unclear, parliamentary secretary, because the clause states the commencement date of the act, or assent day, is 1 July 2023 or earlier or otherwise, so there is a bit of a range. However, proposed section 39F mentions provisions for build-to-rent developments completed by 12 May 2022. Can the parliamentary secretary give me an understanding of what happens to the land tax exemption for those projects commenced prior to the commencement date? Is there a retrospective claim for the land tax, or is it simply that they can receive the exemption post July 2023?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: The bill commences retrospectively from 1 July 2023, which means the land tax exemptions will apply from 1 July 2023. There might be some constructions that commenced prior to that, but they will only get benefits from 1 July 2023. No taxpayer will be disadvantaged by the retrospective commencement date.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3 put and passed.

Clause 4: Section 15B inserted —

Mr R.S. LOVE: Clause 4, proposed section 15B “Tax payable on land containing former exempt build-to-rent developments” is on page 3. Proposed section 15B(1)(b) reads —

the land ceases to be eligible for an exemption under that Division in relation to the development, or becomes excluded land as defined in section 39E, for an assessment year that is within 15 financial years (the *relevant financial years*) reckoned prospectively from and including the financial year in which the land first became exempt under that Division in relation to the development.

This requirement is for the property to remain eligible for 15 years, otherwise there is a clawback of the funding. Can the parliamentary secretary explain the thought processes behind deciding 15 years as the relevant length of time? It is a different period of time to the assessment itself, which is 20 years. Can the parliamentary secretary explain why it is 15 years and what consultations or other thoughts led to that decision?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: The period of 15 years is consistent with what has been done in the jurisdictions of other states in Australia. The clawback clause is there because we want people who are building for the purpose of renting to commit to a considerable period of time and not a short duration. There should not be access to the exemption, only to then exit out of the purpose for which it was built. That was the reason for the clawback clause. Does that answer the member’s question?

Mr R.S. LOVE: That does answer my question in part. The parliamentary secretary indicated that other states have used 15 years, and the government wants a fairly lengthy period of time, but why is it 15 years? Why is a clawback on the exemption needed for a project that had been in place for, say, 14 years, and that in that 14 years offered exactly the product the government would like to see—that is, self-sufficient rental accommodation? When there has been no lack of performance on the part of the property owner or the property for 14 years, why would this legislation seek to claw that money back as though they had not offered the land for the fit purpose for that length of time?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: We want the investor, or the intention of the build-to-rent development, to make a minimum commitment of 15 years. We have to draw a line in the sand at some stage. As I said, we do not want build-to-rent developments for the purpose of getting the tax exemption, or taking shortcuts by removing the property from being available for rent. It defeats the purpose of implementing this policy. The investor or builder is expected to commit to that 15-year landmark right from day one if they want to apply for and get this exemption.

Mr R.S. LOVE: We turn to clause 4(3), which states —

The amount of land tax payable for each of the relevant financial years is assessed, at the rate applicable for that year under the *Land Tax Act 2002*, as if the land were the only land of the owner on which land tax was payable for that year.

If the property is no longer considered eligible, why have a provision that has a clawback of tax on it that would be as if the land was the only land? Presumably, that would be at a lesser rate of tax than if it were the additional or final land that a person or owner held.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Land tax is normally calculated on the aggregated value of all land held by the same owner, which means that more land tax will be payable when an owner holds multiple properties. Proposed section 15B calculates a retrospective land tax without aggregating land in this way. This might result in less land tax being payable than if the build-to-rent exemption had never applied, even if retrospective land tax becomes due. The retrospective tax is calculated this way because it would be administratively difficult to calculate it while aggregating the value of other land the owner held during the relevant period. It could even be inequitable if the land had changed ownership during this time.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5: Part 3 Division 4B inserted —

Mr R.S. LOVE: Clause 5 inserts “Division 4B—Land used for build-to-rent developments”. We are talking here about excluded land, which is land excluded from the area that can be part of the exemption. It reads —

excluded land means land, other than land used for exempt development or a purpose solely related to exempt development, that is —

- (a) vacant land or land used for residential, commercial, professional, industrial or mixed development purposes ...

I wonder whether the parliamentary secretary could give me an idea how that test will be applied. I would imagine some circumstances in which there might be a cafe or some such. Although technically open for the public, the cafe’s customer base would be virtually solely for the residents of the development. I wonder whether the parliamentary secretary could explain the process of the decision. Who will undertake that process? Will it be the commissioner or the local government? How will this process be carried out?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Excluded land will include land that is not accessible by build-to-rent tenants or commercial users, such as shops, cafes and gyms that are not solely for build-to-rent tenants. Land used for these purposes will not be eligible for the exemption. In a simple example, as the member said, if a cafe is located or co-located on a build-to-rent premises and is being run for commercial purposes, not exclusively for the build-to-rent tenants, it will not be eligible. The commissioner will make a determination about which part is eligible and which part is not eligible.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): Member, do you want to move the amendment at this stage?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Yes. I move —

Page 5, lines 24 to 29 — To delete the lines and substitute —

- (c) it consists of —

- (i) the construction of a building or buildings on the land; or
- (ii) the substantial renovation of the whole or a substantial part of a building or buildings on the land that are not used for residential purposes (including aged care);

and

Mr R.S. LOVE: Perhaps the parliamentary secretary can explain why this amendment is necessary because it is exactly the same wording. I think there are a couple of punctuation differences.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Proposed section 39F(1)(c) of the bill provides that the build-to-rent development must be one or more buildings either constructed or substantially renovated for the purposes of build-to-rent accommodation. After the bill was introduced, it was identified that the structure of proposed subsection (1)(c) could be read as disqualifying a newly constructed building from receiving an exemption because it was built for residential use. The first part of proposed subsection (1)(c) provides that a development will meet the requirements for a build-to-rent development if it counts as the construction of a building or buildings on the land. The second part of proposed subsection (1)(c) continues in the same sentence and provides that a development will meet the requirements of the build-to-rent development if it consists of —

... the substantial renovation of the whole or a substantial part of a building or buildings on the land, that are not used for residential purposes (including aged care) ...

By including newly constructed buildings and renovated buildings in the same clause, it is not clear that the limitation on residential use is intended to apply only to existing buildings that have been substantially renovated. This conflicts with the policy intent to provide an exemption for newly constructed build-to-rent developments. The amendment proposes to insert a new section 39F(1)(c), which specifies that developments can consist of either —

- (i) the construction of a building or buildings on the land; or
- (ii) the substantial renovation of the whole or a substantial part of a building or buildings on the land that are not used for residential purposes (including aged care);

The replacement of section 39F(1)(c) clearly sets out that only substantially renovated existing buildings are subject to “not used for residential purposes” criteria.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I thank the parliamentary secretary for that explanation. I had marked down a question about why residential purposes were being excluded, so that explains quite well the need for the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Proposed section 39F, “Requirements for exemption relating to build-to-rent development”, again goes to the question asked before about the commencement date of May 2022. Proposed section 39F(1)(d) reads —

all of the dwellings become able to be lawfully occupied as dwellings on or after 12 May 2022 and before 1 July 2032 and within a 5-year period ...

What does the inclusion of “and within a 5-year period” mean? Is that the length of time that they have to be still occupied? I wonder what the inclusion of that phrase achieves.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 4552.]

VISITORS — LAKE GWELUP PRIMARY SCHOOL

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.00 pm]: On behalf of the member for Scarborough, I welcome the student leaders, principal and deputy principal from Lake Gwelup Primary School to the Speaker’s gallery today. I hope it is a very informative and interesting time for you.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT AND REPEAL BILL 2023 — TWO-BILL SPLIT — PROPONENT APPLICATIONS

613. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to calls by the opposition to split the Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2023 and to ensure that the failed 2021 act can be immediately repealed.

- (1) Is the minister aware that the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is advising that proponents are not to make any applications under the existing 2021 act?
- (2) What is the impact of this discouragement on the productivity of our state if applications are left in limbo, not even being processed?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

(1)–(2) I am unaware whether that is the situation. I will follow that up. As the member knows, we will debate the bill in the house next week. Very shortly, we will release the draft regulations and offer the opposition a briefing.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT AND REPEAL BILL 2023 — TWO-BILL SPLIT — PROPONENT APPLICATIONS

614. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I have a supplementary question. Is it not best to immediately repeal the 2021 act to ensure that that legislation does not continue to act as a handbrake on the state’s development?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

I do not agree with the premise of the member’s question. Can he please provide evidence that it is a handbrake on development or proponents continuing with their works? The best course of action is for us to debate the bill in the house next week and have it pass so can move it to the upper house.

INVEST AND TRADE WA INDONESIA CONNECT ROADSHOW

615. Mr P.C. TINLEY to the Premier:

I refer to the Cook Labor government’s sustained efforts to diversify the economy.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on outcomes from the recent Invest and Trade WA Indonesia Connect Roadshow 2023?
- (2) Can the Premier outline how this government is fostering strong relationships with international neighbours to grow trade opportunities for Western Australia?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

Before I answer the question, on behalf of the members for Perth and Mirrabooka, I acknowledge First Class Constable Ella Cutler who has had a very bad accident in Croatia and is in a very difficult situation. She is a great police officer and frontline worker, and our thoughts go out to her and her family. I hope we can resolve those issues soon.

I also wish to acknowledge that today another one of our workers has lost their life on a worksite. Let us all continue to commit ourselves to making sure that people can get home safely at the end of the day.

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. My government is unapologetic, and has as its high priority the economic diversification of our economy and our markets. It is about creating a resilient economy that can withstand shocks, whether they are geopolitical shocks, downturns in other trading partners or other interruptions to our economic prosperity. It is important to make sure that we work with our closest trading partners to continue to drive trade and economic growth.

In particular, our Diversify WA strategy is about decarbonising our economy, and we are not only looking to decarbonise our state and economy, but to help other nations to transition to renewable energy as well.

Here in WA, we are rapidly growing our critical minerals and rare-earth sectors—exploration, mining, processing and, increasingly, manufacturing. In less than a decade, Western Australia has successfully established a multibillion-dollar battery and critical minerals processing industry largely under the guidance of the Minister for Mines and Petroleum, who is our minister responsible for battery energy strategy.

We have seen global-scale investments in battery-grade lithium, lithium hydroxide, nickel sulphate and rare earths processing projects. These projects are just the tip of the iceberg. As this burgeoning industry continues to grow, this government is working to ensure our key trading partners are primed to invest, collaborate and mutually benefit from the shift to net zero. One of these trading partners is our closest—Indonesia. It is the fourth most populous nation in the world with 278 million people and the largest Association of Southeast Asian Nations economy. It is an important opportunity for us. I had the absolute pleasure last week to lead the state’s largest ever overseas investment and trade mission to Indonesia. I was accompanied by Ministers Johnson, Jarvis and Templeman, who sounds like he picked up a pretty nasty flu in the process. We focused on the key areas of critical minerals, agriculture, international education, creative industries and tourism.

A particularly important part of this trip was the Western Australian–Indonesia Energy Forum, which we held in Jakarta. Both regions are in an enviable position in relation to energy. Indonesia has the world’s largest deposits of nickel, providing 90 per cent of the world’s nickel sulphate. Western Australia has the largest deposits of lithium and provides over half the world’s supply. We are both beautifully placed to be in partnership to assist the world as part of its clean energy transition.

At the forum, we saw WA industry liaising directly with Indonesian industry on exciting plans for the future—for example, the opportunity for WA to support Indonesia with its ambitions to be a global leader in electrical vehicle manufacture through midstream processing in WA or strengthening collaboration to secure future battery and critical minerals supply chains. We also have a commitment to continued engagement with the Future Battery Industries Cooperative Research Centre located at Curtin University.

These outcomes are built on my meeting with President Joko Widodo to sign a plan of action with KADIN, the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, earlier this year. This plan of action strengthens our economic ties, trade and supply chain opportunity. It also supports the existing memorandum of understanding we have with KADIN signed in February this year.

We are at a critical moment of our history. The race to renewables is now well and truly underway, and Australia and Indonesia have a once-in-a-generation chance to maximise the opportunities presented by decarbonisation. I look forward to working with Indonesia, as our closest neighbour and long-time trading partner, to achieve more great things, and look forward to discussing how we can seize further opportunities for our respective jurisdictions.

This is about WA jobs. This is about great companies in Western Australia taking the opportunity of being a trading state with our closest neighbour in the ASEAN region. It is a very exciting time, and I very much look forward to continuing to work with the 130 representatives we had in Indonesia as part of this trip and with all Western Australian industry to seize these great opportunities.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT — GOVERNANCE

616. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

On behalf of the member for Cottesloe, I acknowledge the year 11 students from John XXIII College in the visitors’ gallery today.

I refer to the inexplicable resignation of the entire board of the Western Australian Institute of Sport and the minister’s comments to the media yesterday that bringing WAIS back in-house might be an option to ensure there is a clear line of transparency and responsibility.

- (1) Does the minister have confidence in the past and existing governance of WAIS?
- (2) Have there not been clear lines of transparency and responsibility to date at WAIS?
- (3) Is the minister sure that circumventing due process with overnight appointments of an all-male board is the best footing to start on for any hope of change?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I am very happy to answer the question, but before I answer the question, I acknowledge the Sandover Medal winner, East Perth’s Hamish Brayshaw, who was announced on Monday night. Congratulations to Hamish. I also acknowledge Courtney Bruce from West Coast Fever who will not continue for Fever next year. Courtney Bruce made a tremendous contribution to West Coast Fever.

- (1)–(3) As the member is aware, the Western Australian Institute of Sport is an interesting entity. It is an incorporated body funded by government. That arrangement was established many years ago when WAIS

was established. It is an interesting model, because it means that although government funds it, and in fact ministers continue to appoint its members, the fact that it is an incorporated body means that it operates differently from a statutory body or other entities.

My comments yesterday were absolutely true. It is something that should be considered. The member asked me whether that should be considered; I think it should be in the considerations around the ongoing governance and operations of WAIS into the future. I am very pleased and very happy that Dr Neale Fong has been appointed by the cabinet to chair WAIS, along with Darren Foster, Gary Dreiberger and Fabian Ross, joining Jennifer McGrath as the department representative, thus creating a quorum.

The process that led to the resignations was a frustrating one. WAIS operates as an incorporated body, and the body was responsible for the ongoing oversight of WAIS, with the operational side being, of course, conducted by the CEO and the staff.

We have been going through a very important process and a very important report that came out last year about some gymnasts. One commitment I made to the gymnasts, including when I made an apology in this Parliament in April last year, was that there would be a restorative process. Sadly, and frustratingly for me, that process was not able to be progressed as quickly as I wanted. Part of that challenge was some concerns of the outgoing board. I refer to the members of the outgoing board. I appreciate their work and I thank Priya Cooper, who I think did a tremendous job as chair. I am not critical of them, but they made a decision that they were not able to continue to serve as board members. I might say that they are not paid board members. There is no remuneration for the board members, except for the chair, who I think receives something around \$5 000 to \$8 000 for their service.

I needed to move swiftly, and I appreciate the cabinet's support in installing those members I have highlighted, all of whom are very experienced and I think are very eager to make a contribution and to offer their services. They join Jennifer McGrath. As I said yesterday in an interview with Nadia Mitsopoulos on the ABC, my intention is to add further members to that. Of course, I want more of those members to be female, and I will make some further announcements about that in due course and as soon as is practical.

We have to make sure that WAIS provides the services to the athletes and the high performance as it should. I think it is about time that we actually get things on track. That is what I am focused on. I think Dr Fong and the new board and those who will be co-opted in the near future are well positioned to do that. They will have my support and the support of the department.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT — GOVERNANCE

617. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests:

I have a supplementary question. Noting recent history and the millions in funding handed to WAIS, what key performance indicators have been put in place to ensure that the minister's new board does not similarly combust?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

Just hold on, member. The member has some sort of premise. Let us remember that WAIS has produced some outstanding Australian and Western Australian athletes. That has not changed. If the member's criticism of WAIS is that it has failed to do that, I think he is absolutely wrong. In fact, in the Tokyo Olympics, I think that we had three gold medallists from Western Australia, and, of course, we have a recent champion who reached great heights in pole vaulting in the World Athletics Championships. This is not a criticism of staff. This is not a criticism of the psychologists, the trainers, the coaches and all those people. The operations of WAIS in delivering high-quality athletes has been tremendous. However, there are some governance issues that need to be addressed, including a consideration about the current arrangements and whether that entity should be a statutory body—whether it should come within the department or stay the same as an incorporated entity. It is timely for those considerations to be addressed, and I am very confident that the board that I have appointed will be focused on that, as well as ensuring that the restorative justice issues that impact the gymnasts are a priority.

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE — KIMBERLEY REGION

618. Ms D.G. D'ANNA to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's record \$5.3 billion investment in roads in regional Western Australia. Can the minister please update the house on the work to improve major roads in the Kimberley, including the construction of the new Fitzroy River Bridge, and can the minister outline this government's commitment to regional WA compared with that of those opposite?

Ms R. SAFFIOTI replied:

I thank the member for Kimberley for that question. Of course, a lot of work is being undertaken at the moment to cross the Kimberley, in particular in relation to the Fitzroy River and the new bridge that is being built to support the reconnection across the river. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent. In particular, we have seen a major milestone met over the past week for the Fitzroy River. The seven piers have been built and we are now

constructing the deck over that river. From the contract commencing in March to being at this point now at which the deck is being constructed with an incremental launch process is a magnificent milestone. We have done it through the cooperation of the local community and industry and through government. We are employing hundreds of workers, including 132 local people being employed on the project, and \$11 million has been spent on Aboriginal owned businesses. The key point I want to make is that there has been cooperation and coordination across industry, whether it be the concrete yards or the steel producers, to get the bridge to this point. We look forward to further progress being made very soon. As I said, it is an incremental launch. The first section has been launched and a second section will be launched through this week.

Of course, we have commenced sealing Tanami Road, work is underway on Great Northern Highway in particular, and further works are happening across the Kimberley, including further works at Cape Leveque Road and other roads in the area.

Members will be appreciative of the work that has been undertaken, but it is always good to see what the opposition priority is on these matters. The opposition member in that area who has been quite critical of the work undertaken in that area is now very much focused on the city in Cottesloe. Members will want to know about this, because it is quite interesting. We have seen the Nationals WA wanting to delve into Liberal Party seats. The National Party wants to chase densely populated areas, but it seems there is a lockout from the seat of Cottesloe—a lockout! On Saturday, there is to be a Cottesloe traffic forum, at which will be the member for Cottesloe, the opposition spokesperson on Metronet—or opposition spokesperson against Metronet—and Hon Neil Thomson, MLC, shadow Minister for Planning; Transport. As I recall, the Leader of the Opposition is the shadow spokesperson on transport. What has happened, Leader of the Opposition? Has he lost the shadow Minister for Transport position? Is there a lockout? What is happening? Not only is the member for Cottesloe locking out the National Party, he has taken their portfolios, too!

Ms J.J. Shaw: Just like Scomo!

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Good one. Hon Neil Thomson swore himself in as the shadow Minister for Transport!

I am upset on the Leader of the Opposition's behalf. I am incensed on his behalf that the member for Cottesloe—who I know said, “just ignore it” because I just heard him—is holding a traffic forum in the western suburbs because of density, but it is the Nationals WA members who are going after densely populated areas, so we would think that they would want to be invited. Members, I do not know what is happening! I am incensed and disappointed on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition that the upper house member for the Kimberley is coming down to hold a traffic forum in Cottesloe, pretending to be the opposition's spokesperson for transport. I do not know what is happening over there. There are six of them; we would think that they could sort out who is the opposition's spokesperson for transport—I do not know!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Ms R. SAFFIOTI: Really? As I said, I am offended on the Leader of the Opposition's behalf. I will give the Leader of the Opposition the flyer. I would like to see him turn up and talk about those traffic issues in the western suburbs and, in particular, make sure to outshine the Liberal Party member for Kimberley who is pretending to be the shadow Minister for Transport.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT — GYMNASTICS PROGRAM —
SPORT INTEGRITY AUSTRALIA REVIEW

619. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I refer to the long 18 months those people involved in the investigation by Sport Integrity Australia have waited for any response from the Western Australian Institute of Sport or the government on restorative justice processes. I also note comments from the minister yesterday that this is the biggest regret that he has.

- (1) Is the minister aware of just how unacceptably insufficient his regret is in the face of decades of trauma and pain for those people who have suffered institutionalised abuse in a government-backed structure?
- (2) What is the minister doing right now to achieve a resolution?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

Has the member met with any of the gymnasts?

