



Parliamentary Debates

(HANSARD)

FORTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday, 21 March 2024

Legislative Assembly

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THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) took the chair at 9.00 am, acknowledged country and read prayers.

PAPERS TABLED

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

CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE FUND — APPLICATION ROUND

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldvis — Minister for Environment) [9.02 am]: A new round of the Cook government's Clean Energy Future Fund is now open for applications. This fund is an important part of the Cook government's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The fund supports innovative projects to decarbonise existing industry, develop new renewable energy businesses and improve energy efficiency. As part of the sectoral emissions reduction strategy released in December 2023, the state government is investing an additional \$18 million to 2031 to expand the Clean Energy Future Fund to help develop the technologies necessary for the transition to net zero emissions. The expansion increases the total value of the fund to \$37 million, with \$21.7 million now available for allocation over future funding rounds.

This current funding round will enable organisations to embark on clean energy projects that provide new local renewable energy options and improve energy security and reliability, while also strengthening our economy. As the Minister for Energy; Climate Action, I have identified a number of priorities for this round, including projects that are led by First Nations people, are in regional and remote Western Australia, improve the security and resilience of our electricity networks, enhance energy efficiency, support the transition from diesel electricity generation and provide long-duration energy storage.

To date, the fund has awarded \$12 million to eight clean energy projects. Each year, these projects will save 163 000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to taking 52 000 cars off the road. They will generate or save 133 000 megawatt hours of power—enough to power 26 000 Western Australian homes. Examples of successful projects from two previous funding rounds include a mini pumped hydro energy storage system near Walpole; a wind, solar and battery microgrid incorporating biogas for industry in Moora; and a five-megawatt re-deployable solar installation by Nomadic Energy at Northern Star's Carosue Dam mine site.

The Clean Energy Future Fund unlocks new technologies to support Western Australia's renewable energy boom. It plays an important complementary role to the Cook government's \$700 million investment in transforming the state's main electricity network, as announced at the end of last year, and the \$3 billion our government has secured in low-cost finance from the commonwealth government's Rewiring the Nation program for transmission infrastructure in the Pilbara. The Cook government is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and is establishing this target in legislation that is currently before Parliament. By working together, the Western Australian government and industry can position the state to maximise the energy transition's economic opportunities and reach net zero emissions as soon as possible.

ADOPTION RESEARCH AND COUNSELLING SERVICE — ADOPTION JIGSAW

Statement by Minister for Child Protection

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Child Protection) [9.05 am]: I rise today, on the eleventh anniversary of the national apology for forced adoptions, to recognise survivors and update the house on significant changes to support services. Today I provide my heartfelt thanks to Adoption Jigsaw, which recently ceased its services after 46 years of providing support and services to the adoption community. Since 1978, Jigsaw has played a critical role in advocating for legislative reforms and the rights of adopted adults, birth parents and adoptive parents in the WA community. In more recent years, Jigsaw transitioned to a service offering search, mediation and counselling, and conducted over 4 700 reconnections for those involved in adoptions. I want to provide special acknowledgement of Isabel Andrews, the former manager of Jigsaw. Isabel has worked in the adoption field since 1985—a steward of the sector, her absence will not go unnoticed. I also acknowledge researcher Ann Allpike and the rest of the team for their tireless efforts and wish them all the best in their retirement.

Jigsaw has walked alongside individuals and their families for decades, providing support and understanding for individuals who needed it most. The state government recognises that people affected by past adoption practices have a need for ongoing support, and that continuity of services is crucial. On that basis, I am pleased to announce that the state government has funded a new service to ensure that those affected receive the support they need. The Adoption Research and Counselling Service will receive funding for two years to provide fee-free counselling for individuals impacted by forced adoptions. ARCS is now taking referrals to this service statewide, with telehealth

appointments available for residents of regional and remote communities. We know that for some people, accessing counselling can be cost prohibitive. I hope this service ensures that those in need can access ongoing counselling support.

The Cook Labor government remains committed to supporting survivors of forced adoptions through the provision of services to those affected and by progressing work from the 2018 statutory review of the Adoption Act 1994. I also acknowledge the work being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in the other place that is focused on past forced adoptive policies and practices, and will consider its recommendations upon completion of its inquiries. I am working alongside community services ministers around the nation who have also reaffirmed their commitment to support survivors, making forced adoptions an area of focus for 2024.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — MENTAL HEALTH UNIT — REFURBISHMENT

Statement by Minister for Mines and Petroleum

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Mines and Petroleum) [9.08 am]: On behalf of the Minister for Health; Mental Health, I rise to update the house on the refurbishment of Perth Children's Hospital's inpatient unit, ward 5A. Perth Children's Hospital's ward 5A will undergo an upgrade to ensure that it continues to meet the contemporary needs of its patients as part of the Cook government's commitment to improving mental health facilities for children and adolescents. Of the ward's 20 mental health beds, 12 will be temporarily moved to Hollywood Private Hospital in October 2024 to allow for the upgrades to take place. The 12 beds at Hollywood Private Hospital will continue to be staffed by existing experienced child and adolescent mental health clinicians employed by the Child and Adolescent Health Service. Those 12 beds will cater for children and adolescents aged 14 to 16 years, while the other eight beds will remain open at Perth Children's Hospital for children aged 13 and under and non-voluntary patients. The upgrade will help to ensure that children and their families and carers can access equitable, timely and quality mental health care, and will include the creation of more therapeutic and activity spaces and provide more flexibility in how spaces are used to suit patient needs. This refurbishment is part of the government's commitment to transform the WA mental health system, following the report of the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents aged 0–18 years in WA.

ROAD SAFETY — FIRST AID AWARENESS

Statement by Minister for Road Safety

MR D.R. MICHAEL (Balcatta — Minister for Road Safety) [9.10 am]: Last Friday, 15 March, I attended the St John Ambulance headquarters in Belmont along with our local member Cassie Rowe, the member for Belmont, for an important launch event that will lead to lives being saved on our roads. We met two inspirational people, Nicole Tolhurst and Rod Baltovich, the total stranger who saved her life after a car crash because a first aid course was fresh in his memory. When Mr Baltovich saw her Kia Mentor collide with another vehicle at a Palmyra intersection and then crash into a brick wall, he did not hesitate to help. Ms Tolhurst was slumped over the steering wheel and turning blue until her rescuer leaned in through the passenger side and lifted her head up to a normal position, allowing her to start breathing. He then called 000 and stayed by her side until paramedics arrived to take over. Ms Tolhurst survived, and she and her rescuer are still in touch, many years after the crash.

This real-life scenario was the inspiration for a new television campaign, Anyone Can Save a Life, which is a partnership between the Road Safety Commission and St John WA. It encourages all drivers, but particularly new drivers, to learn a few simple techniques that could save a life after a crash. We know that about 15 per cent of road deaths could be avoided with early first aid intervention, particularly to address blocked airways. The key message in this campaign is that it is important to refresh first aid knowledge, and St John WA has made this easy with a short online course. I have completed this course myself and found that a few things have changed over the years, so I would highly recommend it. The course is free, and it takes only 15 minutes.

Since St John WA launched the first version of this online course, more than 170 000 people have taken the time to learn the skills to potentially save a life. Thanks to the Road Safety Commission, this knowledge will now reach a broader audience. Post-crash response is one of the five priorities of the state government's Driving Change road safety strategy. The first few minutes after a crash can be the difference between life and death.

I would like to remind everyone that Easter is next week, and WA roads will be extra busy. Double demerits will be in force from Thursday, 28 March to Monday, 1 April. The Easter break may also be an opportunity to visit the St John WA First Aid for Me website and look for the 15-minute courses. It might be the most important 15 minutes of your life.

SOCIAL HOUSING — ELIGIBILITY

Statement by Minister for Housing

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [9.12 am]: I rise to update the house on the Cook government's ongoing commitment to ensuring access to safe and affordable housing for all Western Australians. The Cook

government is again increasing the income eligibility limits for social housing, marking another step forward in our efforts to support vulnerable individuals and families. Effective from 20 March 2024, the income eligibility limits for social housing will see a \$9 increase for single-income households and a \$14 increase for dual-income households. This adjustment is crucial in ensuring that those who rely solely on commonwealth statutory benefits remain eligible for the vital support provided by social housing.

It is important to recognise the context in which these changes are being made. This is very critical. Over its eight years in office, the previous Liberal–National government neglected to address the stagnant income eligibility limits, leaving vulnerable members of our community without adequate support. Not once did it raise the eligibility limits. In contrast, since taking office in March 2017, the Cook Labor government has increased social housing eligibility limits five times, reflecting our unwavering dedication to supporting those in need.

Our government’s commitment to ensuring access to safe, affordable and sustainable housing for Western Australians remains unchanged. These changes are in line with rising income support payment rates, ensuring that we continue to support those who rely on commonwealth income support.

HOUSING — STATEWIDE BUILDERS PANEL

Statement by Minister for Housing

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Housing) [9.14 am]: I rise to update the house on the Cook government’s ongoing commitment to accelerate social housing delivery across Western Australia. I am pleased to announce that an additional 53 Western Australian builders have been appointed to our statewide builders panel, further expanding capacity to deliver social housing. This expansion of our statewide builders panel follows a successful expression of interest process, bringing the total number of builders on the panel to 145. We sought expressions of interest from registered builders of all sizes, ensuring that small, medium and large builders alike have the opportunity to contribute to our record \$2.6 billion investment in housing and homelessness services.

Established in late 2022, the statewide builders panel plays a pivotal role in supporting the delivery and refurbishment of social housing. Builders appointed to the panel have the opportunity to participate in refurbishment, construct-only and design-and-construct projects, providing a diverse range of expertise within the industry. One of the key objectives of our panel procurement process was to simplify the qualification process, particularly for smaller scale and regional contractors. This approach not only encourages broader participation, but also cuts red tape for builders, streamlining the process for taking on government contracts and delivering social housing dwellings across the state.

I am pleased that an additional 53 small and medium builders, including many family-owned Western Australian businesses, have joined the statewide builders panel. With more than 140 builders now pre-approved to deliver and refurbish social housing in WA, we are very much well on our way to achieving the target of 4 000 social dwellings. The statewide builders panel illustrates our government’s reforms and commitment to addressing housing and homelessness challenges in Western Australia. Our record \$2.6 billion investment is creating real-world change right now, ensuring that Western Australians are provided safe, secure and sustainable housing.

EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY

Grievance

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [9.16 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Veterans Issues and relates to equine therapy and its profound benefits, especially for those with mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress syndrome. I would like to highlight how equine therapy can be used to provide assistance to our veterans, who have served our nation.

In Helensburgh, New South Wales, a registered not-for-profit called Horse Aid runs a program for veterans and first responders suffering from serious mental health challenges. Participants work with re-homed ex-racehorses to learn about communication and emotions and building trust, patience and confidence. I learned about this program when I read a news article about the efficacy of this style of treatment for PTSD experienced by veterans, which had been captured by an Australian filmmaker, Nick Barkla, in his beautiful and hugely impactful documentary *The Healing*. Horse Aid’s founder, retired mounted police officer Scott Brodie, pairs traumatised veterans with ex-racehorses in NSW. The approximately 120 to 150 participants a year, who are often not coping, come in small groups for a week at a time and find Scott’s alternative therapy of working with horses to be truly transformational and, in the participant’s own words in the film, “lifesaving”.

In my electorate of Belmont, there are many service men and women who have served our country in war and, having returned home to their lives, are dealing with many mental and physical injuries. The repercussions of their experiences in active service are staggering; divorce, depression, abuse, fear and anxiety occur at some of the highest rates ever seen. Tragically, as I am sure the minister is aware, in Australia, male veterans have a suicide rate 27 per cent higher than that of the general population, and the suicide rate for female veterans is 107 per cent higher than that of the general population.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs Houston branch began referring veterans to equine therapy back in 2022, noting —

“Evidence-based talk psychotherapies for trauma are effective, but we know not every Veteran wants to address their trauma by sitting down in an office or virtual appointment with VA,” ... “Equine-assisted therapy is a great alternative approach that allows Veterans to address their trauma in a hands-on way, alongside other Veterans who understand their story.”