Mr P.J. Rundle: No; I haven't at the moment.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN:

- (1)–(2) No. Okay, so I have met with them, and I have met with them on a number of occasions. I might tell the member that as a result of becoming the minister in late 2021, the issue of the gymnasts was raised with me and I sought a meeting with them very early on in the process. I take this very seriously, member. It is one of the reasons I asked the cabinet to allow me to make an apology in this house to those gymnasts, and

I made that in April 2022. I am very much aware that these sorts of situations are very traumatic for people, so any imputation that the member might be placing through his question about me not caring is absolutely wrong. Not only did I do that, I have met the gymnasts on a number of occasions; in fact, the last time was around about a month ago or maybe less than that. Why? It was because I was frustrated and I knew that they were frustrated with the processes that we had sought about an effective restorative justice process. One of the issues was concerns by the incorporated body, the WAIS board, about potential liability, and I can understand that. Anybody who serves on a board, particularly an incorporated body, has some potential exposure, so I could understand that. However, I could not allow a restorative process that needs to take place not take place. To the rights of the outgoing board members, they made decisions and I respect those decisions, and I appreciate the work that they gave to WAIS, but I needed to progress this important issue.

I made the apology in this place in April 2022 to the gymnasts—they were here—and conversations about what that apology would look like included consultation with the gymnasts themselves. That is why I have appointed a high-level and very experienced group of people who will take the WAIS board forward to deliver on a restorative process. That is my commitment to the gymnasts, and it will be the commitment of the incoming board chair, and that is what will be delivered. Also, as part of that process, we will look at the culture of the organisation. We will look at the governance structure of the organisation, and it is important that that take place, too, because taxpayers' money goes towards this entity. What I hope to get out of this process is that we will have a much stronger WAIS organisation and that any young child, girl or boy, who has aspirations to reach the peak in their athletic pursuits will have clear, safe pathways to do so. That is one of the reasons why we now also have a child safety program in place.

I am absolutely committed to this. I will deliver to the aspirations of those young athletes who come through WAIS and make sure we have a robust WAIS going forward that is accountable to the taxpayers of Western Australia, but also supports the requirements of an elite sporting program. I am committed to that and will continue to be committed to that while I am the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT — GYMNASTICS PROGRAM —
SPORT INTEGRITY AUSTRALIA REVIEW

620. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Sport and Recreation:

I have a supplementary question. I note the minister has a departmental representative on the board of the Western Australian Institute of Sport who as of Monday was the only remaining member. Will the minister guarantee protection for incoming board members?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I do not think I can guarantee protection. Does the member want me to guarantee that? First, that is a legal matter, and I do not think I am in a position to do that. Let me say this: the interesting thing is that when we started having resignations, my office had a number of contacts from people willing to put up their hand because they believe in WAIS. They believe in the importance of WAIS in terms of our sporting infrastructure in Western Australia, and they wanted to contribute. That included the chair who I have appointed and others. I think this comes to the point that these people have put themselves forward because they recognise that they have the skills and expertise to take the organisation forward, and I am very confident that they will do that. Of course, they will have my support. As part of the government's review and other processes, there may be recommendations around how the WAIS board organisation needs to operate, whether it should be in-house, a statutory body or remain as an incorporated body. Back in the 1980s, it was originally established as an incorporated body because of the willingness or urgency at the time for the government to be at arm's length from those people who were the experts—those who train and who know about athlete psychology and all those sorts of things. But is it timely to look at that process and structure now? Yes; I think it is. We now have in place a board that will be able to do that I think very effectively.

ENERGY — COST-OF-LIVING RELIEF

621. Ms M.M. QUIRK to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's ongoing commitment to support Western Australian families to manage cost-of-living pressures.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house on how this government is providing direct financial assistance to all Western Australian households through our state-owned energy companies?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house on how this government's record of supporting households compares with the Liberal and National parties?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON replied:

- (1)–(2) Thank you, member for Landsdale, for the question. I know that she has deep concerns on behalf of her constituents to make sure they have a government, such as the Cook Labor government, that is very keen to support them with cost-of-living pressures in the energy sector. I remind everybody that so far the Labor government has provided the \$600 rebate in 2021 and a \$400 rebate in 2022. In conjunction with

the federal government, we have provided a \$500 boost for energy assistance customers and \$400 to all other residential customers, which will be paid in two instalments. I remind members that those rebates were opposed by the Liberal Party.

We have gone and done other things as well. Of course, unlike the Liberal Party, we have not increased electricity prices by 97 per cent, as was done by the former government. Remember that when we came to government, the former government had a pathway for a seven per cent per annum increase in electricity prices. It intended to increase the price of electricity by 30 per cent if it was re-elected in 2017. Fortunately for the people of Western Australia, that increase in cost did not occur because they got a Labor government. They are not the only things we are doing. Both Synergy and Horizon Power have a case management program whereby they work with hardship customers to assist them through their challenges, because it is not just that they cannot pay their power bill; there are usually other issues involved. With the Minister for Community Services, we have reformed the operation of the hardship utility grant scheme and put the financial counselling service back into HUGS, which was taken away by the last government. The last government's changes to HUGS meant that it was helping Synergy and Horizon Power but not the residents. Synergy has created the Keeping Connected program to work with customers. It is a voluntary program that Synergy itself has developed. I met some of the people involved in that program. They are really proud of the work they are doing. Of course, the hardship connection strategy sees disconnections as the last resort, not the first resort, as was being done under the former government.

The other thing we have done is to introduce the household energy efficiency scheme. On Friday, I was very pleased to meet the HEES coaches. This program is being managed by Anglicare in conjunction with financial counsellors and other non-government organisations. Horizon has its version of the program using Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as the opportunity to engage. It was really interesting to talk to the energy coaches. One of them explained to me how they dealt with a particular person. They went through every single piece of electrical equipment in the house and worked out that the reason the power bill was so high was that the person was using a fridge that had been donated to them by a friend. No-one really understands why, but that fridge was creating the bill problem in the house. The HEES program has replaced the fridge and now that person's energy bill is significantly lower. That is a massive assistance. Another example given to me by one of the coaches was of a woman—I could not believe this—who had a \$1 300 bill for one two-month period. Her employer—this is unusual—got her to take home bees in hives to keep in the garage of the house. The employer had her heating the garage to manage the bees through winter and that was leading to a \$1 300 bill for two months of energy!

These people are saving hundreds and hundreds of dollars not just for one year—obviously, they are also benefiting from the grants that we have given—but for the rest of their life. That is why I was shocked to see the shadow Minister for Energy, the member for Cottesloe, criticising the program. Here we have a program that Anglicare, UnitingCare West and other NGOs and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the Pilbara are working through with the Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia to assist 10 000 individual Western Australian families to permanently reduce their electricity bills—forever—and the member for Cottesloe criticises it. No wonder they are so out of touch.

Dr D.J. Honey: When?

Mr W.J. JOHNSTON: This is the member's tweet from 12 November 2021 when we made the announcement of the program. Here he was, if he has forgotten. We have not forgotten. He might have, but we have not. I am happy to table it. He called the scheme "expensive bureaucratic PR". Tell that to the individuals who are being helped by this program. I champion this program. It is modelled on programs around the world. There is enormous research that demonstrates why it should be championed. When we launched the program back in 2021 with the then Minister for Community Services, the member for Fremantle, I made the point that if we give a person a fish, we feed them for a day, but if we teach them to fish, they will feed themselves for life. That is what this is about. Of course, the one-off contributions to people's bills gives everyone a benefit. I do not know whether the member for Cottesloe opposes that. It is appalling that he opposes this program, because this one is making massive differences to lots of individuals and I am very proud to be the minister. I table the document.

[See paper [2224](#).]

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT AND REPEAL BILL 2023 — REGULATIONS

622. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I refer to the Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Amendment and Repeal Bill 2023 and the subsequent regulations and guidelines.

- (1) Are the regulations and guidelines complete?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that public consultation for the regulations has been set for just two weeks?
- (3) Can he confirm that the public consultation period for the guidelines has been set for only four weeks?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(3) If the member had listened to my previous answer to the Leader of the Opposition’s question, I think I said that they would be released very shortly—incredibly shortly; after question time actually. Members opposite will receive them very shortly. They will be given a briefing on regulations, which is highly unusual.

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Dr A.D. BUTI: A consultation period is being allowed on the regulations, which are not complex or overly extensive and, we believe, are sufficient. This has been discussed for a number of months.

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT AND REPEAL BILL 2023 —
REGULATIONS

623. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs:

I have a supplementary question. Can the minister confirm that the public consultation period for the regulations will be two weeks and that the period for the guidelines will be only four weeks?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

That will all be confirmed very shortly when members opposite receive the draft regulations. There will be an accompanying media statement and members will be offered the briefing very shortly.

BROOME PORT

624. Ms D.G. D’ANNA to the Minister for Ports:

I refer to the \$200 million investment in new port infrastructure at the port of Broome.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this significant private investment will support local jobs both during the construction and on an ongoing basis?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how an expanded Broome port will allow the Kimberley region to build its economic capacity?

Mr D.R. MICHAEL replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question and for her continued advocacy for economic development in her electorate. I had the pleasure last week of visiting the Kimberley region to share an announcement with the developers of the \$200 million jetty and supply base at the port of Broome. The Kimberley marine support base will include a revolutionary floating jetty to be built adjacent to the current jetty and administered by the Kimberley Ports Authority. The base will also include a large landside depot on leased port land nearby. The project has been about five years in development and is aimed at ensuring and developing the trade capacity at the port. I thank both former Ministers for Ports, Hon Alannah MacTiernan and the Deputy Premier, for their continued support of this project over that time. The Kimberley Ports Authority will supply the stevedoring labour for the jetty operations from its in-house workforce, ensuring the Cook government’s commitment to jobs in our regions. I am told that construction of the jetty is about to start—so, in coming weeks—and will create about 260 jobs over the next two years during its construction. Once operational, the facility will be able to support new and emerging trades in the West Kimberley region, as well as the growing cruise industry, supporting hundreds of ongoing new jobs in the town and region. Broome remains an extremely popular destination for international and interstate visitors. Through this crucial investment in key pieces of infrastructure like this new floating berth, it will eliminate the interruptions to passenger boarding activity that currently result from the 10.5-metre tidal swings, which I know the member knows about.

To capitalise on the opportunities for the new trade that these facilities will bring, I am working hard to support applications to the federal government to approve first port of entry status for the port of Broome. Without this approval, biosecurity rules prevent many imported goods from being delivered directly into the Kimberley region; instead, they have to enter the region via Darwin or Port Hedland, creating a road trip of at least 600 kilometres. The high cost of these transport legs puts the environmental costs quite high. This can be alleviated through the granting of first port of entry status. I am committed to working with the Kimberley community, particularly businesses in Broome, on this work. These efforts will involve the provision of some inspection infrastructure and working out resourcing arrangements with the federal agencies that already—I saw this last week—have a presence at the port. As recent weather and climate change impacts have shown, shipping has a strong role to play in the Kimberley region and needs to be supported with a suitable port capacity to deliver the greatest possible benefit. The Kimberley marine support base, with the cooperation of the Kimberley Ports Authority, is at the forefront of this effort and will prove crucial for the development of the region in the future. This is a win for the port authority, this is a win for local jobs in the Broome community and it is very much a win for economic development in the Kimberley.

PRISONERS REVIEW BOARD — EARLY PAROLE — LUKE NOORMETS

625. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I refer to the decision of the Prisoners Review Board of Western Australia to release Luke Noormets early and the PRB's reason for it—that he has no previous history and it was deemed he posed an acceptable risk to the safety of the community.

- (1) Does the Premier believe that the PRB erred in its decision to grant Luke Noormets parole given the new details that have come to light about his history of violent offending and convictions in 2012?
- (2) Given the Premier said yesterday that the PRB does not always get it right, what is being done to ensure that decisions like this do not happen again?

The SPEAKER: Member for Vasse, I think the first question may be asking for an opinion. I will allow the Premier to respond to your questions as he sees fit.

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(2) Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for Vasse for the question. As I said yesterday, the Prisoners Review Board makes its own decisions; it is an independent authority, as it should be. Occasionally, we will see a circumstance in which a government or a Parliament may create frameworks under which they operate, such as the laws that we brought in around serial sex offenders, but the decisions around the circumstances of a prisoner's release are appropriately up to the independent Prisoners Review Board.

At the time of Mr Noormets' supervised release into the community in June 2022, I am advised that the Prisoners Review Board took into account a wide range of factors, as it was required to do under its guiding legislation, and determined that his release did not present an unacceptable risk to the community at the time. The supervision of prisoners on parole in the community assists with their reintegration and rehabilitation, and generally offers more protection to the community in the longer term than releasing prisoners into the community without any supervision at the end of their sentence. In this particular instance, the perpetrator had been on parole in the community for a period of over 13 months under the supervision of Adult Community Corrections without any incidents being brought to the attention of the Prisoners Review Board.

The tragic death of Ms Lyall continues to be investigated by the Western Australia Police Force in the context of an intimate partner homicide. The police investigation will hopefully provide answers as to why Ms Lyall's life was taken in these tragic circumstances. These circumstances, as I said yesterday, are always complex. That is why it is important that we not only appropriately consider all the issues that feed into that complexity, but also that we support the people who are subject to these release orders. As I just said, the perpetrator of this particular act against Ms Lyall had been in the community for over 13 months, with no incidents to that point in time. It is a horrible set of circumstances, and all our hearts go out to Ms Lyall and her family.

PRISONERS REVIEW BOARD — EARLY PAROLE — LUKE NOORMETS

626. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Given the devastating impacts of this outrageous decision, what is the Premier doing to ensure that the WA community can have confidence in the decision-making processes of the PRB going forward?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

This is the problem that occurs when a member prepares their supplementary and it does not in any way interact or coincide with the actual answer I gave. We continue to have confidence in the process because it does its work day in, day out over a very long period of time. As I said, this perpetrator had been on parole for over 13 months without any incidents reported back to the Prisoners Review Board. In that context, I am not quite sure what else it could have done. If there had been more issues it could have taken into account and if there were more issues that it was not aware of or were not noted, I am sure that will come out in the police investigation.

AMERICA'S CUP WIN FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

627. Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE to the Minister for Culture and the Arts:

I refer to the fortieth anniversary of *Australia II's* win of the America's Cup being celebrated this year. Can the minister outline to the house how the Cook Labor government is planning for the celebration of this proud Western Australian achievement, including the many free events the community can attend?

In case it affects the minister's answer, I confirm that I was born in 1988.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I have to say, you missed out on something quite remarkable. For those of us who were alive on 26 September 1983, particularly if they were in their mid-40s and older, during the early morning of that day, we witnessed a remarkable achievement by an Australian team. It has been acknowledged as probably the greatest achievement of an Australian

sporting team in history. It was a very important and pivotal moment in Australian cultural history too because, against the might of the Americans, with a 132-year history of holding the trophy that had never been anywhere else but bolted to the New York Yacht Club's hallowed halls, an Australian team, with many members from Western Australia, was part of a remarkable campaign. It was out-budgeted but it had a couple of key things that made a difference. One was Ben Lexcen, the amazing designer. Another was the tenacious skipper of *Australia II*, John Bertrand. Alan Bond was the bankroller of the campaign. He had tried three times previously to win the America's Cup. Of course, there was also a remarkable crew and support staff. They went to Rhode Island in New York and competed in the Louis Vuitton challenger series. They won 49 of 53 races to win the right to challenge. They won the right to challenge. For the first time in a long time, they won one of the races but were 3–1 down. A team needed to win only four races in the America's Cup to take the cup. They were 3–1 down, then they became 3–2 down and then they became 3–3. During that time, a long way away, all of Australia was right behind this remarkable crew a long way away. It was a different time in our history. The media, the internet and all that social media stuff that exists now did not exist then, yet the nation united behind them. As the team approached the marker in the last leg, it was behind. *Australia II* crossed in front, and the rest is history. There were 43 tacks; there was a tacking duel down that last leg.

This was a remarkable thing for Australia, and a very important thing for Western Australian history. The Cook government, quite rightly, is acknowledging the fortieth anniversary of this amazing sporting triumph. All the crew, bar one, who sadly passed away two months ago—the late Sir James Hardy—will be here in Perth, Western Australia, for the fortieth anniversary. An exhibition has already opened at the WA Maritime Museum in Fremantle—a wonderful exhibition that celebrates this amazing story and the stories that are part of this win. I encourage people to go down to the Maritime Museum. There is merchandise available. I know that the Deputy Premier is very keen on merch. I have one example of the merch that is available.

Ms R. Saffioti: The “G’day from WA” shirt.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, the Deputy Premier has a “G’day from WA” shirt. There is an exhibition, and a play has been commissioned through Theatre 180 called *Taking Liberty*, of course *Liberty* being the defending yacht during that race. We are claiming that the world's biggest party will be held down in Fremantle. I know that the member for Fremantle is very excited about this because there will be a 1980s theme around Victoria Quay.

Ms S.F. McGurk: Back to the 80s.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Yes, “Back to the 80s”, and why shouldn't we! Get out your cardigans and your tank tops.

Ms R. Saffioti: You can tease your fringe.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I will tease what hair I have left on my head. I will get that big hair look. We are inviting all Western Australians, particularly those people who remember where they were at that moment. Radio stations have been highlighting where people were. People have been ringing in saying that they were harvesting on a tractor or they were doing whatever. They remember where they were. It is important, when we have these historical moments, that we take the time to acknowledge them. I invite everyone to come down on Sunday, 24 September. There will be free public transport and there will even be some special things happening at the railway stations, as I understand it. Fremantle will be decorated with America's Cup paraphernalia and promotions. Some great bands will be there: The Hoodoo Gurus; Voyager, our entrant in that thing—what was it? Eurovision!

Several members interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: I was on a roll! I will finish up in a minute, because I am about to be attacked anyway! At Victoria Quay, there will be The Hoodoo Gurus, Baby Animals, Voyager and Slim Jim and the Phatts. We want people to come along and celebrate this. I think it is a tremendous thing.

Finally, just to put this in perspective, in 1983, about a month after the America's Cup win, the people of Perth lined Stirling Highway—I was one of them; I was 17 years old and looking fantastic!—down to the Esplanade. The population of Perth then was just over 900 000 people and it is estimated that more than 250 000 people turned out, so a quarter of Perth turned out. There have been very few occasions like that since then, so that is an indication of the excitement. Get on down—Sunday, 24 September, in the afternoon from 2.00 pm onwards. It will be a great celebration, celebrating a great moment in Australian sport.

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

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS — GPS TRACKING

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

I refer to the Western Australian Labor government's repeated stonewalling and inability to answer the simplest questions about the \$15.5 million GPS tracking trial—a program announced by the former Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence and designed to address family and domestic violence in some capacity in this state.

(1) Since I first asked this question —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please! Member, one of the reasons you got the interjections is that yesterday I suggested to you that you could not have preambles that are so long. When we have such a long preamble, it is a big temptation for people to interject. I appreciate that you have now got to part (1), so if we can continue from that point, I will then call the minister to respond.

Ms L. METTAM: To continue —

- (1) Since I first asked this question of the minister, has she sought a briefing on the outcomes; and, if not, why not?
- (2) How many offenders were tracked during this trial, and was the program successful in adding additional protection to potential victims of family and domestic violence?

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: As the house is aware, questions need to relate to the particular minister's portfolio areas. As part of this question relates to ankle bracelets and other things that fall under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General, I ask whether that question is appropriate.

The SPEAKER: It is a requirement to ask a question of the minister who is responsible for the area. I understand what the member for Vasse is saying—that there was an announcement by the former Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence, and, on that basis, she is addressing the question to this minister. It is a pretty fine line; I think the question would probably more appropriately be directed to the Attorney General, as the Leader of the House has suggested, but I will give the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence the opportunity to give us a brief response.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Ms S.E. WINTON replied:

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I concur.

- (1)–(2) The trial pilot is being run by the Department of Justice, so I ask the member to refer questions to the appropriate minister.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

Ms L. Mettam: No supplementary?

The SPEAKER: You cannot ask a supplementary to the wrong minister.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, as I have advised, that concludes question time.

Ms L. Mettam: It is just unbelievable!

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members! I am really waiting for someone to appropriately seek the call.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF SPORT

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.54 pm] — without notice: I move —

That so much of standing orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the following motion to be debated forthwith —

That this house condemns the Minister for Sport and Recreation for ignoring the raft of issues confronting the Western Australian Institute of Sport and flouting the concerns raised by those who have trained at the institute.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

On motion by **Mr D.A. Templeman (Leader of the House)**, resolved —

To insert after “forthwith” —

, subject to the debate being limited to 10 minutes for government members and 10 minutes for non-government members

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion, as Amended

The SPEAKER: As this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it needs an absolute majority in order to succeed. If I hear a dissenting voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [2.56 pm]: I move the motion. I take this opportunity to reiterate the motion: that this house condemns the Minister for Sport and Recreation for ignoring the raft of issues confronting the Western Australian Institute of Sport and flouting the concerns raised by those who have trained at the institute.

I reiterate that this is not about the quality of the facilities or the quality of our athletes; this is about Western Australians being worried about our former gymnasts and athletes, and Western Australians asking what is actually going on with the board. Another question is: what is going on with the minister's review? I must say, from the outside looking in, as a Western Australian reading articles that the likes of Rebecca Le May have been writing in *The West Australian*, analysing what is actually going on at the Western Australian Institute of Sport, I believe there are questions to be answered. I think it is important for the Minister for Sport and Recreation to give the people of Western Australia some answers.

It has been reported in *The West Australian* and other publications over the last few days that we have now lost all our board members. Nine out of 10 board members have departed the scene and the one board member left is an ex officio deputy director general of the minister's department, so the minister should be well aware of the things that have been going on at the Western Australian Institute of Sport.

Those are the questions. It is about the governance and the former gymnasts and athletes. What is happening to them, and what communication has there been? We know that the minister has made an apology; he spoke about that today, but what is going on with the review that he said would be tendered in February? Here we are in September and it still has not happened. The minister yesterday apologised on radio for the stalled process. Those are the questions that the people of Western Australia and I are asking.

I will just do a bit of a time line, if I can. I go back to when *The West Australian* broke this story on 24 April 2021 in an article by Annabel Hennessy titled "Scarred for life by Olympic dream". It was an excellent article that was about how complaints have spanned over three decades from the late 1980s to 2016. The article states —

When Julia Murcia was just nine years old she wrote an entry in her diary titled: My worst nightmare.

...

In green felt tip she added: "I'll never ever forgive or forget."

Almost three decades on and Ms Murcia has certainly not forgotten.

The woman she was writing about was her gymnastics coach, and the incident is one of many where she was allegedly verbally abused during her training at the Western Australian Institute of Sport.

Some of the allegations were that child athletes were sworn at; harmful comparisons were made to other gymnasts; there was a negligent attitude to injuries; there were feelings of worthlessness among gymnasts; and gymnasts had had difficulties with relationships after being taught to be docile and compliant. This is about a sustained culture, not one-off incidents. In that article, the Western Australian Institute of Sport confirmed that some of the allegations raised related to at least one coach who was still employed by WAIS in a managerial role. Gymnast Alliance Australia was formed to represent the athletes and told *The West Australian* that the group was seeking a public apology from WAIS. As the Minister for Sport and Recreation pointed out earlier today, he made that apology.

Mr D.A. Templeman: No. Can I be very clear: I made the apology on behalf of the government and Parliament. That article relates to WAIS making an apology.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. I have the article on the WA government's apology, dated 22 June 2022 and titled "Apology to gymnasts as child safeguarding unit established". Discussions have been ongoing with WAIS since September 2020. In an article in *The West Australian* of 21 April 2022, former child gymnasts who say they were abused at WAIS called for government intervention in the sporting body after Sport Integrity Australia released its report the day before. The report looks into allegations of the mistreatment of child athletes who trained in the now-defunct gymnastics program between 1987 and 2016. The Sport Integrity Australia report was ordered in 2021 after a group of former athletes came forward alleging they were abused during their time in the elite program. The women said they were subjected to physical abuse; forced to compete with serious injuries, such as broken bones; and were subjected to verbal abuse, including being called fat if their skin folds were too thick. Sporting Integrity Australia interviewed 92 people and collected more than 15 000 pages of documentation. It found it was likely that some gymnasts suffered abuse and/or harm at WAIS. It found also that the policies and procedures that governed the program did not adequately protect some of the gymnasts.

That is part of the time line of events. As we now know, earlier this month, six of the 10 members of the WAIS board quit. The three remaining board members quit shortly after that and it was left with one ex officio member on Monday night. The minister has appointed four male members to the new board. I want to put it out there that the organisation receives 90 per cent of its funding from the state government—\$2.416 million each year over the forward estimates—and around \$13 million in cash each year. That is a summary of the situation.

The thing that concerns me more than anything is that a media release on 8 February 2023 states —

Minister David Templeman today announced the open tender process to appoint a consultant to undertake an independent review into the culture and governance of the WA Institute of Sport ... is now live.

The government called for the tender on 8 February and here we are in September, and I do not think anyone is aware of where that review is at. The minister yesterday talked about his regret that the process has been stalled. It has been too long, minister. It has taken seven or eight months to get a review organised. These are the questions everyone is asking: What is happening with those board members? Why did they quit? I would appreciate an answer from the minister today. Was it because they were worried about their protection as board members and future liabilities? What is the situation with the four new board members the minister has appointed? Will they have any liability? Will the minister guarantee them some sort of exemption? These are the sorts of things we are worried about. I am also worried about the reputation of WAIS. It runs a great program. As the minister said today, many great athletes have come out of that institution. The facilities are great. Look at the aspiration of events such as the Commonwealth Games. Western Australia still has the opportunity to host the Commonwealth Games. I understand the Premier was keen for that until he went to the ALP federal conference and it came to a standstill. The state still has an opportunity to host the Commonwealth Games. The WA Institute of Sport still has aspirations, but the questions need to be answered: What is going on with the board? Why have those people resigned? Why has the minister had to appoint another board and what will the process be in filling that board? What has happened to the minister's review? That is what we want to know.

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.06 pm]: I will speak on the motion that stands in the name of the member for Roe. Of course, I completely reject the premise of the wording of the first part of the motion that condemns me for ignoring a raft of issues. The fact is that a new board has been appointed because of a range of processes that have broken down, including the capacity of the outgoing board to progress an important process, which is the restorative justice program for the gymnasts. As I said in question time, I am absolutely committed to that. The member for Roe went through a time line. He will note that the integrity report came out in April 2022 and, importantly, highlighted that there was a likelihood that various acts, including some of abuse and bullying et cetera, were likely to have been imposed on gymnasts from the 1980s through to, I think, 2016. They are very serious allegations and it was a very serious finding by the integrity body. I remind the member that these matters affected gymnasts, many of whom were children, or very young, so of course not only should those findings be considered very carefully, but also their needs and aspirations in seeking redress for those concerns are understandable.

I will just go through a few things that are important for the member to understand. The report came out in April 2022. On 11 May, the Western Australian Institute of Sport publicly stated its commitment to the former gymnasts and the WA community by responding to that review. On 22 June, after I had sought a meeting directly with the gymnasts, my decision was that we needed to apologise on behalf of government and that, in fact, consideration of the apology—anything included in the wording—was done in consultation with the gymnasts because I wanted to come in here and make sure that what we said was appropriate to those gymnasts. Included in that were commitments. Many of those commitments require the actions of the board, which is an incorporated body, according to its governance model. As part of this process, we engaged the department to oversee some key actions. One action was to facilitate the restorative and reconciliation process that the report recommended. The other was, of course, to ensure that we had a process and a firm policy regarding child safety. That has been put in place. In our engagement, we included the Commissioner for Victims of Crime because we wanted to make sure that we had the expertise to advise on the establishment of an appropriate process. The commissioner has continued to work to prepare all parties to participate fully in this.

It is not a process that can be put in place in a couple of weeks, because we are dealing with some very traumatised people. I have personally met them, and I acknowledge the pain and trauma they have been under and continue to be under. I made the apology in June 2022.

The reason we have a new board in place is that I have been frustrated by the lack of progress, particularly in the restorative process. I had a meeting with the gymnasts a couple of months ago. I cannot remember the exact date; maybe it was just over two months ago. I recognised that I needed to talk to the board. I had a meeting with the board a few weeks back, and I said to the members, "I think we are in a stalemate. If the board's concerns are a range of legal issues, we need to move forward." I understand the board's concern. Members are actually not paid, but they put themselves forward, so I am not critical of them personally, but I could not have a blocked and frustrated process. I am sure that the board members considered their situation and decided to resign. I think that is a good thing, because now we can put in place a board—I have done that—that is able to progress the restorative justice process, making sure concerns are moved forward and addressing some of the outstanding issues that could not be progressed by the previous board. I think that Dr Neale Fong and the others—as I mentioned yesterday and reiterated in the house today during question time—are very well positioned to do that. I thank Priya Cooper, a wonderful woman and an outstanding para-athlete, for her services to the board, but we had to move on because it had taken too long, and it was very frustrating for me. We will now continue to set a course.

Part of this is the cultural review. I understand PricewaterhouseCoopers has now been appointed to conduct the cultural and governance review. It is appropriate that we look at the culture of the organisation over its history to inform us about what other things might need to happen to make sure that the Western Australian Institute of Sport is functioning appropriately on behalf of the taxpayers of Western Australia and, more importantly, on behalf of the young men and women who have and will come through WAIS on their pathway to elite sport.

I am committed to that. It is important that we also look at WAIS's structure and how it operates because, as the member for Roe highlighted, it gets millions of dollars from the state. That includes whether it should be. I am unashamedly interested in the new board's considerations of how WAIS should fit within the governance arrangements and how it relates to me, as minister, and to Parliament. As the member knows, WAIS is an offline agency that we can call if we wish during the estimates process. I do not think we called it this time.

Mr P.J. Rundle: It was very difficult to find a question to ask.

Mr D.A. Templeman: That is right. I think the question needs to be asked: is it better that it become a statutory body? That is something I would entertain. I would like to hear the argument why that would be the best option.

I think that board members should be remunerated; I honestly believe that. I would not be doing it for nothing. They do important stuff, so I would not be doing it for nothing. I am trying to progress what the remuneration would look like for a WAIS board going forward and, of course, ultimately, what the arrangements will be.

I will finish on this. I said this to Nadia Mitsopoulos yesterday: because of the nature of how sport is operating in the nation now, sadly, we will see more legal challenges about a range of past and present sports administration practices, and that will be a challenge for sports administration. We are already seeing it now with the concussion issue in the contact codes. We will see more of these sorts of things emerge, so we have to make sure that an entity like WAIS has a very strong governance structure and framework so it can deal with these things when and if they occur. Sadly, the reality of the world is that we will see more of this. The concussion issue is a live one, and we have only scratched the surface of that. Many others are likely to come at us. My focus is making sure that WAIS is absolutely in the best position to deliver as it should to the taxpayers, the athletes and the community of Western Australia.

I also acknowledge that it has been a very effective organisation for many, many years, delivering high-quality athletes and providing athletes into the future.

Division

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

Ayes (5)

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

Noes (42)

Mr S.N. Aubrey	Ms M.J. Hammat	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms J.J. Shaw
Mr G. Baker	Mr T.J. Healy	Mr K.J.J. Michel	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Ms H.M. Beazley	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.A. Millman	Dr K. Stratton
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr H.T. Jones	Ms L.A. Munday	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr D.J. Kelly	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Mr D.A. Templeman
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke	Ms E.J. Kelsbie	Mr S.J. Price	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Ms C.M. Collins	Ms A.E. Kent	Mr D.T. Punch	Mr R.R. Whitby
Ms L. Dalton	Dr J. Krishnan	Mr J.R. Quigley	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms D.G. D'Anna	Mr P. Lilburne	Ms M.M. Quirk	Ms E.L. Hamilton (<i>Teller</i>)
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mrs M.R. Marshall	Ms R. Saffioti	
Ms K.E. Giddens	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr D.A.E. Scaife	

Question thus negatived.

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

Consideration in Detail

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

Clause 5: Part 3 Division 4B inserted —

Debate was interrupted after the clause had been amended.

Mr R.S. LOVE: The parliamentary secretary was about to explain the import of the words “and within a 5-year period” in proposed section 39F(1)(d). That was the question at the time. Proposed section 39F(1)(d) reads —

all of the dwellings become able to be lawfully occupied as dwellings on or after 12 May 2022 and before 1 July 2032 and within a 5-year period ...

I was just asking what the import of the words “and within a 5-year period” is. We are at clause 5, page 5, proposed section 39F(1)(d).

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member for the question. A development’s build-to-rent dwellings must be completed within five years of each other. This requirement encourages the availability of build-to-rent dwellings within a reasonable time frame. It promotes developments being functional as soon as possible to boost Western Australia’s housing supply. The reason why we put a limit of five years is to encourage investors or developers to complete the project within a time frame so that more houses become available for Western Australians, rather than leaving an open-ended deadline. That is the reason why the five-year period is in the clause.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Does this mean that a proponent cannot claim an exemption for the five-year period but if after five years there is a total of over 40 dwellings on the development or the land, they become eligible, or are they forever ineligible to claim the land tax discount?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: If they take more than five years to complete, they will not be eligible to claim the land tax exemption. The day they are operational with 40 or more dwellings and have completed the project they will be eligible to claim the land tax exemption. For instance, if they complete the project in three years, from that time onwards they will be eligible to claim the land tax exemption.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I am not quite sure. I thought what the parliamentary secretary said was clear, but then he said if they did it within three years, they could claim it. I was actually asking: if they take more than five years, but at some point they end up with more than 40 dwellings, can they then claim the land tax exemption; is that the case?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: To further clarify, when they start construction of one dwelling and it becomes operational, they have five years to reach 40 and complete the project to be eligible. That is the time limit from the day the first one becomes operational to the completion five years later.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I move to a different question. I want to touch base on page 6, still clause 5, but now proposed section 39F(2), which states —

... *substantial renovation* of a building or part of the building does not include minor works to the building or part.

Could the parliamentary secretary explain the definition of “substantial renovation” a little more for us? I understand it also involves a change of class of use of the building. Perhaps the parliamentary secretary could further explain what is meant by “substantial renovation”.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: We are defining “substantial renovation” as, for example, the change of use of premises from commercial to residential. That is when the developer completely converts the use or purpose from commercial to residential, making more residential development available. When more fixtures changes and construction happens, we consider that to be a substantial renovation. We do not consider minor works to the building that do not require major structural changes, such as repainting, installing new flooring or replacing light fixtures, to be within the substantially renovated category. These do not constitute substantial renovation.

Mr R.S. LOVE: Will it be possible for an existing building that was used for residential occupation to undergo substantial renovation? My understanding is that will not be, but I want to clarify that that is the case.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: I thank the member for his question. He is right that existing residential buildings will not be eligible for exemption as a substantial renovation. This provision is to bring about more residential availability for people who want to rent. It would defeat the purpose if already existing residential properties were to be renovated and come under this category.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I turn to page 7, proposed section 39G, “Exceptions to leasing restrictions for exempt development”, and proposed subsection (2), which states —

A restriction may be placed on the class of persons who may occupy a dwelling that is part of an exempt development —

- (a) if it is necessary to ensure public health or safety; or
- (b) if the dwelling is social housing premises; or
- (c) in prescribed circumstances.

I want to get an understanding of this terminology. I understand that there are restrictions so that build-to-rent development is not specifically about student accommodation, for instance, but perhaps the parliamentary secretary could explain a little more about the type of circumstances that he is envisaging here whereby it may indeed be possible to put a restriction on the class of person.

Dr J. KRISHNAN: Restrictions on the class of persons occupying a development are not generally allowed apart from three narrow exceptions. For example, a public health and safety restriction could restrict smokers from certain

areas, like non-smoking occupancy areas. Social housing premises means residential premises led by a social housing provider—that is, the Department of Communities and other prescribed bodies. The third example is “prescribed circumstances”, which is included in case there is a future need that cannot be anticipated at this time.

Mr R.S. LOVE: This is my final question on the whole matter. On page 10, proposed section 39K(3) refers to calculating the amount of exemption percentage for buildings that are partially used for build-to-rent dwellings. It states —

For the purposes of determining the floor area of a building or part of a building, the floor area does not include carports, storage areas, stairwells, lift towers, cooling towers, machinery or plant rooms, air conditioning or ventilation ducts or any other prescribed part of a building.

I would have thought that those matters would be essential for the development of apartments. I know that there are inclusions for things such as parks and other users. Why are basically essential working elements of the building excluded from that calculation?

Dr J. KRISHNAN: The excluded areas that the member mentioned in the proposed section are excluded for a specific reason. When there is a mixed dwelling with residential and commercial combined, we do not want a build-to-rent proposal to lose out when all this is taken into consideration. It becomes complex in situations in which there is a small cafe that is excluded, and, in the exclusion, the entire stairwell, the lifts and all that is taken into consideration. The best way to divide or apportion the land tax exemption is the living area of the residential, as well as the lettable area in the commercial area. That is a way of keeping it very clear. That is why these areas that are commonly known as common areas are exempted from the calculations.

Before I sit down, I thank the advisers who have been waiting and providing their support in consideration in detail.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 6 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

PERTH PARKING MANAGEMENT BILL 2023 PERTH PARKING MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Cognate Debate

Leave granted for the Perth Parking Management Bill 2023 and the Perth Parking Management Amendment Bill 2023 to be considered cognately, and for the Perth Parking Management Bill 2023 to be the principal bill.

Second Reading — Cognate Debate

Resumed from 10 August.

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie) [3.39 pm]: It is a pleasure to speak to these cognate bills regarding the Perth parking management arrangements. I welcome the Perth Parking Management Bill 2023 and the Perth Parking Management Amendment Bill 2023 coming into this place, and I wholeheartedly welcome the purpose for which these amendments are necessary. I want to say a little about the great virtue of this Perth parking management system that we have in place. Ultimately, it is about providing a dissuasive mechanism and sending a message, a disincentive, to people wanting to drive their private vehicles into the Perth central business district. It is a discouragement to people coming in by private vehicle and occupying that very precious land space that a car occupies for the whole of its duration in the city area while it is not being used; it is simply being parked. Precious land given over to parking space is actually an incredibly inefficient use of land, and, by definition, we could say that land in the city centre is exceptionally valuable, so why would we give it over to metal boxes sitting there doing nothing? That is what this mechanism will counter. It will work against the notion that people can just drive into Perth, even at the time of greatest demand, and there will be a parking bay for everyone. That is just not feasible. We cannot do that. We have got to be able to provide parking bays for those who need them—absolutely—such as those people who are involved in deliveries or are assisting people with limited mobility. On occasions I need to bring my elderly parents into the Perth central business district. My dad loves to go to the Apple Store and at 85 years of age that is a real treat for him, so I need to be able to park near the Apple Store; we can work that out. For most of the time, for the vast majority of us, there is no need for us to occupy a parking bay for the day when there are many great alternatives, and I will come to some of them.

Essentially, the purpose of this legislation is to enable us to further spread the benefit of the money that is raised through the levy, and I really think that is a great thing, too. At the moment, the zone over which the expenditure can occur is somewhat limited, and we want to be able to extend that out to local government areas that are contiguous with the Perth central business district. I think that is a great thing because it recognises that we will be able to spend money on the things that will make it easier for people to use means other than a private vehicle to get into the city.

To give the perfect example, the Minister for Transport has been an absolute champion of all things related to active travel. One of the most emblematic initiatives that we have proposed at the moment is the bridge that will go from

near the Swan River foreshore, the WACA, Trinity College and the police headquarters, over to Heirisson Island and then Victoria Park. It seems that with the current arrangements and the legalities around where this levy can be expended, it is not actually possible to use the levy funds to build the part of the bridge that will extend from Heirisson Island over to Victoria Park, yet that is absolutely crucial to the success of this project. This will be, as I mentioned, a pedestrian and bike bridge that will be used by all forms of active travel, including e-devices. We want to encourage those means of travel. This new saying that we have—to walk, wheel, ride and thrive—is such a great mantra for us all to adopt. The walk, wheel, ride and thrive idea is great for people’s health and wellbeing. It is a great way to alleviate congestion and develop community spirit. It is a much better way for people to get around, but it depends on us providing good infrastructure. We need to give people infrastructure that will make them feel safe and give them some sense of security. That is exactly what this new bridge will do.

The bridge is an example of the sorts of projects that we might see in the future. I know that some initiatives have been announced very recently in Northbridge and elsewhere around the City of Perth, and the areas that connect in there. We have a magnificent principal shared path network that is being extended, and there are all sorts of projects underway, and I will address some of those. It seems that, quite often, some of the most expensive-to-deliver sections, because they often require the most complex engineering and difficult construction, are areas that need to be retrofitted, such as where the principal shared path network comes into the CBD area. This bill will do a really important job and will enable us to expend on those connection areas that, as I say, can be very expensive.