Research published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* in 2021 showed that equine therapy can jump-start, for want of a better term, the healing process for veterans who suffer from PTSD. Dr Yuval Neria, professor of medical psychology and director of Columbia University’s PTSD program, stated —

Both PTSD patients and horses are preoccupied with ongoing concerns about trust and safety. This innovative therapy facilitates bonding, overcoming fear, and re-establishing confidence.

Closer to home, in 2019, RSL LifeCare in Picton, New South Wales, offered equine therapy. Racing NSW supplied off-track horses deemed unsuitable for racing and relatively untrained and unruly—much like many of us in here today! Participants learnt to bond with and train the horses, and while concentrating on the horses’ wellbeing and progress, their minds were not wandering into deep and intrusive thoughts. Interestingly, I learnt that the person who runs this program had participated in Horse Aid with Scott Brodie. He was so moved by that experience that he went on to establish his own equine therapy for returned servicemen.

I was recently privileged to meet Jennifer Erwin, a Western Australian veteran of the Royal Australian Navy who served from 2006 to 2016, and hear of her personal experience of equine therapy. Her first experience was a five-day onsite equine therapy program in 2016 with a company based on the east coast. She explained how the program changed her life and said that if she had not experienced it, she doubted that she would still be here today. Jennifer engaged in traditional therapy, and still does, but explained that due to the severity of her trauma, she was unable to be sufficiently present in the moment to benefit from cognitive behaviour therapy until she had undergone equine therapy.

The current focus on treatment of mental health, PTSD and trauma related to service does not include equine-associated therapy and does not deliver the benefits that could immediately help to manage and heal and deal with mental health issues that our service men and women live with each day.

In my electorate of Belmont, I have two racecourses and a stabling precinct. Racing and horses are a part of the fabric of my community.

I ask the minister whether it would be possible for the government to explore equine therapy and programs, similar to Horse Aid, here in WA, whereby ex-racehorses are given a second chance as they work alongside traumatised veterans on the journey towards healing. I thank the minister for taking my grievance.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Veterans Issues) [9.22 am]: I thank the member for her grievance. It is an interesting suggestion and proposal. I also thank her for drawing to my attention the documentary *The Healing*, which is the work of Nick Barkla, and the insight she has given us into the instances in which equine therapy is being employed in Australia for veteran healing.

Taking a moment of reflection, members are probably familiar with Riding for the Disabled. It has had a change of name here in WA to Horse Power, but the organisation still exists around the country. It was established after World War I as a means of treating returned soldiers who were suffering from shell shock, which it was called at that time. It is a long-established principle that equine therapy is a valuable tool in assisting people who suffer from trauma. I recognise and acknowledge that and the opportunity that it represents.

I will update the house on what we have done in the veterans issues portfolio in Western Australia. Since coming to office, our government has increased the funding for the veterans issues portfolio fourfold. Initially, the government contributed \$300 000 a year to the Anzac Day Trust, which then disbursed grants. At the last election, we increased that to \$1.3 million a year.

The Anzac Day Trust is a vehicle through which money is disbursed to efforts in Western Australia to support veterans, noting that veteran support is a federal government responsibility. My predecessor, Hon Peter Tinley, and I have made it a focus of our efforts, noting that we have a relatively small role in it, to assist living veterans and provide additional support when we can to veterans and families in Western Australia. We try to fill gaps where the federal government and Department of Veterans’ Affairs are perhaps not as active as we might be.

There is a board for the Anzac Day Trust—volunteers who are great people—and it disburses money to support things like the veterans employment program. It was established in collaboration with the RSL and a company called Working Spirit, which is run by Karyn Hiner, who is a great Western Australian veteran. It places veterans and their families in job opportunities with employers who want to employ veterans across the full spectrum of the economy in Western Australia. Last year, it placed more than 100 Western Australian veterans and family members into jobs. That is a great outcome.

Every year, the Anzac Day Trust funds the operational costs of the Legacy WA Busselton Camp. That is a place where orphans, widows and family members are given an opportunity for respite and camps. We took away from Legacy the cost of having to fundraise to operate that camp. The CEO of Legacy WA, Matt Granger, has been a great partner in that collaboration.

We are establishing the Andrew Russell Veteran's Living Program in Western Australia, which is a collaboration between the RAAF Association and Kylie Russell, to provide accommodation and wraparound services for veterans who are challenged with housing to get themselves back on their feet and back into the community in a self-sustaining fashion. We are also focusing on the prison system, because it has been demonstrated in South Australia that veterans coming out of prison are particularly vulnerable. That is a fantastic partnership. RAAFA's CEO, Michelle Fyfe, is working collaboratively with the Anzac Day Trust and the Western Australian state government to deliver that program.

A psychiatric assistance dog program has been established here in WA. For the first time, veterans will not have to travel to the east coast to be matched with a dog. Kai Zen K9 and the RSLWA have partnered in that with funding from the Anzac Day Trust.

Those are the things that we are doing. We encourage individual providers to partner up with big ex-service organisations that provide administrative support and probity around funding that comes from the taxpayer to deliver programs. I think equine therapy for veterans here in Western Australia is an opportunity for someone to establish a similar program to those I have just outlined—supported by our state government and the Anzac Day Trust. I encourage them to consider coming forward and partnering up with one of the bigger ex-service organisations to support them. If there is an equine therapy provider out there, I encourage it to get involved. I have asked our veterans issues staff in Defence West to explore the field in Western Australia. I know there are equine therapy providers here. We will seek them out and find out whether there is someone interested in establishing a program focused on supporting veterans. It could potentially be a really good contribution. I thank the member—it is a wonderful idea and hopefully we can establish a program that we do not currently have in Western Australia and replicate what has been experienced in New South Wales.

SCHOOL CROSSING — STIRLING HIGHWAY, PEPPERMINT GROVE

Grievance

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [9.29 am]: My grievance is to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Transport. I thank her for taking my grievance. I bring to her attention the pressing issues surrounding the children's school crossing on Stirling Highway situated directly outside Presbyterian Ladies' College in Peppermint Grove.