Some other projects are being envisaged as well. One very exciting project that a lot of people in the cycling active travel community have spoken of is called the veloway. I know this is really just on the wish list at the moment, but it is a fascinating project. If someone is driving their car from the Kwinana Freeway, coming through Perth and then going up the Mitchell Freeway, they have, more or less, a continuous flow through—of course, not when there is traffic congestion. Let us say they are doing it late in the evening and they have a very smooth run through. If a person is doing that particular run by a bike, e-scooter, e-bike or whatever the means, they have quite a disrupted journey. Once they get to the top of the Kwinana Freeway—we will do the south–north run—they come to Hay Street where they will have to get across the lights and then onto Wellington Street, through a series of traffic lights, and eventually they can wind their way over to the Mitchell Freeway bike path, which has been significantly upgraded, with some magnificent works completed there. It then takes them in a very smooth fashion from the Leederville area all the way through to the City of Stirling council chambers and beyond. That path has really come a long way. There is a magnificent bridge that goes over Scarborough Beach Road and some really clever and brilliant engineering work has been done there. My point is that the linkage between the freeway south and freeway north is seamless for cars, but those on bikes, or other means of active travel, have to negotiate a higgledy-piggledy set of traffic lights and things. The veloway is only on the wish list of the cycling community, but it would extend over all of that and eliminate the need for people to negotiate all those sets of traffic lights. That is just one of the sorts of things that people want to talk about.

One of the beauties of having this funding that will come from the Perth parking levy is that we can have that conversation, look at those sorts of ideas and work out where the priorities are. I think it is quite right that, at the moment, our top priority is to get that bridge from East Perth across to Heirisson Island and then over to Victoria Park. I know how much it will help people who want to commute from there. It will be far safer than the current situation in which they have to negotiate a very narrow footpath on the Causeway, which has some quite uneven pavers and cracks. It gives people the feeling that their wheel could go into a crack and all sorts of things like that. The last thing we want is for someone to have an accident while travelling to their place of work or coming into the city for whatever reason.

It is very interesting to look at some of the methods that have been used to deal with the issue of traffic congestion in other cities around the world, bearing in mind that often the driver for a lot of decongestion initiatives is, first and foremost, to improve air quality in the city area. Other drivers include the decongestion benefits, countering climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from transport. They are three strong reasons.

I have been following the situation with a scheme in London known as ULEZ, or the ultra low emission zone. It is an interesting program that the Mayor of the City of London, Sadiq Khan, has been driving, even though it has been a long time in its creation. I know that a previous mayor—a fellow called Boris Johnson, who was, until not too long ago, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom—was very much for it, but he totally backflipped on it. The support for the ultra low emission zone is very much driven by the need to reduce, as the name suggests, the emissions intensity. The system is based on someone either opting to pay a levy of £12.50, or about \$25, to go into the city area or having a vehicle that is compliant with the ultra low emission zone standards. I am told that the vast majority of vehicles in the City of London are compliant. ULEZ has been expanded to cover all the London boroughs, so it covers a very sizeable population. It has been the subject of great controversy. It had great bipartisan support, but it suddenly became a focus point for those on the extreme right to say, “No, we can’t possibly have people paying a penalty if they have a polluting vehicle.” It became a flashpoint in the recent Uxbridge and South Ruislip by-election caused by the resignation from Parliament of the previous UK Prime Minister. As disgraced as the Tories were at that election, they won it because they ran a campaign saying that they would stop ULEZ. It was absolutely disgraceful that they got that amount of right-wing media. However, we have to bear in mind that that country has incredible

media like *The Sun*, *The Telegraph*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, *The Spectator* and GB News. We have it bad with the Murdoch press of course and some other papers. However, in the UK, there is the force of that right-wing press, and then, sadly, the BBC just follows along. It is a dreadful situation. Something as worthy, credible and useful as the ULEZ program can be demonised so that people fail to see it for what it is. There is a campaign mechanism that is designed to denigrate good policy. It makes me think of something that is going on in Australia right now with the disgraceful behaviour of those promoting the no campaign. It is sometimes easy to denigrate good policy, because good policy depends on bringing about positive change. How sad it is that that can sometimes be the way that things happen.

Fortunately, in London, ULEZ is going forward. Sadiq Khan, a very astute man and a fine mayor, is driving that. He is providing all sorts of concessions to those who might have an old vehicle that is not ULEZ compliant. He is providing what is known as a scrappage payment—it is an interesting word that I have not heard before. People who have older vehicles that are not ULEZ compliant can access the payment through the £160 million scrappage scheme. I mention this because the ULEZ arrangements do not tackle what I think is a major problem that our Perth parking levy does tackle. The approach taken through our Perth parking levy is clever because it is about attacking the problem of congestion. With ULEZ, there could still be heavily congested streets, but they would just be congested with electric vehicles or, in fact, vehicles that are ULEZ compliant. These vehicles still emit pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and PM2.5 and other very damaging things.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: Those NO_x, as they are called, and PM2.5 emissions have been falling since ULEZ was introduced, but they are still there. This is really worrying, because it can cause premature death and stunt the growth of children's lungs. That is the driver for these things. Even if the streets are congested with all electric vehicles, there will still be a great inefficiency. There will still be the problem of people wasting time as they negotiate various traffic jams on their way to their destination. That is why I think our Perth parking levy is a far superior mechanism. I note that the ULEZ arrangements are to be overlaid with congestion charges as well, so it is not the sole method. There is potential to have two programs in tandem, but I think there is a risk of complicating things in the minds of the public. Again, we can see the elegance and the value of this legislation. That is a very positive thing.

I note that there is great transparency to be had with the changes that are coming in and the improvement that we will see in the breadth and scope and administration of the Perth parking levy. The new requirements for spending from the levy will be published in the Department of Transport's annual report. I think that will further instil confidence in the community because the expenditure will be there for people to see. They will be able to understand the purpose and they will be able to say that that money is adding to the quality of infrastructure that brings people into the city and enables people to travel smoothly, using their choice of transport. That is all highly commendable. It is important to note that the Perth parking levy mechanism has enjoyed support from both sides of this Parliament. I understand that the act and the levy were introduced in 1999, during the time of Richard Court's government. That is an important feature of our legislation—the fact that it has had bipartisan support.

I would like to highlight some other things about the current situation. The information I have is that roughly 66 per cent of trips made into the CBD are made by car.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

EDUCATION — GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Motion

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.00 pm]: I move —

That this house condemns the Western Australian Labor government's continued neglect of the state's education system and acknowledges its failure to prioritise the needs of students throughout the entire state.

This is a very important motion. I know that the relatively new Minister for Education will be looking forward to the opportunity to respond to my motion. I say to the minister that my speech will not be all negative. I tend to agree with some of his philosophies, even though I do not always like to admit it. Certain elements that he has spoken about in the last nine months or so since he has been the education minister have struck a chord with me. I will outline a few of those. I do not agree with everything that is happening in the education system; I have quite a few concerns. I want to point out a couple of things at the start of my contribution.

It is unfortunate that this relatively new minister has been tainted by the actions of some of his predecessors, including what occurred with Moora Residential College. The member for Cottesloe was around at that time. The people of Moora, and the people of WA, had to go out and rally and make sure their voices were heard. Eventually, a combination of funding, including \$10 million from the federal Liberal–National coalition government, saved the day.

There was also the issue relating to the Schools of the Air, which the member for North West Central would be very familiar with, given her background in the pastoral region. When I look back on the nearly seven years that I have been in Parliament, the Schools of the Air fiasco is something for which this government will be remembered, along

with Perth Modern School. We remember the likes of former students Hon Kim Beazley, Hon Malcolm McCusker and many others working in the background or rallying on the front steps of Parliament House when the former minister was very keen to build a high-rise building in the centre of Perth for Perth Modern School, when it has a beautiful campus not far away from us.

Unfortunately, for the current minister, they are some of the things that have tainted this government's education background. I like to call it command and control. That was the modus operandi for the minister's predecessor. I like the current minister's slightly more relaxed and consultative attitude. The minister demonstrated that a few weeks ago at the opening of the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association conference. His opening address struck a chord with the audience. That was so important for the 600-odd principals and deputy principals in the room. They felt that the minister was listening and that he knew about some of the issues they are facing. I recognise that.

I have quite a shopping list of concerns that I would like to raise today, including reference to a couple of grievances that I will make over the next few weeks, one of them being school bus services and the relationship between the Department of Transport and school bus services. As the minister knows, I was on the committee that inquired into that issue last year. I will be making a grievance to the Minister for Transport tomorrow morning because the silence is deafening. I am looking forward to learning whether there has been any interaction between the Minister for Education and the Department of Transport and the Minister for Transport. I also wish to raise the situation of the Darkan community in the Shire of West Arthur. Many families in that community are trying to get their children to Collie Senior High School. Once again, they have been left high and dry as far as I can tell. They have certainly written to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Transport. I am looking forward to hearing whether they have received a response.

Another issue that probably relates to the minister's portfolio is the teacher housing situation in Munglinup. Basically, the Shire of Ravensthorpe and the community of Munglinup negotiated with the Department of Education. The department purchased a block. I have more detail on it. It said that it would build a house in Munglinup, starting in 2021, I think. Sure enough, late last year or early this year, the Department of Housing decided to build one in Kalgoorlie and not worry about the Munglinup community. They are the sorts of things that really upset our regional families when they are just trying to get a decent teacher and a decent principal in their community. I thought I would mention those issues early on. I will provide more detail as we go.

One of my big concerns is the resignations and teacher shortages that we have seen. There is certainly no outward sign of it, if the minister is looking for some sort of signal from the department that it is struggling for teachers. However, I can assure the minister that I see how some of our regional schools, in particular, are struggling to get teachers, with regional directors having to slot people in, swap principals to other schools and do all sorts of things, including merging classrooms. This is a real issue. As the minister commented the other week, our teaching graduates are down 41 per cent over five years. I was very interested to hear those comments from the minister. No doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has had some effect on this, as it has on many other occupations, but it has probably been amplified in schools. Many principals were almost health department operatives during the COVID pandemic. They had to do all sorts of things, whether it was cleaning, checking people's medical records and the like. There was a certain burnout factor. That has no doubt started to come into play in the education sector.

An article by Holly Thompson dated 20 March 2023 states —

West Australian teachers are struggling to keep up with growing workloads, as teacher shortages and threats of violence continue to increase, a new survey has revealed.

The results of the survey showed that in WA, school leaders and their staff were struggling with burnout, stress and anxiety over a range of factors. They also showed that 55 per cent of teachers reported that they had been subjected to threats, including cyberbullying or physical acts of violence—the highest number ever since the survey started 12 years ago. Almost 52 per cent of teachers in WA also received a red flag alert email, up from 28 per cent in 2021, in the survey sent to participants. The email said that they may be at risk of serious mental health concerns in the coming years. That is an increase from 28 per cent to 52 per cent. There is no doubt that that is one of the biggest things in the principal/teacher landscape that we are seeing. Western Australian Primary Principals' Association president Niel Smith has been quoted as saying that school leaders continue to work, on average, the longest hours in the country. That certainly struck home with me. An article in today's *The West Australian* reported that the New South Wales government is looking to reimburse its teachers and principals on a much better basis. I wonder whether the WA Minister for Education will follow suit. From my perspective, everywhere I go, burnout of our teachers is a real issue. Every time I talk to principals, they are worried about not only themselves but also their deputies and the teachers on their staff. Those surveys highlight quite a few concerns.

The other part of that is teachers with limited authority to teach. Around this time last year, in the order of 673 teachers were in that category. They were certainly filling a pretty large gap. I will be interested to hear whether the minister has any up-to-date figures on the number of teachers with limited authority to teach in the mix. That is something that has developed. I have met a few, out in the regions especially. Generally, they are pretty well prepared, but

I suggest that classroom management could be a challenge for a lot of teachers who are in their last years of training. Then, of course, they potentially have to return to a prac situation to gain their degree after having taught for a year or part of a year. That is an issue. I will be developing a few of those topics in my time today.

Another thing I forgot to do at the start of my contribution was to congratulate Bob Hawke College on the opening of stage 2. The Minister for Education, the Premier and the member for Nedlands were there the other day; obviously, my invitation was lost in the mail.

Dr A.D. Buti: Member, if that is the case, it's not acceptable.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No; I must admit I was disappointed when I saw the press release and the photos. I visited Bob Hawke College about six months ago and was very impressed with how things are going there. The school seems to be well-run, but as I said, I am disappointed that my invitation obviously got lost in the mail.

Regardless of that, I will move on to various other subjects, all of them important. I asked the minister a question about NAPLAN the other week, I think with regard to the year 9 results. As the minister pointed out at the time, participation is pretty good, but there are some concerns in the lower age groups. I think NAPLAN is important and something that we need to press on with. I actually agree with the minister that we still need to put some pressure on our students to get a measure of how they are going.

One of the first things the current Minister for Education did was to bring up the matter of early university offers. I asked the minister a question about that recently also, and I will be curious to hear how his recent meeting with the universities went. I know that the early offers were not as early as usual this year; they did not go out in April, which was the timing in the past. The first round of offers this year from various universities went out on 17 July. It is my understanding that they would go out on a monthly basis from there. I tend to agree with the minister's perception that if early offers go out too early, there is a tendency for students to take their foot off the pedal. I am curious to hear how the minister's meeting went with those universities, what his long-term strategy is for that and how he sees it fitting in with the eastern states. As we know, some of those universities are looking for some of our top WA students, so I am curious to know how that is going to play out. We do not want eastern states universities taking all our best talent out of WA.

I will now move on to what I suppose I could call the union review. It must be close to being released. We know former Premier Carmen Lawrence was leading the union review, and some of the issues it looked at included housing; the lack of support from the Department of Education for teachers and principals; increased violence in schools; behavioural issues in schools; the revolving door of principals and teachers, with little notice to the schools that they are leaving; and the use of teachers and principals from nearby schools to fill gaps for short periods. The list goes on. We have not been able to get the review from the union at this stage; I understand it is close to being released.

I refer to an opinion piece that appeared in *The West Australian* of Monday, 30 January by the new president of the State School Teachers' Union of WA, Matt Jarman. It states —

As almost 317,000 public school students head back to schools around the State, there are concerns about whether they'll have the right teacher in front of their class.

While it's expected all classes will have a teacher, the teacher shortage in WA will mean that not every teacher is the right fit for the class they're in front of.

Some of the teachers will not yet be fully qualified to teach in secondary schools —

As I mentioned a minute ago, that is because of their limited authority to teach. The article continues —

This situation is not fair to teachers, and it's certainly not fair to students. The teacher shortage in WA, which the State School Teachers' Union of WA flagged several years ago, is now causing major headaches for the State Government and the Education Department.

WA's border closure prevented the department from recruiting teachers from overseas or interstate, while at the same time many were leaving the profession due to high workloads, violence in schools and stagnant wages ...

I have already mentioned the stagnant wages, pursuant to the article in relation to the New South Wales government improving the wages of its teachers and principals. I have already mentioned the stress and extra workload in schools during COVID. It is often teachers in classrooms who bear the brunt of behavioural and emotional outbursts, from not only students but also parents. This is one thing I agree with the minister on. In general, many parents need to have a hard look at themselves; they go onto school premises and make trouble. Principals are faced with this issue, sometimes daily and sometimes weekly. It is a real challenge and it adds to the stress they face as they deal with other things.

In the car this morning I listened to a well-known educator from the eastern states talk about helicopter parenting and some of the flow-on effects when parents do not let their children make their own way and learn from their mistakes. I found that interesting. I am sure part of that flows on when those parents go onto school premises and think they need to put in their two bobs' worth about how their child is not necessarily being dealt with properly.

I am sure there are instances when that might be the case, but there are also challenges with some of the same parents cropping up all the time. I can only imagine some of the issues our principals deal with. I point out the part of the article that talks about the COVID scenario and the former Premier, Hon Mark McGowan, creating those shortages with his COVID closures and the flow-on effect it had for universities.

Mr D.R. Michael: Outrageous! Do you support what he did?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I am talking about the 8 February closure, when university students were stranded around the world after the former Premier decided arbitrarily—I understand against the advice of other members of the committee he was on—to extend the border shutdown for a few more weeks. Members cannot believe the amount of grief that caused for the university sector and for students who were stranded around the world, in Hong Kong, India, the USA—wherever you like. A lot of them had no money and they were stranded for an extra six to eight weeks. That has now contributed to this state having the lowest number of international students in mainland Australia—5.8 per cent. Members can say what they like, but that last arbitrary shutdown by the former Premier caused a lot of grief. I wanted to point that out. As far as I am concerned, the long-term effects of that will be felt for many years. Our universities are doing their best to recover from that, but from my perspective, it will take some time.

I will move on to some of the other issues I am concerned about and outline them further as I go along. I have this discussion every so often with the director general of Education about our regions and some of the challenges for regional directors covering the territory. I could probably compare it with the recent electoral distribution changes. By stretching out further and further the electorates of regional members of Parliament, there are more and more schools to be dealt with and more and more kilometres to be covered. The electorates of the member for Central Wheatbelt and I partly cover the district of the wheatbelt district director, who looks after in the order of a couple of hundred schools. It is challenging to cover that many. I still believe there is a place for district offices, like the ones in Narrogin and Northam, to support that district director. Those offices could have some mentor-type principals and people who could spread out to some of the smaller schools to support principals who are out there at the coalface and might be in only their first, second or third year, as well as support the regional director. I believe there is under-resourcing in this sector. I am not a fan of the current structure; there are too many schools for a regional director to cover. As far as I am concerned, that is a real challenge. All the other sub issues—school buses, teachers leaving, principals moving, district high schools—are challenging for one person to deal with. That is an issue from my perspective.

Another matter involves relief teachers. In remote areas, relief teachers are not included on the list for remote incentives, such as the country teaching program, the locality allowance and the attraction and retention initiative. That is something the minister could look at. I know the member for North West Central will comment on that later. Relief teachers, especially in those far-flung areas of the state, need to be compensated properly because, quite frankly, a lot of schools rely on them for 70 to 90 per cent of the working week. It is very important that they are looked after.

I have spoken to the minister previously about education assistants. They are a very important part of the schooling system and they need to be compensated better. The government lodged a \$6 billion surplus the year before last and \$4 billion last year and yet education assistants, who do a fantastic job, are not paid anywhere near what they are worth. That is another issue for the minister to take on board.

In consultation with the Principals' Federation of Western Australia and other representative bodies, the Department of Education has said that everything is back to normal after COVID. I do not think it is back to normal. Programs are being collapsed so that teachers can be put in front of classes. We have seen programs merged to ensure that teachers are in front of classes. An important element was when the State School Teachers' Union of WA said that it wanted to cut class sizes because of the challenges faced in many classes. The Minister for Education raised in his speech to the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association that the number of students with undiagnosed severe behaviour disorders creates a real challenge for staff and principals. It is very challenging. We know how far behind this government is in getting students diagnosed—it is up to 18 months at times. As the minister well knows, and as he pointed out on that day, sometimes even when kids are diagnosed, some students do not fit into that category. They do not fit into that diagnosis or anything that can be pinpointed, but they do have severe behavioural disorders. I look forward to the minister's proposal and hearing his thoughts. This is starting to create a real challenge in a lot of our schools. There is also a shortage of psychologists. Once again, Hon Donna Faragher has asked many questions in the other place about delays in diagnosis and access to psychologists, and the many shortages. Families are in limbo and cannot identify what their child may be diagnosed with. They do not know whether they or the school can get funding to help out or whether education assistants can be put in place.

I move on to some of the challenges in the regions. Government Regional Officers' Housing for our teachers is a real issue. In *Hansard* of 17 May 2023, Minister Carey gave a statement about extra funding for GROH. He ended the statement by saying —

... we are actively increasing the housing supply to meet the needs of our dedicated government workers who deliver critical services across regional Western Australia.