We all know that governments of both sides have encouraged students to walk or ride to school. However, students must be able to do that safely. Not only is this crossing vital for the safety of the students attending Presbyterian Ladies' College, but also it serves the nearby North Cottesloe Primary School. The parliamentary secretary may recall that this matter was previously discussed with the Minister for Police, Hon Paul Papalia. On that occasion, the main issue of concern was the resignation of the local traffic warden, which had caused the Western Australia Police Force to stop staffing the crossing due to requirements that two traffic wardens must always be present. This resulted in the school and its principal, Ms Cate Begbie, having to personally operate the crossing. As members can imagine, that presented all sorts of safety issues for students and staff alike. The staff had no power to stop the traffic and relied simply on the good nature of drivers to stop on Stirling Highway.

Despite efforts made since then, the situation has unfortunately deteriorated. Recent incidents including significant crashes and injuries to wardens underscore the urgent need for action. Last November, in a harrowing event, a traffic warden was struck by the wing mirror of a passing vehicle, resulting in severe injury that caused him to resign from his position as traffic warden. Consequently, the crossing was again closed, as two traffic wardens are required to operate it. This left the operation of the crossing once again to the school and its principal. Despite warnings from the WA Police Force advising against its use due to these safety concerns and recent incidents, the crossing remains indispensable to the large number of students who access essential transportation services. The main bus stop is immediately adjacent to the school on the other side of the highway. Attempts to redirect students to alternative signalised crossings have proved impractical, jeopardising their safety and disrupting transportation schedules. The controlled crossing points are both 600 metres from the children's crossing, representing a 1.2-kilometre detour for the students.

The gravity of this situation cannot be overstated, with over 31 000 vehicles traversing the dual carriageway daily at speeds exceeding 60 kilometres an hour. Efforts by law enforcement—that is, the police—including a recent speed trap operation have shed light on the alarming frequency of speeding violations in the area. The staggering number of fines issued within a brief time frame underscores the potential for catastrophic outcomes, especially considering the vulnerable pedestrians involved. I explained that the crossing is 600 metres downhill from a major set of traffic lights, and vehicles gain considerable velocity on that road. This speed trap resulted in the issuing of a shocking 401 speeding fines in a matter of only 80 minutes, with most cars travelling some 20 kilometres an hour over the

speed limit. As I am sure members can imagine, hitting a child or a traffic warden at this speed would end in absolute catastrophe. Two cars during this period of 80 minutes were caught travelling at 30 to 40 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. We can only imagine the damage that would cause if one of those vehicles hit a student or a traffic warden.

Last year, I was invited by the school to come down at the end of the school day and personally assist in helping the girls cross the road so that I could see the chaos for myself. I personally witnessed the chaos during school dismissal, and I can attest to the urgency of finding a solution. The unique challenges posed by this crossing demand innovative solutions to mitigate risk and prevent a tragedy from occurring. I believe that the school's plea for a signalised pedestrian crossing or alternative infrastructure such as a bridge or tunnel across Stirling Highway is a reasonable and proactive step towards ensuring the safety of all stakeholders. These measures would not only safeguard students and traffic wardens, but also alleviate the persistent threat of traffic accidents. There is a significant number of accidents at the crossing due to traffic being stopped. In light of these dangers, I implore the parliamentary secretary to work with the minister to prioritise the enhancement of safety measures at this crossing point without delay. The lives and wellbeing of these children depend on swift and decisive action. I thank the parliamentary secretary for taking my grievance.

MS M.J. HAMMAT (Mirrabooka — Parliamentary Secretary) [9.34 am]: I thank the member for bringing the grievance today. As the member noted, I am responding today on behalf of the Minister for Transport, who sends her apologies. She is unable to be here today to respond to it.

I thank the member for outlining his concerns. In doing that, he also referred to the grievance that he raised in this place I believe in February last year to the Minister for Police, in which he outlined the challenging circumstances that the students who rely on that crossing are experiencing.

The safety of our roads, and particularly the safety of vulnerable road users like pedestrians, is of great importance to our government. As the member noted, Stirling Highway is a primary distributor road and one of the key corridors for people who travel in the western suburbs and through the Fremantle area. As he rightly identified, it is a busy highway. It has a posted speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour, with two lanes of traffic travelling in both directions. The advice I have been given is that Main Roads records indicate an average of about 31 064 vehicles travelling through that area every day, so it is a busy stretch of road.

I note the member's comments about the traffic warden who was injured I think he said in November of last year. Along with the member and everyone in this place, I wish that person well for their recovery. I appreciate the concerns that the member has raised about the safety of both pedestrians and those wardens.

I have been advised that the data is that in a five-year reporting period to 31 December 2023, there were about 11 crashes recorded in that location, and none of those involved pedestrians, as such. I agree with the member that we do not want to wait until there is a serious injury before taking steps. That is why the strategy has been to have in place a traffic warden-controlled crossing on Stirling Highway near the intersection of McNeil Street, which services primarily Presbyterian Ladies' College but also the primary school that the member mentioned as well.

The current arrangement is considered safe when there is a guard in attendance. I note the member's concerns about the lack of a guard, and I note that was the issue he raised in February 2023, and that there have been concerns about the lack of a guard for some time. I also note the member's concerns about speeding. I will not comment specifically on that because it is a police matter, but clearly some attention has been paid to that matter as well.

Unfortunately, the lack of traffic wardens is not unique to this intersection. I note that many other communities and members are also seeking traffic wardens for schools in their areas. I know that this is something the Minister for Police has been working very hard to address. Those concerns about shortages apply to not only that crossing but also others.

Specifically in relation to the crossing on Stirling Highway that the member has raised today, I can advise that in May 2023, Main Roads undertook a review of the school zone that has been established on Stirling Highway around Presbyterian Ladies' College. The review identified that a section of highway between Airlie Street and Forrest Street did meet the requirements for a school zone. That section includes the aforementioned crossing. That new school zone became operational in August 2023, and the speed limit for that section of Stirling Highway is now 40 kilometres an hour during school hours, slowing the traffic to improve the safety of children who are crossing the road. Static signs advising of the new speed limit were installed first so that the speed reduction would be in place as quickly as possible; shortly afterwards, they were replaced with the electronic school zone signs.