I can assure members that many teachers out there are not housed very well at the moment. Another challenge is what some of our teachers and principals pay in rent for GROH. Although the minister has said that all rents for GROH tenants will be frozen for the upcoming financial year, that will not help to attract teachers and principals to regional areas. Compared with police officers and so forth, teachers get the short straw. The Principals' Federation of Western Australia says there needs to be, preferably, rent-free accommodation, but at least higher rent subsidies, to attract principals to the regions. Why would a principal-elect go to a regional school where they have to clean the school, as there is no cleaner; teach classes when there are gaps in available teachers; and pay over \$20 000 from their salary to rent a mediocre house? That is a challenge. As I said when I spoke about Munglinup earlier, it was quite frustrating that the community of Munglinup and the Shire of Ravensthorpe negotiated with the Department of Education for a block and an amount of \$19 800 in December 2020. The block was there and ready to go. What happened? In April this year, just before bringing down the 2023 budget, the state government advised the community that it would not be getting the house for their teacher. To rub salt into the wound, the government set aside an extra \$61.6 million for GROH in the 2023–24 budget. One teacher travels a 160-kilometre round trip daily from Cascades to Munglinup Primary School. The other staff members drive from Esperance, which is 108 kilometres in the morning and 108 kilometres in the afternoon. That is 216 kilometres a day or 1 080 kilometres a week. The Minister for Housing and the government say, "Look at this: we are putting an extra \$61 million into GROH", yet teachers go to Munglinup from Esperance and Cascades, driving over 1 000 kilometres a week. A block has already been bought from the Shire of Ravensthorpe, but some bureaucrat somewhere decided that the house is no longer needed and to put one in Kalgoorlie because they think it is more important there. We can understand how some of our regional communities become very frustrated.

I highlighted the school bus situation. I was seconded onto the Public Accounts Committee by the Minister for Transport. We conscientiously went on a trip. The member for Bicton was the chair of our committee. Five or six members of the committee went to Dumbleyung, Darkan and Narrogin. We went to all of those schools.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: The member for Cottesloe, of course, is very familiar with what goes on at country schools, having come from Cranbrook back in his heyday. Here we are, a year after lodging our report, and the silence has been deafening on our two most important recommendations—the one about the nearest appropriate school and the one about district high schools. I will make a grievance to the Minister for Transport tomorrow morning.

Dr A.D. Buti: Just for clarification, what was the second recommendation about district high schools?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That was about the challenge faced by the community of Darkan, in which, depending on which part of Darkan a student lives within a 500-metre radius, they can be sent to four different district high schools rather than being able to attend the likes of Collie Senior High School. I do not want children from my electorate going to Collie Senior High School!

Dr A.D. Buti: Absolutely. That is a difficult one because if you allowed that, in some places a parent would probably want their kids to go to the senior high school so they do not make a double transition, but that might dilute the district high school that might be the major focus of that little town. It is a difficult one.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: It is challenging. One family in Darkan has a child at Darkan Primary School, another student in year seven or eight has been sent to Boddington District High School and another student in year 11 goes to Collie Senior High School, so they have three children spread-eagled around three different towns and they are trying to work out school buses and everything else.

Dr A.D. Buti: It is very difficult, but the problem is that if they all go to their school, then —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That is right. As I said, I know the Shire of West Arthur wrote the Ministers for Education and Transport a letter. The silence has been deafening and we would like a response. As a member of the Public Accounts Committee, I would like one. I am sure the member for Cottesloe, as a hardworking member of the committee, would also like a response. The concept of the nearest appropriate school has created a lot of grief out there. There is an invisible line in the sand; if someone just happens to live one kilometre to the wrong side of that line but their community is on the other side, sorry, but the Department of Transport dictates where they can send their kids to school. As far as I am concerned, that is not good enough. That was the number one recommendation of the report, and there is still no sign of life from the government. That is quite frustrating.

I turn to a few other things before I wrap up in a few minutes' time. I will now talk infrastructure. Highgate Primary School, as the Minister for Education and I both know, having visited it, faces some challenges. It is very restricted. The school has around 890 students, with projected growth each year. I believe the minister is looking at a site between the WACA cricket ground and Gloucester Park. I am concerned about how long that will take and whether it will happen. I look forward to hearing anything on that. As I said, with that number of students and the number of staff, car parking is challenging. Currently, the school is at a restricted site, and some really quick action needs to happen.

I turn to no doubt my favourite subject—that is, Esperance Senior High School. I could not have let this speech go without saying something about it. I know the minister is in discussion with the P&C, the shire president and the school board. I know the minister has a strong interest in it. The Esperance community well and truly has a strong

interest because when I run into grandparents, they say that their son went to Esperance high school and nothing has changed from when they were there. I run into them again and they say their grandson now goes to the school and still nothing has changed. It is not good enough. I know we spent \$14 million on the Esperance Residential College out of royalties for regions funding. That is a fantastic facility. Now, we need the upgrade. Hopefully, the state audit is completed or close to completion. I am sure the Minister for Education will enlighten us about Esperance Senior High School.

There are a couple of things I will go on with. I know the member for Vasse has been out to speak to the community about Como high school, and the minister visited there as well.

Dr A.D. Buti: What did you just say? I got distracted.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I think the Minister for Education visited Como Secondary College on 7 September, if I recall yesterday's question in the upper house.

From my perspective, they are some of the issues, but I have a couple of other little ones that I found quite interesting, and quite disturbing in some ways. I spoke about the challenges with overseas recruitment. The article from Bethany Hyatt on 29 July stated —

Just 33 overseas teachers netted so far in the education department recruiting campaign.

I am not too sure whether there has been an improvement on that, but as I said, Hon Mark McGowan extending the COVID-19 lockdown at one stage would not have helped. One issue that confuses me is the country teacher allowance, which is worth \$8 020. It is a big allowance for some of those challenging schools that teachers are asked to go to. It is quite confusing, because East Narrogin Primary School and Narrogin Primary School get a country teacher allowance, but Narrogin Senior High School—300 metres up the road—does not. Newdegate Primary School gets the allowance but Lake Grace District High School does not. It does not quite add up for me. I have an example. Condingup Primary School, about 100 kilometres east of Esperance, does not get the allowance, but Scaddan Primary School, which is probably 40-odd kilometres from Esperance, does. Apparently, Condingup does not get the allowance because it is closer to the coast. It does not matter if a school is a bit closer to the coast when it is almost the furthest east primary school in Western Australia. It does not make sense.

I am curious for the department to take a look at that, because it is trying to attract teachers to the regions, and get some numbers out there. These are the sorts of incentives that it could have a good, hard look at. Before Minister Buti became the Minister for Education, his predecessor announced the remote and regional program. It was in place, but I am curious about the results, how the government went with that, and what numbers came on board when that funding package was improved. Today on the jobs.wa.gov.au website, there are still 346 vacant positions in the Department of Education, including 23 jobs advertised for the goldfields area, 16 in the great southern, 231 in the metropolitan area, eight in the midwest, 13 in the Geraldton region, 11 in the south west, 17 in the Pilbara, and seven in the Kimberley region. Those are the numbers. There are still quite a few shortages even though the education department does not want to admit it. There is still a teacher shortage. That is a real issue from my perspective.

As I said, and as the Minister for Education said in a statement in here recently, violence in schools is totally unacceptable. I think there has certainly been an improvement of the department's attitude towards violence in schools. It is totally unacceptable. Parental involvement, such as parents coming to the school site with violent intentions, is totally unacceptable as well.

I look forward to hopefully receiving an invitation to the opening of stage 2 of Bob Hawke College—even though it has come and gone! I know the member for Nedlands was there because I saw a photo of her there.

Mr R.S. Love: It got lost in the mail!

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Obviously, it was lost in the mail, member for Moore. Anyway, so be it.

Dr A.D. Buti: As I promised you, I will chase it up. I will let you know. I don't actually get involved with the protocol. I thought you would have been invited because I have seen you on the list for other invitations. I'm not sure what happened there, but I'll follow it up.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: No worries; I thank the minister. I appreciate that. In closing, I agree with some of the programs the minister is putting in place, but I want the minister to be aware of some of the challenges, in not just our metro schools, but also our regional schools, in trying to address the housing and teacher shortages and supporting principals, schools and, especially, teachers.

The last issue is the School of Isolated and Distance Education. The member for Central Wheatbelt is also very familiar with this. It is almost now the largest school in the state. In some of our district high schools, years 9 and 10 have only three or four students, and the easy solution is to put those kids in SIDE. They spend a lot of their school life now just sitting in front of a computer. That is a challenge. The number of students going to SIDE is increasing by the day. The last figure was up around the 4 000 mark. It is probably now the largest school in the state, but it is not a pattern we want to see developing in the regions. We want those kids to have the opportunity to have face-to-face learning. It is a challenge for the department, but it is an old story: we all want to give our children an opportunity to have an equitable education no matter where we live. I will leave it at that.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [4.47 pm]: I stand to support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and make a brief contribution about our agricultural colleges, in particular at Cunderdin, the Western Australian College of Agriculture. The minister would be familiar with this as I have raised my concerns around some of the infrastructure and lack of funding to address the shortcomings at the college, despite the fact that there is a desire from that school community to see those upgrades. It is an absolutely fabulous education facility, and I was there last Friday for its open day. All of the agricultural colleges are hosting open days, and students past and present go with their families to look at what is on offer. We should be really proud of our agricultural colleges in Western Australia. I think other states look across the border at WA's model with some envy.

I can personally attest to the fact that the calibre of the graduates from those colleges is exceptional. The colleges provide an alternative pathway for students looking to take on a trade or go back into the agricultural industry to complete their ATAR in a working farm environment. That obviously changes depending on whether a student is in Denmark, Cunderdin or Morawa; there are tailored programs depending on where a student is. The Western Australian College of Agriculture Cunderdin is in the central wheatbelt; it is broadacre farming, so that is the focus. I am very proud of the investment we made when we were in government. There were significant upgrades to the accommodation. Two new dormitories were built because there had been very little done and they were very out of date at that time. That was back in 2011, so members can imagine that the ones that remain on campus are now very out of date. I will talk a bit about what they look like in a moment if the minister has not had the opportunity to see them firsthand. We also air conditioned all the dormitories; provided upgrades to the piggery, shearing shed and farm workshop; and, over a prolonged period of time—it took us nearly two years working with the advisory committee, the school and the Department of Education—we managed to procure more land for around \$1.7 million. The college needs to function as a replica of a working farm. The students need to have an appropriate amount of time on the equipment, which means that the college has to be the equivalent of a normal-sized farm in the wheatbelt so that the students can all have time on the tractor when it is seeding or harvest time, they can go through the shearing shed and those sorts of things. We worked really hard to make sure that that remains an authentic experience that generates graduates who are highly sought after, and they are. Every single kid who goes through that school either has a job lined up before they finish or returns to a family or other farm, whether they are going into a trade or the agricultural sector. The industry knows that it is getting a great product. We need to keep investing in those colleges, whether it is Cunderdin, Denmark or the other colleges that we have across the state.

It was unfortunate that one of the first things this state government did when it came to power was to make a series of education cuts. That has been well canvassed in this house over a number of years. But one thing within that suite of cuts that was never reinstated was the garnishing from the agricultural college trust. The Minister for Education advised during estimates that that was no longer happening—that is, the 20 per cent was no longer being garnished from the trust. The trust sat there to provide support for those colleges not only so that when they needed new equipment—they could do that off the books of the government and not pull on the government's budget—but also to provide support for other schools across the state to deliver agricultural education programs. That was generated by the students through the commercial activities of those farms so, in essence, they were self-sufficient. This government saw that as a target early on in the piece and removed that funding and, as a consequence, when those colleges need to purchase new equipment or go down the path of reinvesting in their colleges, they now have to go through the department and convince the department through a budget process. I do not think that is an ideal way to operate when trying to create a commercial outcome for those colleges. The advisory boards do a magnificent job of making sure that they are run and overseen and provide contemporary support and advice, and it worked seamlessly for many years, so that was very disappointing. It would be interesting to know when the government stopped garnishing from that trust, and perhaps the minister can address that when he stands to respond.

As I said, I was at the Cunderdin ag college open day. The head students, Corey and Matilda, were on hand to show us around, and they did a fabulous job, along with principal Matt Dowell. I had the chance to look at some of the older accommodation that I am familiar with and had seen previously. I had mistakenly made the assumption that that accommodation had been retired, because I did not think that it could possibly still be in use, given that the new accommodation we built in 2011 was supposed to provide an alternative. This accommodation is essentially two dongas—the dongas with the single rooms that we see on campsites without the bathrooms. They are then covered with a tin roof that is insulated on the inside; there is a concrete pathway through the middle of the two and a door at each end. Essentially, the students are being housed in two dongas in a shed. I am told that some of the students actually quite like it because they are the only single rooms available in the accommodation. Having said that, I had a look inside, and it is not acceptable to me that our students are residing there. The demand for that college is only continuing to increase, so it would be a good investment to add to the new accommodation blocks that our government provided in 2011 to make sure that we have contemporary accommodation.

The other issues that I have raised previously with the minister, and I know that the college itself has raised through the Department of Education, is additional extensions to its workshop and further work for the piggery. There are also a number of staff who are accommodated on the grounds who are sharing accommodation. Unfortunately, that is not uncommon. Although people might raise their eyebrows, it is not uncommon in regional Western Australia. I know that a number of nurses and teachers in our regional towns have no other option than to share accommodation;

otherwise, there would be nowhere for them to live where they have a job. I do not think that is acceptable in this day and age, either. I would like for the minister to provide an indication as to whether in the next budget round, or even before that, consideration is being given to the business cases that have been put up by the Cunderdin agricultural college to ensure that that investment is continuing and that we are accommodating and providing the best opportunity for our students at the college. Without a doubt, the priority is residential accommodation for the students, but I would reiterate that there is work to be done around the workshop, the piggery and the staff accommodation as well. Although some funding was provided for the college in this year's budget, it certainly did not address what I had raised with the minister and I know was a priority for the government. If that has changed and there has been movement on that front, I would be very happy to hear that from the minister today.

That is the contribution I make, advocating on behalf of all the colleges, but particularly in my electorate of Central Wheatbelt, Cunderdin, which has continued to turn out some amazingly talented and valuable students who have gone on to become assets in our regional and agricultural communities.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [4.57 pm]: I rise to support the motion. At the outset, I acknowledge all the teachers who are dedicated and committed within our state, but particularly those in the regional areas who really do a lot more in lots of ways because they are under-resourced. They coach for sporting teams and help with difficult situations without the support that they probably need but cannot access because of the tyranny of distance. I acknowledge that group of people.

As the member for Roe said, I undertook all my primary schooling through the Schools of the Air, and I think I turned out reasonably well. I hope that institution remains in place. The Minister for Local Government made a comment when the member for Roe raised the distances and the sizes that we have to cover. He is welcome to come on a trip with me anytime! This equates to the same issues that are faced by people who need to travel. A lot of our regional managers or education providers who need to travel who are living in Geraldton, for example, actually need to travel inland to Meekatharra, which is a six-hour drive one way. These people are under enormous pressure to travel to meet their commitments, and there is no connectivity with air flights and so forth. From Geraldton to Exmouth, it is probably a 19-hour drive. It would be really helpful to have some of our people relocated back into some of the regional centres to take that pressure off. Obviously, there are housing issues; that is an issue as well.

I move to something the member for Roe touched on, which are the incentives for regional teachers to go to remote towns that are difficult to staff. I had a timely letter in the last week from a teacher who has moved to a regional town in the north, in a part of my electorate. The person pointed out the disparity between relief teachers working in rural, regional and remote areas and those who work in the metropolitan areas. The current high demand for teachers was acknowledged, especially for experienced relief teachers. It is not something that will change in the foreseeable future. It is particularly true in regional and remote areas. At the beginning of the year, this teacher moved to a regional or remote location and works at one of the local primary schools and often at the high school, between two and four days a week.

According to the letter, teachers in the schools up there are receiving amounts above their nominal salary—a country teaching program allowance of \$10 210, a locality allowance of \$3 469, plus an attraction and retention initiative allowance of \$17 000. Apparently this does not apply to relief teachers in remote areas, regardless that the cost of living is the same. This person has written to me saying they have contacted the Department of Education about this issue and the response they received stated —

Please be informed that as per your request about allowances for casual employees working beyond 26 parallel, I can confirm that casual employees do not receive any allowances anymore.

The relief teachers who are living in those towns are not being rewarded for the work that they do in the same way as non-relief teachers. That is a concern of a lot of teachers I talk to across the regions. They are asking for a modification so that allowances and entitlements apply to any teacher in regional areas, because some of the relief teachers are doing four days a week and they are very committed. They are not suggesting it should be applied to transient teachers, but to those who are living in the towns and who are performing the same duties as the teachers who are receiving those entitlements. I think attracting and retaining teachers in rural, regional and remote positions is something we need to change or refocus on. That would go a long way to making a difference to the people in the regions.

I want to touch on the alternative education space. The member for Central Wheatbelt spoke about creating spaces in which people can be educated in different areas. For example, in Carnarvon we have a research property on the river. It is a large horticultural area. There is a lot of scope there to think outside the box and maybe create some kind of educational opportunity for people who are living and growing on plantations and pastoral properties. It is not far from where they live so they can be educated in that space of horticulture and pastoral at home.

We have spoken about the School of Isolated and Distance Education. It is important for a lot of remote towns where there are people who want to do units and subjects that they cannot access in their high schools. Early education is another important piece of the regional puzzle. One of the challenges we have in the regions—it is challenging everywhere, but particularly in the regions—is access to child care. There is very little access to child care in many towns across my electorate.

I am not sure whether the minister is aware of bush classrooms. They have been successful in the Pilbara. They had a model in Carnarvon, which ran out of funding, and there is now one in Meekatharra, which is really successful. That is run by the ABC Foundation. The aim is to get children to transition from the bush classroom—some are eight to 11-year-old kids who have never been to school—and give them confidence to move into the education system. The group that provides that service says there is a need for better engagement from the Department of Education in terms of working with those groups. We are trying to put these kids into normal education but they are not ready, willing or able to join that cohort. They are happy and want to go through the bush classroom system and transition through to education. If we can create a better understanding between those two groups, that would go a long way to getting those kids back into the education system. I acknowledge some are living with challenges such as overcrowded housing, and there are other challenges. I hope the minister may visit a bush classroom to have a look.

In the regions we have issues with resourcing and specialist access to some of the services that the member for Roe has already touched on. My contribution is very short, but to recap: the attraction and retention of teachers and looking especially at relief teachers who are in our regional areas and maybe bringing them up to par with the teachers who are full-time and permanent would go a long way to helping teachers and encouraging more people into that space. We should also look at alternative education spaces. I think bush classrooms is a worthwhile model to investigate in more detail for the region that I represent.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [5.05 pm]: I rise to support this motion and put on the record some concerns that have been raised with me about the education portfolio. Those concerns support the motion that condemns the WA Labor government's blatant neglect of the state's education system and acknowledges its failures to prioritise the needs of students throughout the entire state. My focus today will be on my local electorate and the broader region surrounding the area of Vasse. I will also point to another school and school community in the state.

Firstly, I will focus on early childhood education. I know my colleague in the other place, Hon Donna Faragher, has done a lot of work in this area, as has our shadow Minister for Education who leads today's debate. Fiona Stanley had an opinion piece in *The West Australian* in February, titled "We must invest in our kids". She has long advocated for investment in early childhood education to secure Australia's future prosperity, especially in terms of sustainability and the wellbeing of citizens. She wrote —

That inequity which is threatening our social cohesion sits at the heart of inequity in health and learning outcomes for children—the so-called social determinants of health—and they demand our immediate attention. Today, —

That was 25 February —

with the National Early Childhood Summit concluded and an Early Years Strategy on the horizon, we have a new opportunity to invest in early childhood in a truly transformational way. If we get the early years right, every single outcome is better.

In July this year, I had the privilege of attending the official opening of West Busselton Primary School's Bindi Bindi program for three-year-olds. It was fantastic to see young children with family members enjoying a welcoming and stimulating space with age-appropriate learning opportunities. It also creates routine and provides support for families. The school has invested a great deal of time and effort into creating this much-needed program. Its delivery has not been without its challenges. It is a wonderful program. It does not receive any separate funding. It is currently covered through the school's existing online budget. The school does this with an understanding of the great value in ensuring that those children will be ready for kindergarten. It is understood that there are 38 KindiLink centres across the state, which were opened by the former Liberal–National government. The aim, like Bindi Bindi, was to help kids get ready to start school. Despite the integrated service model benefiting thousands of kids each year, the Labor government has opened just one extra centre since 2017. When questioned in Parliament about whether there were plans to expand the model, given its success, the answer was no. There are no KindiLink programs in public schools in the lower south west region and I am yet to be made aware of whether there will be any more programs for three-year-olds. My understanding is that a number of schools would be interested in running the KindiLink program, which would meet the objectives of this valuable program and the demand in the catchment area and beyond.