In the absence of a crossing guard, alternative signalised crossing locations are located approximately 500 metres either side of the crossing, as the member identified, at the traffic signals of Eric Street and Osborne Parade to the north and Napoleon Street and Leake Street to the south.

Main Roads works very closely with the police and the Department of Education around this issue in particular, and this specific crossing will be raised at the next Children's Crossings and Road Safety Committee meeting. I can also confirm that we will work with Main Roads and the school to see what further improvements we can make—

notwithstanding that since the member raised the grievance last year, we have taken steps to slow the traffic in that portion of the road. We will see what further improvements, by working with Main Roads and the school, can be made. Signals could be an option that is considered as part of that.

In terms of member's specific recommendation about whether the installation of a bridge or an underpass could be investigated, I note that the site is a bit constrained, and that currently the future planning for this section of Stirling Highway does not include any kind of pedestrian overpass or underpass. The member would be familiar with this section of the road and would appreciate that it may not be easy to install or construct such a treatment that he suggests.

I want to thank the member for bringing this grievance today. Thank you for raising the issue. I assure the member that Main Roads will continue to investigate the most appropriate treatments for this area, and we will work with the school to find suitable solutions. The Deputy Premier will of course continue to liaise with Main Roads, the Minister for Police and Minister for Road Safety on options and initiatives that could improve safety right around the state for our most vulnerable road users—in particular, schoolchildren who we want to encourage to walk or ride to school. I thank the member for bringing this grievance. As I say, we have made improvements already, but we will continue to work with the member's school community and Main Roads to find further improvements to ensure the safety of those students.

CHILD PROTECTION — CASEWORKER WORKLOAD — KIMBERLEY

Grievance

MS D.G. D'ANNA (Kimberley — Parliamentary Secretary) [9.41 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Child Protection. I believe this is a crucial issue that deserves some attention, and that is the need for more support for our frontline workers in the Department of Communities. I thank the minister for taking my grievance.

I would like to start by saying that the care and protection of our children is important. It is essential that we provide the necessary resources to ensure their safety and wellbeing with their families, and on-country when possible. It is no secret that the number of children requiring intervention and protection services is greater than what we would like. When we speak of child protection, we are not merely speaking about numbers or statistics; we are talking about the safety, wellbeing and future of our children.

Every child deserves to grow up in a nurturing and supportive environment that fosters and enhances their development into adulthood and gets them on a path that leads to better life outcomes. The demand for frontline workers who work directly with these vulnerable children and families is at an all-time high. We need more frontline workers who can respond swiftly and effectively to families and children who are referred to the department. It is important that these frontline workers support the families, and part of their role is to ensure safety and wellbeing, to advocate for these families and children and to support these families in many different facets. They also need to be culturally sensitive. Early intervention and prevention is key.

The current workforce in the child protection sector is overwhelmed and understaffed. Caseloads of frontline workers can sometimes be quite straining on some of these child protection workers, and I know a few of them throughout the Kimberley. This strain can sometimes lead to burnout, but, most importantly, it can compromise a worker's effectiveness when addressing the needs of our vulnerable children and families. I believe it is imperative that steps are put in place to reduce the pressure on some of our workers. We need to ease caseloads of existing workers, which means more intensive supports to families. Supporting families is a significant part of the role of a child protection worker. Supporting families and overcoming challenges may impact a parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. The support might involve connecting families with community resources, such as counselling or other support services that can help address issues such as poverty, substance abuse or mental health problems. By focusing on strengthening families, child protection workers can prevent situations that lead to harm or neglect.

Early intervention services in child protection are proven to be vital in addressing some of the complex and social issues across WA, particularly for Aboriginal children and families. We also need to emphasise the importance of cross-agency support and acknowledge the collaborative work that is currently being done to enable better outcomes for the families and children involved. We cannot expect one agency to bear the weight of this responsibility alone. It requires a unified effort, with stakeholders from various sectors coming together to share resources, expertise and information. Cross-agency partnerships are of vital importance to address the multifaceted issues surrounding child protection. Collaboration with child protection services, law enforcement, healthcare providers, educators, community organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations is essential to create a safety net that leaves no child behind. By working together, we can provide a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to child protection. Moreover, we must acknowledge the importance of local employment in this sector.

As I mentioned before, I know many local DCP workers in the Kimberley. In my electorate of the Kimberley, we have child protection officers in Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek and Kununurra. Recruiting and retaining frontline workers from within our own communities not only ensures better understanding of local needs

and cultural sensitivities, but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the wellbeing of our children. Investing in training programs and career development opportunities for aspiring child protection workers can also help bridge the gap between supply and demand in this critical sector. It is also essential that we recognise that their roles are complex and demands a deep understanding of social, cultural and family dynamics. It is imperative that we support our frontline workers and value their contributions. These dedicated individuals work tirelessly in challenging and often emotionally taxing situations. We must provide them with the necessary training, resources and ongoing support to help them carry out their vital work effectively.

In conclusion, the department of child protection plays a vital role in safeguarding the wellbeing of our children. By addressing the need for more frontline workers, promoting cross-agency collaboration, employing local staff and supporting our on-the-ground workers, we can make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable children and families. Therefore, I today ask the minister: How are we supporting our current child protection workers? How are we supporting the growth of the child protection workforce?

MS S.E. WINTON (Wanneroo — Minister for Child Protection) [9.47 am]: I thank the member for Kimberley for her grievance this morning on this most important issue around supporting child protection staff, particularly in the Kimberley. The member for Kimberley and I have a really, really close relationship. I value it, and I value her contributions not only in this place, but also in constantly advocating for her community because she is closest to the people of the Kimberley who have the solutions for these challenging issues.

We know that across Australia, one in every 32 children come into contact with child protection services. When I think about that broadly and from a teaching perspective, that is at least one kid in every classroom. We know and we need to recognise right here that Aboriginal children are over-represented in the out-of-home care system, and this government is making it a priority to address that over-representation. A really critical part of doing this work is having a child protection workforce that is professional and well resourced.

Since becoming minister, I have made it my priority to understand the challenges of child protection workers right around the state, particularly in the Kimberley. It has been my great privilege to meet with them, in not only Broome, but also Kununurra and Derby. The member for Kimberley would know that those sessions, in which I talk deeply with child protection staff, provide insight about the resources they need in order to do the important work that they do. I will continue to listen to them. The most vulnerable kids in the community, and children's families and carers, need those child protection workers to support vulnerable children and enable them to be safe and supported.

Like many other industries and workplaces, the child protection workforce is not immune from being impacted by the challenges of the tight labour market and the competing demands and opportunities that are available to qualified and experienced child protection workers, particularly in the regions. Recruiting and retaining child protection staff is critically important. It was really good earlier this week to recognise social workers in the child protection field. I want to acknowledge Dr Katrina Stratton, a former child protection worker. It is great to have her insights as a member in this place.

Since 2007, the government has invested more than ever in the child protection workforce. More child protection workers than ever are on the front line doing the important work of keeping vulnerable children safe. We have increased the workforce to some 300 FTE, an increase of 35 per cent. Our strategies, through statewide talent campaigns, interstate and local recruitment activities and the social work student placement program are having an impact. It is really important that we support students who are undertaking their qualifications. Those placements in the Department of Communities is also paying dividends, with 63 per cent of those students becoming permanent employees of Communities. But of course we need to do more.

Housing is one of the issues relating to the attraction of staff, particularly in the Kimberley. We have increased rental subsidies for employees who relocate to regional towns and we have removed the fortnightly Government Regional Officers' Housing payments for employees in remote locations, which is critically important if we are going to attract and retain staff and encourage them to stay there.

In June last year, we announced a \$3.7 million regional attraction and retention initiative package for the Kimberley, the Pilbara, the midwest, the Gascoyne, the goldfields, Esperance and the wheatbelt. The member would be really happy to know that that package has made a difference. It topped up existing incentives for child protection workers to go to or stay in the Kimberley, amounting to an additional \$13 000 for each to stay there. It has had an impact. Since we made that announcement, an additional 40 child protection staff have chosen to relocate to or stay in the Kimberley. It is critically important, and we will keep working on that.

The member made a really important point in her grievance. It is not just about the Department of Communities; it is about other agencies working closely with not only my ministerial colleagues, but also, importantly, the place-based local community organisations. I particularly refer to the Aboriginal-controlled organisations. In the out-of-home care system, six of the 16 providers are now Aboriginal-controlled organisations. In terms of doing important work, supporting children and families so that we can keep children with their families, the communities partner really well with organisations such as Aarnja, which is delivering the Aboriginal representative organisations pilot in the Kimberley. We need to support kids in care so they remain connected to culture and their community. Those

organisations deliver family finding and cultural care plans, which optimise the chances of reunification for those children because that is what we want to do. It is about early intervention, as the member mentioned, having all those wraparound services and supporting those organisations to do that important work of keeping young children safe.

I want to finish by saying that I spent three years in Fitzroy Crossing as a young teacher. I have spoken to child protection staff everywhere. They work in a challenging environment, but when they reflect on their work later, they realise that it was the most rewarding, professional and personal time of their lives. I will continue to fight every way I can to support people to go to the Kimberley to do this important work.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY — CENTRAL WHEATBELT

Grievance

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [9.55 am]: My grievance today is to the Minister for Energy. I speak on behalf of wheatbelt communities that have simply had enough of the ongoing blackouts and brownouts that are causing frustration and anger, significant discomfort and economic loss across our region. I thank the minister for taking the grievance.

Sadly, despite ongoing advocacy from representatives of these communities, some reasonable media coverage and myself as a local member on a number of occasions raising this matter, we are no closer to having a fit-for-purpose electricity network in the wheatbelt. I do think it is unacceptable that in a state as wealthy as Western Australia, in this day and age, we have essential infrastructure that fails regularly. Today I would like to focus on the town of Quairading. But I would like the minister's acknowledgement that I could easily substitute Quairading with Mukinbudin, Bencubbin, Beacon, Wyalkatchem, Nungarin or any number of towns in my electorate. They all suffer.

If we set aside the major storm that went through the wheatbelt and the goldfields in January this year as a significant event—people understand that it was a significant event—the ongoing issue for Quairading is truly a tale of woe. Quairading is 150 kilometres from Perth; it is hardly a remote location. If members read Dylan Caporn's article from last weekend's *The Sunday Times*, they would have learnt that Western Power data shows that for the 2022–23 financial year, the small Quairading community of 582 people endured 16 blackouts, with an average down time of almost three days. The same data shows that there have been 14 outages this year of more than an hour. In 2022, amid ongoing power outages in Quairading, Western Power was forced to install a temporary generator to shore up its supply. It was at that time that I was raising a grievance about this community with the previous Minister for Energy. I am sure that the minister has been advised; the corporation would have provided him with the grievance and *Hansard* of the debate in which I raised these matters with the former minister. Sadly, the first time I raised power issues with that minister, he undertook to meet with me and the communities impacted, but there was no follow-up. It took me raising this issue a second time in Parliament, on behalf of the community, to secure the meeting. Although the minister visited our communities in September 2022, frustratingly, there has been very slow or limited progress on solutions or assistance. My constituents feel that they are not a priority. It is unacceptable that they are strung along with commitments or promises that fail to come to fruition.

I know that Western Power understands the problem. It articulates the problem very succinctly. In a presentation on its website, it identifies that its ageing distribution network is approaching end of life in many areas; that a like-for-like replacement cost can present a significant challenge for the organisation; that small edge-of-grid towns can experience poor reliability, with customers experiencing frequent power interruptions due to stretches of bare overhead conductors sometimes hundreds of kilometres long; and that some rural towns have relatively low peak loads in the order of a few hundred kilowatts and daily average kilowatt per house usage, is a challenge for the organisation. We accept that. It also notes that preliminary feasibility assessments indicate that the rebuilding of the network may incur a higher cost than providing supply to some towns via a disconnected microgrid. I have heard members of the government speak regularly on microgrids. In fact, a number of microgrids are already in place across the state, just none for this community or those that I have raised with the previous Minister for Energy.