The WA government's early childhood website also promotes the Better Beginnings family literacy program developed by the State Library of Western Australia for preschool children and their families. The website states —

Our goal is to improve literacy and learning outcomes for all W.A. children by encouraging families to read, talk, sing, write and play with their child every day.

The KindiLink program certainly reflects those goals. That is what I saw and heard from the people at West Busselton Primary School. This raises the question of why this is not being made more readily available, as we had seen with the expansion of the program under the former Liberal–National government, given the demand from the school community, which is seeking the support provided through this program and the much-needed support that we are seeing on the ground from West Busselton Primary School. The primary school is delivering this program through its existing budget.

I have raised in this place the needs surrounding Cowaramup Primary School. I note that in *The Weekend Australian* earlier this year, Bernard Salt wrote an article titled “Leaving the city behind” that looked at the best places to live, using data from the 2021 census. The article filtered urban centres and localities using a range of demographic, social and civic criteria. The south west of Western Australia rated very highly, with Cowaramup being included in the top-10 finalists. We have seen its population growth expand rapidly. Between 2016 and 2021, we saw a population increase of 27 per cent in Cowaramup, 16 per cent in Dunsborough and 14 per cent in Margaret River. The chamber is no stranger to the ongoing struggle of Cowaramup primary to obtain significant funding to address the classroom and facility issues identified in the 2016 audit, despite Cowaramup being a rapidly growing community with more and more young families choosing to move to that popular town.

The school this month will celebrate its one-hundredth year, which is an incredible milestone. After 19 years at the school, principal Peter Howse retired in July this year. I acknowledge his commitment and dedication to the staff, students and school community over the years. It always has been an absolute pleasure to attend events at that wonderful school. I place my appreciation on the record. I am sure that all members in this place appreciate and understand the wonderful dedication of our school leaders, schoolteachers and staff. I am aware that the school has been reclassified to a class 5 primary school from a class 4 primary school, which recognises the central role that this school plays in a significant community. That also has a bearing on the principal pay rates and on the responsibilities that are attached to those classifications. However, the fact remains that significant funding for school facilities remains unresolved at that school, which is desperately trying to keep up with its ageing infrastructure as well as the significant growth rate it has seen. The issues have been unresolved for many years, with nothing further having been done since the start of the school year. I understand that the biggest issue is the transportable classroom used for the early childhood learning centre. That is an inadequate learning space and, at the very least, needs new contemporary and permanent infrastructure. Surely that is not too much to ask, given the significant pressures placed on that school facility.

I delivered a grievance last November and the response from the minister’s parliamentary secretary was to criticise me for not seeking and securing funding when in government, which was prior to 2017. The Liberals and Nationals WA supported the audit and made a \$6 million commitment in the 2017 and 2021 state elections. The best that the WA Labor government could offer was \$60 000 to undertake some minor works, and that was only because some of the classrooms were sagging and were in a dire state. Labor has been in government since 2017 and has provided no significant infrastructure investment to provide facilities that are on par with other primary schools in the state. It is an absolute insult to the teaching and administration staff who do so much for the school community and to the students who also deserve better. It is unacceptable that the best we have seen is \$60 000 for a bandaid package of measures. That does not provide for or support the current needs, let alone the future long-term planning for that school.

I move on to another school in my electorate—Dunsborough Primary School. The Department of Education’s facilities directorate in 2015 identified the undercover area and canteen as inadequate for a school of that size. All that was required was \$900 000 to provide the school with an undercover area and expand the canteen. Again, the Liberal and National Parties made an election commitment. Dunsborough Primary School is the only school in the district without an enclosed undercover area or assembly area. It is also considered a health hazard, with birds roosting in the ceiling. Instead of committing a small amount to bring the school up to standard, we have seen the government offer a pittance, with little support from the WA Labor government in the lead-up to the election. It committed a miserly \$25 000 to do the very bare minimum. I know that the hardworking parents and citizens association committee members, together with the school community, took the issue into their own hands to finance the installation of lining to improve the health and amenity of this area. This matter has been really disappointing. The undercover areas and canteen facilities were recognised as raising concerns from a health perspective by the local City of Busselton. The whole school cannot fit into the undercover area for assemblies and events and there are concerns about the canteen facilities. The undercover area is not enclosed. It is open to vandals on the weekends, which is a concern. This space could be better utilised for care outside school hours.

It is worth noting that the recent survey of the Dunsborough school community found that 187 families need a childcare provider. There is not one in town due to staffing issues and higher rents. That issue could be resolved by utilising the undercover space. That is a possible solution that has come from the community. Plans for the undercover area were redone and provided to the Department of Education and Department of Finance this term, but they have apparently been rejected. The school and community have done all they can. The P&C cannot appeal again to the school community to raise the funds; therefore, the school is left with inadequate space. I should note on the record that the P&C community has done what it can to get by with these facilities. It has certainly been significantly challenged to deliver the basics with these facilities that are no longer fit for purpose and bursting at the seams.

I also want to raise Como Secondary College in this place. It was built in the 1960s. I attended a community meeting last month with representatives from a range of public schools in the area regarding the need for significant investment. I heard at the meeting that one-third of school-age children living in this catchment attend public schools out of the catchment. Another third attend private schools due to aged infrastructure and a lack of resources at the college. That was put to me.

Following a question in the house the other day, I understand that these issues have been raised by Amy Birch and others in the community and there has been a positive outcome. I thank the minister for visiting the school on 7 September. At the meeting I attended, the school community and board members were concerned about the future plans for the college. A range of matters were put at that meeting, but the urgent need to address maintenance issues and broader concerns was very clear. I thank the minister for his response to the parliamentary question. It did provide some clarity, but it did not commit to a future works program. It simply outlined the investment of \$4.57 million that we have seen at this school since 2017. This needs to be put into context for all members in this place. The answer yesterday highlighted that; I quote —

The Cook Labor government is delivering significant upgrades to our schools as part of our \$1.5 billion investment in public education capital works. This program of works is the largest investment in public education capital works in our state's history.

In that context, real concerns are raised about why schools such as Dunsborough Primary School, Cowaramup Primary School and Como Secondary College are being ignored. With the largest education capital works program ever undertaken in the state at \$1.5 billion, the Cook Labor government has only managed to spend \$4.5 million or 0.3 per cent of the total on Como Secondary School. Can I have a small extension, please?

Dr D.J. Honey: You can have a 10-minute one!

Ms L. METTAM: Yes, an extension is an extension. I guess I am seeking how much longer I have got from my people here!

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Yes, you are. You should be asking me!

[Member's time extended.]

Ms L. METTAM: In *The West Australian* on 1 September, before the minister visited the school, parent Amy Birch stated —

Ms Birch said public schools of a similar age to Como, such as Rockingham and Safety Bay Senior High Schools, had recently had cash injections of around \$50 million each.

“And Como got \$1 million for a canteen upgrade ...

Amy also pointed out that Como students have restricted wi-fi access and the roof was in dire need of maintenance. The Cook government spruiks its investment of \$1.5 billion in education as part of its budget, but where is the commitment to these aged schools? Even parents have had to fund maintenance works that threatened the health and wellbeing of students. I will touch further on this critical area as well.

The health and wellbeing of students and staff is a very key concern with wideranging issues. The issue of support for students without formal diagnosis but with special needs has been highlighted in my electorate. It certainly has broader implications as well. NAPLAN results released last month identified that 10 per cent of students across all year groups require additional support. The long-term outcomes for students who do not receive that extra support are significantly impacted, and we know that only one in five students identified as below the minimum standard of literacy and numeracy in year 3 will improve by the time they get to year 9. Students with learning disabilities without formal diagnosis are not eligible for funding for additional teaching support. This becomes a further pressure on the school's annual budget, which understandably has limitations. I am advised that this is an issue for every school that needs addressing. It has had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of staff, which we understand can lead to stress and burnout through teachers' additional workload.

The *Australian teachers' perceptions of their work in 2022* study revealed that 75 per cent of teachers plan to quit before retirement and 20 per cent want to leave in the next five years. Class sizes, unmanageable workloads and an increasing administrative burden were all common complaints. These are just some of the issues in this portfolio area. I have particularly focused on the electorate of Vasse for this motion, but from the concerns raised at Como Secondary College, we can quite obviously see that there are concerns right across the board. I have particularly focused on school infrastructure, but there are quite clearly real needs for better support for our teachers, who in turn support our students. I urge the minister to reconsider his approach towards the schools about which I raised concern, in addition to providing better support for our teachers and students going forward. I leave my comments there.

MR D.A.E. SCAIFE (Cockburn) [5.27 pm]: I obviously rise to speak against this motion, but I also want to thank the opposition for giving me the opportunity to speak in private members' business about the unprecedented investments that the McGowan and now Cook Labor governments have been making in education.

I firstly respond to the member for Vasse about Como Secondary College. I have a question for the member for Vasse. The Labor party has represented the seat of South Perth for two and a half years and I cannot imagine that the problems she referred to occurred overnight, so what were the Liberal members for South Perth doing over the previous 50 years?

Ms L. Mettam: We made a commitment. There had been upgrades —

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Were they fighting for it? Did they get the government to deliver? It sounds to me like the current member for South Perth has the ear of the minister and he is delivering, but the Liberal Party neglected that area and took it for granted. This is classic Liberal Party: it takes its electorates for granted.

Mr J.R. Quigley: The member for South Perth never raised it in a million years, as I can recall. Not once!

Ms L. Mettam interjected.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: That is pretty extraordinary stuff.

Several members interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Thank you.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I am sure that the Leader of the Liberal Party says that the Liberal Party committed to things, much like it committed to the Ellenbrook rail line: it never delivered it. The Leader of the Liberal Party gives empty promises. What were the Liberal representatives for South Perth doing in all the decades that they took South Perth for granted? We are lucky to have a Labor member for member for South Perth now who has been advocating to the minister on this issue. The minister is clearly paying attention. It is an own goal for the Liberal Party to raise that issue, because it draws attention to how it neglected its heartland for decades. That is one factor that contributed to its epic loss in 2021.

Dr A.D. Buti: On that, even though I have great respect for and really like Hon John McGrath, neither Phillip Pental nor John McGrath raised Como in their whole time in this Parliament, apart from Mr McGrath raising it just leading into the 2017 election.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: So the last gasp of a dying government was when the last Liberal member for South Perth raised this issue.

This government is making significant investments in public education. I am a very proud product of the public school system, as I know are many members of the opposition and government benches. It is ridiculous to suggest that this government is failing on education because it has been making unprecedented investments in public education. It does not matter where one goes in the state, whether the metropolitan area, outer metropolitan area, Pilbara or south —

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: I will get to Rockingham, Leader of the Opposition; do not worry about that!

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms A.E. Kent): Order!

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The Leader of the Opposition is raising —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. The member for Cockburn is on his feet; you will get your chance.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The Leader of the Opposition had the gall to raise Rockingham. I will get to Rockingham, Leader of the Opposition, and we will see what Hon Dr Steve Thomas had to say.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The Labor government has been delivering throughout the state. I will get to Rockingham and will talk about what Hon Dr Steve Thomas had to say about the investments this Labor government is making in schools in Rockingham. Of course, it is typical to hear from the Leader of the Opposition on this issue at the moment. As we know, the Nationals WA are targeting densely populated areas for the next election. I assume that in their view Rockingham, being outer metropolitan, is a peri-urban or regional seat under the new configuration of the “MetroNats”, as the Deputy Premier referred to them. I will get to that.

I will first touch on the many investments the government is making all around the state, including \$18.3 million for a new performing arts centre, a new sports hall and classroom building at Lynwood Senior High School. That traditional Labor area is getting a significant investment from this Labor government. The government has provided \$22 million to build new facilities for students at Karratha Senior High School. We can go all the way up to the Pilbara to see a significant investment like that. In the south west, the government committed \$15 million to provide a new classroom block and science, design and technology facilities at Australind Senior High School. I am a particular supporter of that, being a graduate of Australind Senior High School. It is a big school that takes in a big catchment area on the outskirts of Bunbury and it has been under a lot of pressure. The school had about 1 400 students when I attended. The number dropped with the opening of Eaton Community College, but it has since grown again and I think is in excess of 1 400 students now. It is bursting at the seams. The members for Collie–Preston and Murray–Wellington have been doing an outstanding job advocating for those facilities on behalf of that school. I congratulate this government and the minister for delivering on it.

We are also doing great things in my neck of the woods—the southern suburbs of the Perth metropolitan area. I acknowledge the Minister for Education. I will go into bat for this minister and this government any day of the week when it comes to investment in public education. Lakeland Senior High School, which covers part of my electorate, has historically had additional challenges. It deals with a cohort who often come from more disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, has a higher Aboriginal population, and has kids who struggle that bit more at school. This government puts its money where its mouth is and will deliver \$12 million worth of upgrades to Lakeland Senior High School. The first project—a \$6 million build of new classrooms and an education support centre at that school—has been delivered and opened. It is a great facility. The second phase is \$6 million for the refurbishment of the performing arts and sports facilities at the school. Again, that is a great investment from the government. It just staggers me to hear the Leader of the Opposition suggest that the Labor Party somehow takes seats like Rockingham and Cockburn for granted. This is evidence of the Labor government making investments.

Mr R.S. Love: Only when transitioning out of the seat to a new member do you decide to invest money there.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: Guess what, Leader of the Opposition: these commitments were made before I was elected. They were made before I was even preselected as the candidate. The Leader of the Opposition should get his facts right before he makes those sorts of comments, because it is not true. Those commitments were made before my time, but they are being delivered under my watch and the watch of this education minister. My community is thankful for those very significant investments in my electorate.

Of course, if we continue further south, we get to the area that the Leader of the Opposition decided to pick a fight on—quite unwisely, I would have thought—being the \$100 million worth of upgrades this government has committed to Rockingham Senior High School and Safety Bay Senior High School. That is made up of \$60 million for upgrades to not only Rockingham Senior High School but also the education support centre at that campus, and \$40 million for upgrades to Safety Bay Senior High School. It is a fantastic investment. What was the response of the opposition to this announcement? The other day I talked about Hon Dr Steve Thomas chasing a headline. It is much the same now. In an article in *The West Australian* of 6 June 2023, Hon Dr Steve Thomas said —

“(Mark McGowan) advised everybody that he was hanging around to deliver the Budget and as a part of that—effectively pork barrelled his own seat ...

“These two schools have been advanced. There would be plenty of other schools that are older. Mark McGowan was thinking about a by-election when he made this announcement.”

That was a grubby comment. These schools deserve investments. They are old schools that have been around for decades. Like Lakeland Senior High School, these schools are attended by a cohort of students who experience socio-economic disadvantage but deserve first-class facilities just like anybody else in the state. Does the opposition agree that those announcements were pork-barrelling? Does the shadow minister agree that those announcements were pork-barrelling?

Mr P.J. Rundle: I have not criticised any of those. All I am saying is that Esperance is 10 years older. You can imagine how those people feel.

Mr D.A.E. SCAIFE: The shadow minister does not agree with Hon Dr Steve Thomas. That is fine. We know that the opposition does not play as a team; its members are not on the same team. It is to the shadow minister’s credit that he does not agree with Hon Dr Steve Thomas on this, because it was a grubby comment then and it would be a grubby comment now.

The other question I have is more for the Leader of the Liberal Party. Did Hon Dr Steve Thomas check in with the Leader of the Liberal Party before he made those comments? The Liberal Party was still in the process of deciding whether to run a candidate in the Rockingham by-election. Why would the shadow minister run around and accuse the government of pork-barrelling the electorate when the Liberal Party might throw its hat in the ring? It would have to be the worst election strategy that anybody has ever thought up. The Liberal Party was lucky that it was a by-election in which the government’s attitude was essentially to ignore the opposition candidate, because I reckon Peter Hudson should have been doorstopped and asked whether he agreed with the comments of Hon Dr Steve Thomas. That would have been a very interesting press conference to watch. Those comments by Hon Dr Steve Thomas really tell us why the Liberal Party got such a shocking result in the Rockingham by-election. However, we would not know that because, to quote an article in *The West Australian* of 30 July 2023, the Leader of the Liberal Party said that it was the best result for the Liberal Party in over a decade in WA Labor’s safest seat. That statement was wrong. The Liberal Party’s result at the by-election was its worst result since Rockingham was created as an electorate. I went back and had a look at the results of every election in Rockingham since the seat was formed in 1974, and the Liberal Party had always made the two-candidate preferred count.

The only election for 50 years in which the Liberal Party has not made the two-candidate preferred count in Rockingham was in the 2023 by-election. That was its worst result. It got a primary vote of 17.7 per cent, which is actually worse than its primary vote at the 2017 state election, when it got about 18 per cent of the primary vote. The Liberal Party did worse at that by-election than in the 2017 state election when the Labor Party swept to power with 40 seats. It is the only election since 1974 in which the Liberal Party has not managed to make the two-candidate

preferred count. I would be calling on the Leader of the Liberal Party to correct the record on those comments that she made to *The West Australian* because it is demonstrably not the best result. In fact, it is the opposite. The performance of the Liberal Party in the Rockingham by-election was the worst result it has ever had, and it is no surprise.

I want to give some credit to the new member for Rockingham because some criticism has been made in the media about her performance. I point out for the record that the new member for Rockingham actually got a higher primary vote than both Hon Mike Barnett and Hon Mark McGowan when they first stood for election. Hon Mike Barnett got 46.8 per cent of the primary vote in 1974 and Hon Mark McGowan got 48.5 per cent of the primary vote. The current member for Rockingham fell just short of 50 per cent with 49.33 per cent. She did the best for a new incoming Labor member for Rockingham, a testament to her efforts as a candidate and to the positive campaign that the Labor Party ran.

If the Liberal Party is not going to learn from its mistakes and be a credible alternative that appeals to people across the state, not only within its own sectarian areas, but also in the areas of Cockburn and Rockingham all the way through to the Pilbara, it will not be rewarded by the people of Western Australia and it will continue as an opposition—a lacklustre one at that.

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [5.41 pm]: I am not sure why the member for Cockburn jumped in. What a disappointing contribution from the member for Cockburn, who has decided to become the hard man of the Labor Party. He has joined the ranks of the Attorney General in being offensive and having a general spray, which is really disappointing because I thought he was better than that. That is obviously not the case. I want to talk about a number of issues and to summarise the case put by other members in this debate. I also want to address a couple of matters specifically in and around my electorate.

In this year's budget, the government allocated significant money for the redevelopment of the Rockingham and Safety Bay Senior High Schools. I will put on the record quite clearly that I have been to both those schools and they are in dire need of additional funding. It is appropriate for the government to focus on improving those schools, but my concern is not that the government has allocated money to them, but how it goes about choosing the allocation of funding for those schools—that is, how it identifies those schools and how they are prioritised. It is unfortunate that it appears that the government has focused on a political allocation of funding, not funding based on need. As mentioned by the member for Roe, we welcome this new Minister for Education coming into this role. The minister might recall that we lobbied extensively for him to be promoted to cabinet in the last Parliament. I hope that the minister appreciates the hard work that we put in to promote his good qualifications for the role compared with those of some of his hopeless colleagues. It is good to see him coming into that role. He has been in the role for nine months so I do not think that we can hold this minister to account at this stage for the government performance on education. As the member for Roe said, the minister definitely appears to be making an effort to listen. I hope that the minister listens to the contributions from members today. As I said, I will summarise those contributions at the end of my speech and we see a response to those key issues. The way in which the government is allocating its funding seems to be related to political considerations, not the needs of schools in various areas.