I am told that the town of Quairading has been promised a battery, but the promise came with a five-year time line. Can the minister please advise whether there is a solution for the community; and, if so, why it will take five years to deliver? Why has the government announced that it seeks to introduce this microgrid technology at a community level across the state, as I have noted, but there seems to be no solution for Quairading, which has at least a decade of ongoing issues?

As an aside, it was incredibly frustrating to read the transcript of yesterday's debate in the Legislative Council in which a member of the government, Hon Darren West, spoke at length about the benefits of community batteries at Collie and Kwinana when his own community suffers from blackouts and brownouts with no respite or support. It is ridiculous that the solution offered by this member, and I put this genuinely, is that community members should purchase their own generators. I do not think that the minister or his government would think that to be a solution, and certainly our communities do not feel that way when they are paying significant supply and usage charges. They pay their bills, they are connected to the grid, but they are not getting a service that is acceptable.

I put to the government that if there had been 14 blackouts for more than one hour in a metropolitan area, Western Power would have jumped to find and invest in a solution. Why, if the state government has invested in upgrades to the

transmission line, the poles and the conductors—I know there has been work done in that part of the state—is Quairading still in the dark? It is affecting people’s lives, businesses, safety and morale. I urge the minister today to consider fast-tracking a solution for Quairading because this town has endured more than enough. I seek the minister’s commitment to bring forward the time line if the battery storage solution has in fact been committed to or provide the community with a time line and a solution for the alternative. Anything less, the community will feel like it is just being pushed aside by the government as this has just been going on for so long, minister.

I know this is the first time that I have raised this issue with this minister in the Parliament, but I want to make sure that he knows that it is not the first time it has been raised by me as the local member or the community. It feels under pressure. As I say, it is Quairading in this instance, but I could come back every week and provide a grievance for a community suffering from brownouts and blackouts. My inbox is full of emails and letters of concern from communities like Mukinbudin, Beacon and others. But Quairading is on the agenda for today, and I would really like to go back to the community and say that the government is taking this seriously.

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Energy) [10.02 am]: I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt for the grievance and the very eloquent and passionate case she has put to me. I absolutely recognise the power outages are incredibly frustrating. They are inconvenient, especially as the modern world is so reliant on energy to power devices and communication—a whole range of devices and conveniences are powered by electricity. It is inconvenient, it is annoying and it makes us grumpy; I know that.

We recognise as a government that outages are especially challenging for people in regional and remote parts of Western Australia, including Quairading and the other communities the member mentioned. It is challenging to maintain power supplies. When there are disruptions and outages, it is more difficult and takes time to repair and restore the connections because of the sheer distance involves, which is quite often the issue.

We also recognise that Quairading faces some unique challenges because of its location at the end of a long feeder line. That is not unique—many towns are in that position—but as the member rightly points out, communities at the end of the grid have the issue that there needs to be only one break in that link. They are not networked and there are no other connections at other points coming into the town. With issues in the suburbs, we can almost always get around them because they are on a network. When there is one single line, that line needs to be repaired. There is no other way of getting the electrons there.

Regrettably, these structural factors have contributed to the residents of Quairading having a tough time with power outages lately. I am very aware of the reports in *The West Australian* and, I think, in *The Sunday Times* that in the 13 months to February 2024, there were a total of 16 outages affecting multiple Quairading residents. I think there was a total of 41 outages in that time, but 16 of them affected multiple residents, which meant that the rest were single residents. This does not explain or make it any easier to deal with if you are the single resident! They still lose power, but those figures that include many single-resident outages together paint an inflated or a skewed figure that may suggest to some people that those outages represent an area of people being affected. But I will not argue this point; I will not labour it. If you have your electricity out, it is bloody inconvenient and annoying. I get that. Importantly, a total of 14 of those 41 outages, including to single residences, lasted more than one hour. Most of them had power restored within a one-hour period, but, again, it was inconvenient. I am not sure at what time of the day this occurred, but it is always inconvenient to lose electricity. The outages were often caused by weather. I will not go back to the events in January, but they included that super cell storm that tore across the state on 16 and 17 January. There were other events and failures.

I know the Quairading community can recall the outage back in August 2022. In that instance, severe weather, again, destroyed a pole and caused flooding. This is one example of the difficulties that Western Power often faces. These guys do incredible work in incredible situations and challenging periods. When Western Power crews arrived on site back in August 2022, they saw it was not possible to install a new pole because the ground was flooded and unstable and, obviously, dangerous with water around.

Increasing the resilience of our infrastructure is a key priority for Western Australia and the state government. We know that. We face a challenge with the great transition of our energy supply right across Western Australia. Providing resilience for our regional communities is a huge part of that process. In the period since August 2022, Western Power has invested more than \$1 million in strengthening the network that supplies Quairading—that one community. The member mentioned the follow-up and engagement she had with the former Minister for Energy. I am not sure whether the member is aware of this information, but there has been money and effort involved in improving the network. Western Power has replaced more than 50 poles. There has been the replacement of high-voltage insulators, crossarms and stays. There has been re-tensioning of six bays of conductor. This is critical investment by Western Power to make the system more resilient. The investment is working, in conjunction with reforms initiated by Western Power following the Shepherd report of 2022. In particular, we have seen real benefits from Western Power’s new and improved bushfire response. This allows Western Power to get back on a fireground to restore power sooner following an outage, without exposing its crews or the community to the risk of bushfire. Again, there were delays built into the system. This more practical approach will not only keep crews safe when doing their jobs, but also mean that outages will be concluded more rapidly.

Western Power continues to explore network augmentation options, including resilience measures and supply alternatives like standalone power systems. The member might be aware of events across Western Australia—I am thinking of areas around Esperance that were devastated by a massive and tragic fire with loss of life a number of years ago. The response by Horizon Power on that occasion was that reinstalling the old infrastructure, the longlines, would mean a lot of cost and still have a risk of outages. Therefore, there will be standalone power systems. Solar power, backed up by batteries, has been very well received by many farmers and customers at the end of the line.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: I will lose my time; sorry.

We are engaged in a big program of rolling out standalone power systems, both in the Horizon and Western Power jurisdictions. No energy system on earth is invincible, and power outages occur everywhere. We are aware of and addressing these issues. I thank the member.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSION

*Twelfth Report — Going rogue: Serious misconduct by a commission officer:
Parliamentary inspector's report — Tabling*

MR M. HUGHES (Kalamunda) [10.10 am]: I present for tabling the twelfth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, *Going rogue: Serious misconduct by a commission officer: Parliamentary inspector's report*.

[See paper [2721](#).]

Mr M. HUGHES: The Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission, Matthew Zilko, SC, has found that, between early 2020 and 2023, an officer of the Corruption and Crime Commission, its human source coordinator and manager of the human source team, engaged in serious misconduct. The parliamentary inspector's report *Going Rogue: Serious misconduct by a commission officer* is attached to the committee's report at appendix 1, and a letter from the commission to the committee responding to the report is attached at appendix 2.

The Acting Speaker (Ms M.M. Quirk) is very familiar with the role of our committee, and it is evident that the Corruption and Crime Commission, the state's peak integrity agency responsible for exposing and overseeing corruption by public officers, should set the example on how public officers should carry out their duties. The commission should also set an example on how public agencies actively manage their misconduct risks. Parliament has conferred extraordinary powers on the commission to undertake its important work. The Parliament and the public generally have the right to expect the highest standard of behaviour from officers entrusted with these extraordinary powers.

As part of its work, the Corruption and Crime Commission may enter into formal arrangements with people who want to provide ongoing intelligence regarding crime or corruption for the purposes of obtaining or facilitating the obtaining of evidence. These persons are described as "human sources", and, more generally, we might use the term "informants". Commission officers may be given assumed identities to undertake their work. As the report states, due to the nature of the officer's role and human source risks, publicly revealing misconduct in this area involves a degree of discretion. Our report to Parliament recognises that need.

The human source coordinator is meant to supervise, guide and oversee human source handlers and manage the relationship between the handler and a human source. From the commencement of the commission's engagement of a particular human source in November 2018, the officer was both the human source coordinator and sole handler of the human source, contrary to policies and procedures governing the work of the human source team. As the parliamentary inspector has said, the need for delineation between the role of coordinator and that of handler "should not be understated". This basic failure of protocol was evidently not identified or acted upon by the commission for over four years. The officer then repeatedly and wilfully breached the commission's policies, procedures and code of conduct in how she dealt with the human source. Subsequently, the commission has dismissed the officer. The officer deceived the commission and exposed others to potential harm by revealing official information obtained through her work. The parliamentary inspector cites many examples of the officer's misconduct and calculated deception. I do not intend to revisit them as part of my tabling statement. However, her misconduct included the officer giving the human source the name of a person believed to have made an anonymous report of corruption, despite the complainant having stressed that they wanted to remain anonymous and made the complaint "at great risk" to themselves. The officer gave the human source the first names of three commission officers, including a member of the human source team with an assumed identity. The officer had an "extreme" level of concealed contact with the human source. For example, in 2022 the officer spoke to the human source for 437 hours, but recorded only 28 hours, when she was required to record all contact.

The parliamentary inspector made five findings against the officer, namely —

1. Between early 2021 and early 2023 the officer corruptly used her position as Human Source Coordinator with the commission, and the resources provided to her in carrying out this role, to obtain a personal benefit: an extensive and intimate relationship with one of the commission's human sources.

2. In pursuing this relationship, the officer took multiple steps to deceive the commission, including adopting a pseudonym and failing to record all her interactions with the human source.
3. On or before 8 May 2021, the officer provided the first names of 3 commission officers to a human source without their consent in circumstances where this knowledge had the propensity to fully identify them.
4. On 1 July 2021, 18 August 2021 and 20 December 2022, the officer disclosed official information to a human source without seeking authorisation to do so.
5. On one of these occasions, on 18 August 2021, the officer also informed the human source of the name and location of a person who had made an anonymous allegation to the commission, again without obtaining authorisation to do so.

It is evident that the officer's conduct was extremely serious and potentially dangerous, and involved a gross breach of trust. The officer abused both her position as human source coordinator and the manager of the team and the extraordinary powers given to the commission to undertake its work. It is also evident that the officer wilfully betrayed committed and dedicated officers at the commission. The officer's "strong feelings" and expressed love for the source do not excuse her conduct. The parliamentary inspector has not formally recommended the bringing of criminal proceedings, as in his view this is a matter for the police. However, given the seriousness of the misconduct, the committee would expect the Western Australia Police Force to consider whether to prosecute the officer on appropriate charges. Therefore, the committee has taken the unusual step of recommending that the Western Australia Police Force consider whether to prosecute the former officer of the commission. Of course, whether to prefer charges is entirely the decision of a prosecuting authority.

While it could be said that the officer did "go rogue" and her line manager's supervision was inadequate, the investigation exposed serious weaknesses in how the commission managed its misconduct risks and the human source team, and raised questions regarding the effectiveness of that team. The many questions raised include how the officer's "obviously deficient" supervision, to use the words of the parliamentary inspector, by her manager, the human source registrar, "does not appear to have become apparent to other senior commission officers until early 2023".

What happens next following the finding of serious misconduct is important. Lessons must be learned from misconduct events. This is a crucial aspect of any serious misconduct finding. The commission has unreservedly accepted that system failures contributed to the climate in which the officer's deception was possible and continued over a long time. It has initiated an independent review that commenced on 26 February 2024 to identify the circumstances that led to the conduct occurring and how it took place without being detected for a significant time. This review will focus on governance and reporting mechanisms, capability management and leadership and culture.

I remind the Legislative Assembly that, as the committee discussed in its November 2023 report *What Happens