I have one glaring example in my electorate that has not had a funding commitment from this government. I know that the minister is aware of this school because the minister and I visited some sporting facilities in the area of that school. I also discussed this with the former Minister for Education and asked her to visit the school. She indicated that there were problems, but that school is still in dire need of an upgrade. The Mosman Park Primary School also includes the Mosman Park School for Deaf Children. I was interested to hear the member for Cockburn talk about Lakeland Senior High School and the students at that school from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and the like. It might surprise the member for Cockburn that six per cent of the students at the Mosman Park Primary School come from an Indigenous background. For example, there is 50 per cent more social housing in my electorate, mostly in the southern part of Mosman Park, than in the seat of Rockingham. The member might be surprised by that in my electorate. I think that over three per cent of all housing is social housing that tends to be located in the southern part of Mosman Park and in what they now call Mt Claremont. It was once the old area of Graylands that contained a lot of social housing. The Mount Claremont Primary School, which is still called Graylands Primary School, will ultimately need to be upgraded, but it has been well maintained with upgrades to the administrative area and the like. The Mosman Park Primary School and the co-located school for deaf children is a marvellous model. In the school for deaf children, each child has their own individual assistant, but the children, when they can, participate in the classroom at the primary school so that they are not isolated and can mix with the primary school students. That primary school desperately needs an upgrade. Plans have been around for some time. I understand that maybe something is going ahead, but that school really needs to have its facilities upgraded. I vividly remember that not long after I became a member of Parliament I was invited to the primary school and a darling little Indigenous boy about six years old was sitting outside. Members might know that Aboriginal children are disproportionately affected by deafness because of glue ear and health issues that lead to that. I had been elected in April and I visited this school in the depths of winter in July, and the only place for this little boy to sit in a private space was on the veranda out in the freezing cold weather. The same situation still exists at that school. Some money has been invested in the staffroom. It had one toilet for something like 60 female staff, but that has

been improved, but we still have demountable classrooms on that site and the school desperately needs an upgrade. If members went there they would be surprised by the condition of that school. As I say, we need some money to go into that particular school.

I will go through the way the government has allocated its funding. In the “Shaping the Future” announcements made by the government, 21 school projects are listed under the following three headings: redevelopment of secondary schools, construction continues, and upgrades and additions to primary schools.

How many of those 21 major projects announced by the state government are in electorates that would be considered traditional Liberal electorates? Not a single one—zero—out of the 21 projects. That is appalling. As members can guess, I have some time for the new Minister for Education. We were keen to see the minister elevated in cabinet, which happened as a reflection of his capacity. But this is a good opportunity for the minister to look at how that program was put together and realise that there are other targets.

Other areas in my electorate need dealing with. Do members know that there is not a single government high school in the electorate of Cottesloe? Not one. Shenton College was developed and is full to the brim. Bob Hawke College has been developed. It is in a western suburb, if you like, but it will rapidly fill up. I assume, minister, that the places in stage 2 of Bob Hawke College are pretty well taken up. There is a desperate need for a new government high school in the western suburbs, whether it be in my electorate, because there will be massive growth. The closure of City Beach High School goes back to our time in government and was based on the fact that the forecast of student numbers going forward would decline, but exactly the opposite happened. We are seeing in my suburb a massive amount of infill and a substantial increase in population. Three thousand families have moved into the City of Claremont, which had a population of 8 000. There has been a massive increase in the population and a generational change in the area. In my area, I am surrounded now by young families. Going back a handful of years, I was surrounded by retirees or at least people in the later stages of life.

Dr A.D. Buti: There was Swanbourne, City Beach and Scarborough.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Yes.

Dr A.D. Buti: Has there ever been a high school in Cottesloe?

Dr D.J. HONEY: There was Swanbourne High School in the Cottesloe electorate.

Dr A.D. Buti: There has never been much in Cottesloe itself, though.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Not in the Town of Cottesloe—no. Obviously, a massive number of private schools are in that area. The City Beach High School land has been allocated to a private organisation, but I hope that the government hangs onto that land for school purposes because we will rapidly be in the position of needing another school. Once schools start to reach 2 000-plus students, it is very hard for them to deliver pastoral care. They become large organisations past a certain point.

I now go through where those schools were located and the priorities of where those schools were located under the Shaping the Future program. The schools included Balcatta Senior High School, Kinross College, Darling Range Sports College, Wanneroo Secondary College, Aveley Secondary College and Broome Senior High School, which falls within the electorate of the member for North West Central, so I stand corrected on that point. Other schools included Victoria Park Primary School and Arbor Grove Primary School in Ellenbrook. I can continue down the list. I contrast that. We heard comments that the government’s capital spend is somehow a record, but I beg to differ. I like to take members back to the achievements of the former Liberal government.

A government member interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The member will enjoy this. It is nice to have facts versus spin. In the Liberal–National government’s 2016–17 state budget, there was a 70.3 per cent increase—a massive commitment—compared with the former Labor government’s 2007–08 budget. Whatever faults members opposite attribute to Hon Colin Barnett, a former Minister for Education in the Court government and former Premier of this state, he had an absolute passion for education. He was criticised by a number of his colleagues because of that, but he had an absolute passion —

Ms S.E. Winton interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: The member for Wanneroo might also know that under the Barnett coalition government, teachers in Western Australia were the highest paid in Australia. Under this government, they are lowest paid in Australia. I think the teachers’ union upon reflection would say that they were golden times under the Barnett Liberal government. Teachers have suffered under the member for Wanneroo’s government with a relative regression of their salaries.

I look at the electorates in which the government spends money. This is not a focus on coalition electorates or Liberal electorates, but a genuine focus on what was needed for the state across all electorates. In 2013, Governor Stirling Senior High received \$63 million; Pearsall Primary School received \$12.5 million; Butler College, stage 1, received \$51 million; Baldivis Secondary College, which, at the time, was in a Labor seat, received \$44 million; Baynton West Primary School in Karratha received \$20.7 million; and Tuart Forest Primary School received \$14.5 million. Other schools included West Byford Primary School, which is, by the way, a beautiful school like something out of

science fiction movie in terms of its quality; Exmouth District High School; and Dongara WA College of Agriculture. There was a complete rebuild of agricultural colleges around the state. The agricultural schools in Harvey, Denmark, Mt Barker and others are exemplars, as pointed out by the member for Central Wheatbelt. Overall, in 2013 alone, the former Liberal–National government completed \$372 million worth of school projects.

In 2014, Byford Secondary College, stage 1, received \$35.2 million and Bullsbrook District Primary School received \$24.4 million. Butler Primary School, Yanchep Beach Primary School and Hammond Park Primary School received a total of \$177 million. This is just in capital and does not conflate the other salary increases and all those things. This is purely capital spend on developing new schools.

In 2015, Joseph Banks Secondary School in Banksia Grove, Broome North Primary School and Golden Bay Primary School all received money for capital works; indeed, \$48.7 million was spent on Joseph Banks and \$14.2 million was spent at Golden Bay Primary School, which is in the City of Rockingham, which, at the time, was in the then Leader of the Opposition's electorate. Further, Baldivis Secondary College received \$26.3 million and Butler College, stage 2, received \$32 million. I am happy to table this summary of all the projects. I cannot go through them all because it would take up too much of my time.

Mr T.J. Healy: How many were public–private partnerships?

Dr D.J. HONEY: I will go through the public–private partnerships. In 2015, the former Liberal–National government spent \$231 million. In 2016, Harrisdale Primary School received \$15.2 million; Alkimos Primary School received \$14 million; Halls Head Community College received \$25.9 million; Rivergums Primary School received \$18.5 million; Applecross received \$63 million; and Anne Hamersley Primary School received \$15.8 million, and it was completed at the time that the government went to publication on this documentation for the election. Moreover, \$133 million of the \$237 million for the year was in train for further commitments. There was more than \$1 billion in actual capital commitments that did not conflate with other things. When the government goes on about its record expenditure, it pales into insignificance.

[Member's time extended.]

Dr D.J. HONEY: I point this out because I want the government to recognise that its spend on schools should not be about enhancing its chances in electorates. It is about being fair across all areas of the state. I have highlighted some areas in my electorate, but other members before me highlighted significant opportunities—I should say not opportunities, but significant need—for increased expenditure by the government in those areas. I am optimistic that we now have a Minister for Education who will look at that, and I think it was to his credit that the Minister for Education so promptly came out to Como and looked at those issues.

I want to talk about Bob Hawke College. I certainly welcome the increased number of students there, but I am extremely concerned about two things at Bob Hawke College: the lack of playing space that has been allowed for students and the insecurity that will come to the school from having high-rise developments immediately around the oval. The only oval the school has access to is the old Subiaco football oval, which is now a reduced size. In this place, I have spoken before about how the Minister for Planning is allowing high-rise development around the periphery of that oval, and I think allowing that is absolutely appalling. This supports developers to profit from a prime real estate area, but that school does not have adequate facilities for recreation. It has one basketball court and the oval.

The oval will be a shared community oval, and I think that sharing school ovals with the community, outside of school hours, is a good thing. In fact, I know it already happens, but there is a lot of opportunity for school resources to be shared with the community, and that is something I welcome. I definitely do not welcome the high-rise apartments. They are not being built across a major road and are not low-rise apartments. They are literally being built on the oval. I will go through that in a little bit of detail.

This is fascinating to see because if we look at the Department of Education's 2020 draft policy, which was the continuation of a previous policy, and what it says about the relationship to nearby land uses, we will see that it says —

Common boundaries of school sites with residential uses should be avoided whenever possible. There are a number of activities conducted on school sites which can adversely affect the amenity of residential properties, particularly where they are located very close to a school site. This is a growing problem with the trend towards increased community use of school facilities after hours. To avoid potential conflict with residential properties, it is preferable that school sites are surrounded by a combination of roads, public open space or other compatible community, cultural recreation and sporting facilities.

Section 3.6.2 of the draft policy states —

Land uses such as service stations, restricted premises, licensed premises such as taverns, small bars and liquor stores, consulting rooms and industrial uses are considered undesirable next to school sites and have real and perceived impacts on health, amenity and safety.

What did we see come out? The minister made a commitment to her developer friends that she will put in large high-rise buildings. When I say large high-rise buildings, this is the Subiaco oval precinct schematic. Members

might not be able to see it, but they should have a look at it. The schematic shows buildings that must be greater than 20 storeys right on the periphery of the school oval. There is no road and no public open space between them. They are on that oval. That is a matter that concerns parents and me.

It has been a longstanding policy, but we see that it is now being degraded by the government. Unfortunately, that land has been allocated. I hope that, if it is at all possible, the government will stop it. I know there is a shortage of housing, but we should not compromise—and the government is compromising—the safety of children in doing that.

We understand that commercial developments will be in those high-rise buildings, including a tavern or the like that will sell alcohol. In the former policy, it was very clear that we should not have that on a school oval. In this case, it will be on the edge of the school oval. I think that is profoundly wrong.

I have heard the minister try to defend this, and she very theatrically got up and said, “Do other members have buildings opposite their schools?” No school has high-rise properties built on its oval, as in this case. Some schools may have a two-storey or three-storey building across a main road. No-one has high-rise apartments immediately across the road from their school.

Mr P. Papalia: Can I correct you there? It is a private school, but I think you will find that Mercedes College does. Even though it is a road, it is not a major road.

Dr D.J. HONEY: They are across from —

Mr T.J. Healy: St George’s College.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Do you mean the university college?

Mr T.J. Healy: St George’s in the city.

Dr D.J. HONEY: It does not have high-rise buildings immediately across the road.

Until the minister made the decision to give the developers their heads on that land, it was a very clear direction from the Department of Education that that should not happen. I think there is a very good reason for that, and I will have time to go through that a little bit. That is a retrograde step, especially given that that school has such a dearth of area; it is a multistorey school. If ever a school needed large recreational areas for students, that is the school. Primary schools of 200 or 300 kids in my electorate have substantially more recreational space than Bob Hawke College, which I think will have about 2 500 children or the like. I think that is a sad thing. I welcome there being more places for kids to go, but I think the way that has been done is poor. If we look at other governments in other states, we will see that they have banned this. The Victorian government is known to be pretty favourable to developers, but even it clearly rejects that.

It is not just that I have some sort of odd view about this. I do not have time to go through the debacle of the thought bubble of putting a school in Northbridge. Imagine putting a school in the heart of Northbridge, with the range of social issues that we see in that area. I hope good work is going on to deal with it. There was enormous outrage behind it.

This is an article from the *Post* of 4 March 2023. Lest members think that I have some sort of strange aversion to the idea of putting high-rise immediately adjacent to schools, this article from page 11 of the *Post* states —

Student safety, security, privacy and wellbeing are at risk from the McGowan government’s vision to redevelop the former PMH and Subi Oval sites, according to Perth Modern School’s Parents and Citizens Association.

That article talks about concerns and continues —

It says the situation around schools will “get worse, not better” under the new planning schemes and the government should take a second, closer look before tower blocks start going up.

It said that that should be paused. It continues —

Towering blocks beside the school—not four storeys as voted for by 650 P&Cs at the 2022 West Australian Council of State Schools conference—were outlined in the master plan and precinct guidelines.

“Regretfully the ...

Plan that has been put forward —

has nothing that prohibits young people from being under constant surveillance from anyone recreating around the school oval or visiting, dining or staying in private developments that will tower over the edges or adjacent to school spaces ...

The P&C committee went on. These are real concerns from the parents at that school and others.

I will just go through what other members of the opposition said. The member for Roe gave an excellent round-up of a whole range of issues and I will focus on a couple of those. A number of members on our side spoke about the

co-joined issue of teacher shortages, having partially trained teachers in the schools, the burnout from teachers having enormous workloads, headmasters having to fill in and other staff having to do excessive hours. A close relative of mine is a retired teacher and is doing many hours of relief teaching because there is constant demand to fill the spaces, and the spaces may be being filled, but this problem is building and we see that.

Regional areas have a lack of resources, and some things here go hand in hand for the government. The lack of safety in many regional communities is driving staff away. Staff not feeling safe is a major problem. They cannot take their families into those communities because they do not believe their families will be safe, especially in the north of the state. There is also the issue of accommodation for the staff. We heard about the allowances for teachers in regional areas. I am certain the minister will look at the issue of the difference between the allowances for permanent staff and the allowances for relief teachers. Clearly, the relief teachers are suffering the same shortcomings in those communities.

The member for Central Wheatbelt talked about the issues at Western Australian College of Agriculture in Cunderdin and the government's garnishing of 20 per cent of the funding. Those funds are critical for those agricultural colleges so they can make big purchases. If the college were to buy a large tractor now, it would cost anywhere between \$500 000 and \$1 million, but the state Labor government took money out of that account. It has garnished 20 per cent of that income for a long time, and that money should be put back. It is there to carry those farms through tough times.

The member for Vasse talked about no funding being provided for the growth of KindiLink centres. I thought a critical theme of this government was to get children into appropriate education as soon as possible.

Our side has made compelling arguments. As I say, I do not hold this Minister for Education responsible for the shortcomings of this Labor government. I know that this minister takes his role very seriously and I am encouraged by his focus on the tertiary sector as well, but much more effort needs to be put into schools in Western Australia.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member.

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Early Childhood Education) [6.12 pm]: That was compelling—not at all! I intend to make a really short contribution because I am aware that the Minister for Education wants to respond to the motion and lots of people on this side of the chamber would also like to make a contribution. We have a number of educators who have lived in the real world of education and who actually know about and can generally compare the performance of a Labor government, and how it invests in public education, with the performance of a Liberal government when it is in office. I can personally attest to that, having been a schoolteacher for 27 years. I have experienced significant periods when we have had a Liberal government and a Labor government and, without fail, every single time it is a Labor government that invests in public education because public education is in our DNA. It is what we are born to do because we believe that free, good-quality public education is at the core of equality and providing opportunities for people.

This is my first opportunity to rise as the Minister for Early Childhood Education and speak on the topic since December when I was elevated. I am also the first ever early childhood education minister, and I am very proud of that fact. It signifies, very, very strongly, that early childhood education is a key priority for this government. We know that early childhood education is fundamental to young people—to set them up in their earliest years so that they can achieve as they progress through our public school system. It has been a great privilege to work together with Minister Buti to progress our significant aspirations to continue to make the public school system the best in the country.

I want to speak on a couple of themes. Importantly, too, we must recognise the federal Labor government, which thinks the same as we do about public education. The federal government's priority is very much on early childhood education. It is really important that we are part of the national conversation and investment into the earliest years of a child's education.

I will highlight some of the significant infrastructure investments, particularly for early childhood education, that were in this year's budget. Investments include a \$11.6 million investment to Brabham Primary School to build an offsite early learning facility. I was there with the Minister for Education and the local member, the Deputy Premier. We also invested \$3 million into an early childhood block at Camboon Primary School. Construction has started on a new early childhood block for the South Bunbury Education Support Centre. Construction of an early childhood block has been completed at Kyilla Primary School and Wickham Primary School. In fact, in the 2023–24 budget, there is some \$106 million in infrastructure investments specifically for early childhood education. That, of course, is part of the bigger picture of a \$6.4 billion investment in this year's budget into public education in Western Australia. That is up some \$532 million on the previous year.

I want to mention some good things that are happening in the early childhood education space. Kindergarten is a really successful program in Western Australia. In fact, 95 per cent of our four-year-old kids choose to go into the school setting to get that important education in that year before compulsory schooling. Recently, I announced the new Western Australian kindergarten curriculum guidelines, which is a really important document that further strengthens and supports teachers and educators to develop curriculum that is responsive and most appropriate for the development needs of kindergarten children in Western Australia.

We also released the phonics initiative under the previous Minister for Education and Training, Hon Sue Ellery, which has seen a significant investment in our schools to support teachers to deliver formalised phonics learning to support children in their youngest years to develop good reading and writing skills. It is a great program. I have spoken to many teachers about it, and it is a great investment that this government has made into the early years of education.

The Early Years Partnership that I have spoken about in this place is a partnership between the Minderoo Foundation and the state government, which covers four locations. The first location is Armadale West, and the Minister for Education would know that. The second location is the central great southern, which includes Katanning and the surrounding towns. The third location is in Derby, which takes in Mowanjum and Pandanus Park, and the fourth location is Bidiyadanga. This Early Years Partnership is an incredibly important program whereby families and communities are brought together to develop their own action plans of what they need to support their children from birth to four years old. We will make sure we do everything we can to support those families and communities to get their young children ready for school. Each action plan, whether in Derby or Armadale or Katanning, is slightly different, as it should be, because it has been formulated and guided by the voices of the local families who know best what their children's needs are.

I will also mention the child and parent centres, which are a great initiative. We have a number of them around the state. I have one in my electorate, in Banksia Grove. They are great facilities that are co-located with schools to provide support in a number of areas for families with young children. It makes those important connections into school. Likewise, we have over 50 KindiLink programs running throughout the state, and I have had the privilege to visit Kalgoorlie, Katanning, Broome and Bidiyadanga. KindiLink provides up to six hours of learning a week for young children prior to the compulsory years of schooling, but, importantly, jointly with families to support those children and families to develop a positive relationship with the school that will be ongoing and enduring as they journey through school.

I have noted previously that the Leader of the Liberal Party focuses on KindiLink and child and parent centres. I agree that they are really good things. The Leader of the Liberal Party likes to spruik the point that they were Liberal Party initiatives. Yes, they were Liberal Party initiatives, but they are good things. What I am trying to say is that if she wants to own KindiLink and child and parent centres, she needs to own everything that the Liberal Party did in education. If she is going to spruik KindiLink and child and parent centres as the Liberal Party's, she has to own all of it. The bit I am talking about is the absolute decimation of education assistants out of the system in the Liberal Party's last term of government and the devastating impact that that had on children in classrooms. If she is going to own KindiLink and child and parent centres, she must own the fact that the Liberals decimated the public school system by taking hundreds of education assistants out of the system. Not just teachers, but every parent knows the value of education assistants in every single classroom, particularly for the vulnerable children in our classrooms.

What did we do on coming to government? We put them back. We put over 300 ed assistants back into the classroom. Aboriginal education workers were taken out of the system. Of course, the Liberals did a lot of sly things in taking a whole bunch of teachers out of the system as well. I can talk from experience about the level 3 classroom teacher system. High-achieving classroom teachers were given 0.1 hours of non-teaching time to support and mentor other teachers. The Liberals took that time away from teachers and thought that nobody would notice. There were 1 000 level 3 teachers in the system, so, if we do the maths, that meant that the equivalent of 100 schoolteachers were ripped out of the system by the Liberals taking that time away.

I am happy to speak on this Labor government's record in supporting the public school system. I do not want to go back past 2017; it is too dreary, but I will. If members opposite are going to cherrypick bits of their time in government, I will continue to remind them of the bits that were absolutely devastating to the public school system. This government has spent the last six years rebuilding the system and valuing education assistants and Aboriginal education workers and the critically important work that they do in supporting teachers to support children in the classroom.

MS A.E. KENT (Kalgoorlie) [6.23 pm]: I rise today to add my contribution against the motion that the Cook Labor government is not prioritising students' needs in the WA education system. I came to the position of member for Kalgoorlie from the position of manager of intergovernmental relations with the Department of Education. I spent 13 years in that position and I absolutely loved it. It has been very interesting to sit through this debate and listen to people who think they know quite a lot about education.

Mr P.J. Rundle: She's bitter and twisted because she lost the footy tipping to me!

Ms A.E. KENT: Ha-ha! People who have not worked in the education system seem to think that they have all this knowledge about how the education system works. I am here to tell them that it is quite different being in the system. I got to see firsthand how important education is in the lives of our children and how investing in our education is paramount and what can be achieved when someone understands what drives the system and what results can be derived from that.

In my role, I worked with the commonwealth government to implement what was termed as the Building the Education Revolution, which was led by the then federal Minister for Education, Hon Julia Gillard. Julia Gillard instinctively knew and understood what was required to progress education.

Dr A.D. Buti: Another Welsh.

Ms A.E. KENT: She is! Yes, exactly; we are claiming that, too.

She created, amongst other things, the national partnerships. The Council of Australian Governments national partnerships that I was responsible for implementing with a team across education for quite a number of years included the low socio-economics national partnership, the literacy and numeracy national partnership, and, importantly, because this seems to be a bit of a discussion point today, the universal access throughout the schools national partnership. Not many people would realise this, but prior to 2008–09, children across Australia were not funded to go to preschool. The federal government put into the school system 15 hours of early childhood education a week. We all know how important early childhood education is to our children and to our schools. It was that government back in the day that did that.

From about 2008 to 2013, the national partnerships implemented across the state achieved so many things. Not only did I see those fantastic results being achieved, but, also, unfortunately, I saw what the Liberal governments under Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull did not achieve, as they wound back the funding through the national partnerships. It was such a disappointment.

With my experience and knowledge, I know what working closely with our schools can achieve, and, as the member for Kalgoorlie for the last two and a half years, I would like to tell the house what I have been doing in my electorate.

Firstly, there is the primary school science program. Nine schools within the Kalgoorlie electorate have received funding through this program for science equipment. Boulder Primary School and Kambalda West District High School specifically received funding for classrooms to be converted into science laboratories. The other schools that will receive equipment include Kalgoorlie School of the Air, Leonora District High School, Menzies Community School, Mount Margaret Remote Community School, Norseman District High School, O'Connor Education Support Centre and Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School. These investments help our kids prepare for the jobs of the future and inspire the future chemists, doctors, geologists and miners, who are very important in my area. Let us not forget the \$1 million for the new STEM classroom at Kalgoorlie–Boulder Community High School.

Now let us look at virtual power plants. We have a virtual power plant at the high school and it was closely followed by three at Hannans Primary School, Kalgoorlie Primary School and O'Connor Primary School. We know that a virtual power plant can help a school better manage its energy use, cut its electricity bills and focus on equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to explore new possibilities for WA's energy future.

A priority of mine is helping children deal with their mental health. In late 2021, I met Ashlee Harrison, an inspiring woman from Zero2Hero in Perth, a not-for-profit group that is kicking goals in addressing mental health issues amongst young people. A lot of what this group does was based in the metropolitan area at the time. I was keen to get Zero2Hero to the goldfields. With the help of some wonderful sponsors, we were able to create the inaugural Goldfields Young Heroes Tour for schools. Over 2 600 high school and primary school students last year received much-needed skills to recognise mental health symptoms in themselves and their mates and how to get help. I am incredibly proud of taking these important programs all across my electorate. Every school had a visit from Zero2Hero. The feedback from teachers and students was that it was absolutely fantastic. This year, more schools have taken part in these programs. Moving forward, we will be running them with my help over the next few years.

I have not finished yet. I make sure that every school in my electorate receives \$300 every year. This is provided by way of local business vouchers so that P&Cs can raise funds through raffles et cetera. This is the third year I have been doing this, and schools are really grateful. I was in Norseman last Wednesday and handed over vouchers to the schools. On Thursday I was in Leonora handing out vouchers at Leonora District High School. Schools love these vouchers. It is part of my ongoing interaction with the schools.

Such is my passion for schools and education, I am on the Coolgardie Primary School board. I work with the community. I involve myself. This is what I contribute. I know about education; I have actually worked in the system. I talk to the schools, principals, students and teachers every week. I listen and I act. The Cook government listens and acts. I am very proud to be part of this government that puts so much into education.

MS E.J. KELSBIE (Warren–Blackwood) [6.30 pm]: I want to say with regard to this motion—what a load of old nonsense! It sounds like rubbish to me. The Cook Labor government continues to invest to improve educational outcomes across our state. We invest in education. We understand, unlike those opposite, that investment in education is an investment in the future. The 2023–24 state budget included \$6.4 billion for education—an increase from \$532 million in the 2022–23 budget. We have \$6.8 million for upgrades at agricultural colleges and farm schools around the state. We have over 30 schools in the Warren–Blackwood electorate—primary schools, district high schools, senior high schools, Catholic schools, independent schools, a Steiner school, a nature school and a very much

revered agricultural college in Denmark. I work very closely with these schools. Recently, the Minister for Education visited my electorate twice to meet with and hear from representatives from many of these schools. We toured Pemberton District High School and Mount Barker Community College, and visited Denmark Senior High School.

Pemberton has a strong retention strategy and it is working. Its numbers in the senior years are increasing. The students, teachers and school leaders we met, including students in the classes we joined, talked with animation about a love of their local school. Proud is how I would describe those we met, especially the young folk who recently came joint first in a school robotics challenge. They were proud to show us their robot and their coding, and we saw them in action. Pemberton District High School's vision is to provide a caring, positive and creative learning environment that treats each student as an individual, and to provide tailored educational programs to celebrate their strengths, extend their potential and inspire lifelong learning. We saw this in action.

I recently hosted the Minister for Education in Manjimup, where we held an education round table. Actually, since being elected, this is the third education forum hosted by me with a Minister for Education in the electorate of Warren–Blackwood. We have met with school representatives in Denmark, Walpole, Mt Barker, Margaret River and Augusta. During the last education forum with the current education minister, we met with school leaders and representatives from Boyup Brook, Manjimup, Nannup, Bridgetown, Greenbushes, Pemberton, Balingup and Northcliffe. We met, we talked and we listened. This is what investment in the people on the ground delivering education looks like. This is what investment in the needs of students looks like. It is about listening and learning—listening and learning that helps inform policy decisions.

To say that this government does not prioritise the needs of students is complete nonsense, as I said earlier. It is a load of tosh! Again, we are delivering record dollars—investment—into education across the state.

Recently, the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, or RREAC, as we like to call it, visited the great southern, touring schools in Albany, Mt Barker and Denmark. We came together to share information, knowledge and experiences, capturing accomplishments as well as challenges for the region. I was proud to show my friend and parliamentary colleague the member for Kimberley, Divina D'Anna, around the WA College of Agriculture in Denmark. The member for Kimberley and I were joined by a large cohort from across the state, including representatives from Southern Regional TAFE, the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, Catholic Education Western Australia, universities, the State School Teachers' Union of WA, regional chambers of commerce and Aboriginal education and training interests, to tour the facilities. RREAC provides evidence-based and solutions-focused strategic advice on education and training to the Minister for Education. I was proud for RREAC members to meet and chat with many of the students—students who come from local communities and further afield across our great state to gain a hands-on education with a very strong pipeline to work.

I work closely with the agricultural college, where I believe the previous member for Warren–Blackwood was principal back in the day. Excellence and innovation in agricultural education is what is offered at the WA college of ag over its 560-hectare working farm and educational facility. Spots at this college are highly sought after by students in years 10, 11 and 12. The vision of the school is to educate the rising stars of the agricultural sector in an exceptional specialist school that the industry values, protects and nurtures. This is what RREAC had the pleasure of experiencing—students gain industry-relevant, hands-on education and experiences that give them the best possible opportunity for either undertaking further education or entering the workforce. I am a proud sponsor of the graduation awards for the college. I know that my colleague Hon Sally Talbot is a sponsor of a scholarship for these awards as well. What is clear at the ag college, among other schools in my electorate, is that the needs of students are prioritised. I was also proud to recently join the Minister for Education as he visited the agricultural college in Denmark. He returned to my electorate to meet students and staff and to tour the facilities, including the shearing shed, the trades area and, my favourite, the robotic dairy.

It is evident that students at the college are engaged. They are engaged in their education, respectful of their environment, and keen to learn, graduate and get active in the ag sector. When I ask students what they hope to do after their time at school has finished, many proudly state that they already have jobs lined up. The pipeline to jobs is strong. The principal told the minister and me that industry truly values students coming from the college and that many are offered secure job pathways before they leave. Often, these pathways are created by the college and their work experience program. Often, pathways are sought out by industry proactively contacting the school to find out who the top students are and how to secure them for their businesses.

We have excellence in education at each corner of the electorate. Three schools in the Warren–Blackwood electorate were in the top 75 ranked schools across WA in 2023 by median ATAR scores: Margaret River Senior High School, Manjimup Senior High School and Denmark Senior High School.

My good friend and colleague the member for Albany, Rebecca Stephens, and I have firsthand experience delivering training, education and careers support to students at educational risk in the great southern and goldfields regions. We were responsible for the delivery of alternative engaging pathways in education as part of the Department of Education's participation program, delivering a certificate II in business in Albany and a certificate I in leadership in Kalgoorlie for young people at educational risk. These alternative pathways are important. Not all young people

fit the traditional school model. Some need additional support—mentally, physically and emotionally. We work with local schools, TAFEs, jobs and skills centres, local employers, counselling services, students and their families, where relevant, to support our students to the best possible outcomes for them. I still get messages from some of those students. We prioritised the needs of our students to help them achieve to the best of their abilities. Some of our students had additional learning needs, some were accessing NDIS support, and others had low literacy and numeracy skills. All needed a supported learning environment.

I remind the house that the Cook Labor government is investing \$626.8 million in building and upgrading schools and school facilities, including \$53 million on new and improved infrastructure in regional WA. The total spend to deliver quality education in Western Australian schools has been increased by more than half a billion dollars to \$6.4 billion. Again, this is what investment looks like. This investment prioritises the needs of students across the entire state, including regional Western Australia. I think the motion is rubbish.

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [6.40 pm]: I thank the member for Warren–Blackwood for that outstanding contribution. As she said, I have joined her in her electorate a number of times to talk all matters education. I thank all members who have contributed to the debate, including the member for Cockburn, the member for Kalgoorlie, the Minister for Early Childhood Education and the opposition, led by the opposition spokesperson for education, the member for Roe. We have had a wideranging debate on the motion, so I will not be able to answer all the points made on the various issues raised by the opposition. I thank members who have a keen interest in education, as education is incredibly important for the future of our current and future generations.

The government opposes this motion. How could one even think that the Labor government is neglecting the state education system? I would love to have a few hours to go through all the different points made by the opposition, led by the member for Roe, but I will not have time. It was interesting that the member for Roe cited the State School Teachers' Union of WA. I know very well his hatred of unions, so it was interesting that he referred to the SSTUWA. I have a very good relationship with that union. With regard to the review that he mentioned, I assume that it will be handed down in the next month or so. I met with the union on that. When the report is released, I intend to meet with Dr Lawrence and her team on it.

As mentioned by other members, the most recent budget committed \$6.4 billion to education—the first time it has gone over \$6 billion. How could one say that the government is neglecting the public education system? As Minister for Education, I put up my hand and say that there are enormous challenges in our education system. How can there not be when we have about 837 public schools in a state with a geographical area as large as Western Australia? Members of the opposition have to realise that it is incredibly challenging to provide a quality education system throughout such a geographically large state with a dispersed population, but we are committed to doing that. It is really insincere—one could even say hypocritical—for the opposition to say that the government is not committed to supplying high-quality education to every student in Western Australia, because it knows the challenges from when it was in government. The opposition might have had royalties for regions, but most of that did not go into education. It is not possible in a state the size of Western Australia and with such a dispersed population for every single school, teacher and student to have everything that we want them to have. People in the city cannot have that. However, we are trying to ensure that we do the best job possible. That is why we have invested over \$6 billion in education. That is in the 2023–24 budget and is an increase of \$532 million—a whopping nine per cent increase on the previous budget.

As I said, I will not have time to go through all the issues, but I wanted to allow members of the opposition and on our side to raise the issues they wanted to raise about education in Western Australia. At the top of my presentation, I thank all the principals, all the teachers, all the parents and citizens associations, all the school boards, all the education assistants, all the AIEOs, all the cleaners, all the gardeners, all the frontline office staff, everyone who works in the Department of Education, and everyone who works in statewide services. Thank you for what you do for Western Australian education. It is a challenging job, but it is one of the most important jobs that any person in the public service of Western Australia can do. I know the member for Roe's wife, Andrea, is a committed educationalist. She has done some outstanding work, and it was a privilege to go out last week to meet the WA state school sports people at what was formerly Tuart College. Besides the office staff, the board or the committee are all volunteers. I thank them for all the work they have done.

Let us try to go through part of what the motion talked about—our so-called neglect. An amount of \$6.4 billion certainly does not show that we have neglected the education system. In the delivery of education, one of the hallmarks of this government is the quality teaching strategy. A key component of that strategy is to strengthen a profession-led model of support, built on quality teaching strategy–led schools. This is where we are trying to ensure that we provide sustainable leadership and teaching strategies to deliver high-quality education. That includes the annual delivery of \$1 million for the second iteration of the WA Centre for Excellence in Explicit Teaching of Literacy, \$2.5 million over five years for the phonics initiative, and a state government commitment of \$44.4 million over five years to expand education adjustment allocation funding for public schools to enable staff to provide targeted support for students who need it. That has allowed us to increase additional support for the lowest 15 per cent of students in NAPLAN; previously, it was 10 per cent.

The member for Roe mentioned a speech I made at the Western Australian Primary Principals' Association in which I talked about the importance of that allocation. I also talked about funding for students with special or complex needs and disabilities. We work on a medical model, so there needs to be a diagnosis before the extra funding can be provided. I am looking into the issue of whether we can adjust that and look at a functional model, but there are major budgetary considerations involved in that. I will work alongside the Minister for Disability Services, who is a passionate advocate for people with disabilities in Western Australia. We are looking at what we can do to ensure that students with disabilities, complex needs and undiagnosed needs can be properly supported and funded. I am incredibly committed to that mission.

The Western Australian government in 2021 committed \$185.5 million to recurrent election commitments over five years. This included a number of new and expanded statewide initiatives related to student support and wellbeing. We know that the wellbeing of students has become an incredibly important focus, and we are very, very committed to that. I talked about the education adjustment allowance; there is an individual ability allocation, and the student-centred funding model provides flexibility to ensure that each school can cater for the specific needs of their students, but I also want to look at what else we can do in that space. We also provided a further \$18.2 million in the 2022–23 budget to increase the number of specialist learning programs for students with autism spectrum disorder. This government initiative is incredibly important.

In recent headlines, there has been a major focus on domestic and family violence. Our government has been rolling out the respectful relationships teaching support program. No previous government did that; we did that. We will continue to look at what we can do to ensure that our students understand the importance of respectful relationships. From next year, there will be a mandated consent program in our curriculum, which Hon Nick Goiran lampooned and criticised. How he could do that is shameful. I do not want to be sidetracked by this point, but when we compare the federal education policies of the Liberals with Labor's—in the higher education space, also—the conservatives are driven by ideology, while we are driven by a commitment to provide the highest quality education for students.

I work very closely with the Minister for Early Childhood Education. She mentioned the previous Liberal government's slashing of education assistants. That was ideologically driven because it wanted to damage one of the unions representing the education system. That is just deplorable. There might be a difference of opinion about educational strategies, and there will be. It is interesting. The discussion and debate on various education systems is a contested space—I get that—but it is very disappointing when the policies of the conservatives in the federal and state spheres are driven by political ideology and not education ideology. That is an incredible disappointment. I challenge the opposition to show when WA Labor has instigated educational policy based on political ideology. I think they would have a very hard time doing that, but we would easily be able to identify where that has been the case.

[Interruption.]

Dr D.J. Honey: God's got another view!

Dr A.D. BUTI: That is right!

As I said, I really do not have time to go through what I really want to. The government made a major commitment regarding school psychologists. The opposition rightfully brought up the issue of teacher shortages and so forth, which I will talk about in the few minutes I have left. I was at an education forum a few weeks ago in the electorate of Kalamunda with the member for Kalamunda. I was sitting with a principal. One principal rightly made the point that if the teachers are not there, they are not there. As the Minister for Education, I cannot suddenly snap my fingers and make those teachers arrive. There is a worldwide shortage of teachers. This is not even just in Australia. Apart from maybe Ireland, where there seems to be a surplus, there is a worldwide shortage of teachers. However, we have put in place a number of strategies to try to alleviate that issue. We have an international recruitment program going. I think that the member for Roe draws a long bow to say that the announcement by the former Premier in February 2022 is the reason that we have a teacher shortage today. I really do not think that is the case.

As the member knows well, and I think one of his colleagues mentioned, the decrease in the number of graduates from our schools of education is a major issue. There has been a significant decrease in teaching graduates from our universities. That has correlated with the increase in the qualification requirement from a one-year diploma of education to a two-year master's degree. Universities are debating that because, of course, they have a particular interest in that. However, I think we really need to look at whether we need that two-year master's degree. I thought it was a good idea when it was first proposed because it might have increased status and expertise, but listening to principals and teachers, the quality of students coming out from the two-year master's course does not appear to be better than those with the one-year diploma of education.

One thing we need to look at, and it was mentioned in the national report by vice-chancellor and principal professor, Mark Scott, is improving the quality of teacher training in schools. There is one thing about which I will drill the deans of education. I have already raised this issue, and I know the Minister for Disability Services will be interested in this: apart from one university, universities do not allow their trainee teachers to do practicum teaching at an education support centre or a special school. I will ask them for evidence that this is not the case, but I have now been

told this by at least three principals from education support centres or special schools. If that is true, it is absolutely shameful. It does not allow us to train teachers to operate in education support centres and special schools, nor does it improve those teachers' abilities to cope with mainstreaming when there is an increase in students with complex needs. I am sure the members for Roe, Cottesloe and North West Central would support me in prosecuting the case because if it is true, it is absolutely shameful.

I turn to capital works. There has been \$1.2 billion for capital works. The issues of Como Secondary College and Esperance Senior High School came up. I do not disagree that Como Secondary College, Esperance Senior High School and Kent Street Senior High School all need work. There will not be an argument from me that they do not, but there is always an issue with state governments of unlimited demand and limited resources. That is the basic rule of economics. We would not need economics if we did not have unlimited demand but limited supply. That is just what we have, so we must prioritise. I agree with the member for Roe. As he mentioned, I have had discussions with people in Esperance. I have been to Como, and today I was with the member for Victoria Park at Kent Street. The communities of Kent Street Senior High School and Como Secondary College are very lucky to have incredible, strong local members. I will give it to the member for Roe that he has been advocating for Esperance, and he will keep advocating for Esperance, as he should do. We put on about four or five new schools every year, and we have a continuing maintenance program. Every school I go to presents a case that can be justified, so we need to prioritise the body of work.

I think I have about half a minute left. The member for Cottesloe talked about the sharing of school facilities and ovals. I am a big believer in and supporter of that. I think school resources should be shared by the community. Performing arts centres and school ovals should be shared by the community. It helps improve the linkage between the community and the school, and I am sure it has particular benefits in regional centres. As the Minister for Education, I am very committed to ensuring the best quality education and that every student who goes to school in Western Australia achieves their potential. That is why I also instigated the post-secondary pathway for our students, as I think some of the practices and offers of our universities do not provide incentives or motivation to ensure that every student, whatever their course, aptitude or capacity, achieves their best possibility.

I thank all members for their contributions. We completely reject the premise of the motion. I know members who spoke today, and I think all members—even though I do not agree with some of the comments made by the opposition—are passionate about education.

One final thing: agricultural colleges are incredibly important. I have visited the one in Denmark. They do outstanding work. I am also committed to seeing what we can do in that space.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Did you shear a sheep while you were down in Denmark agricultural college?

Dr A.D. BUTI: No. I wanted to, but I did not have time. I will come to Katanning; I will come to the farm to do that!

I think I should call it to an end. I am proud to be the Minister for Education in the Cook Labor government. As the Minister for Early Childhood Education said, public education is in the DNA of Labor members.

MR T.J. HEALY (Southern River — Parliamentary Secretary) [6.59 pm]: The member for Cottesloe talks about sharing spaces, but all schools that have public-private partnerships struggle now to share their schools. I thought I would throw that one in briefly.

Debate adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

House adjourned at 7.00 pm
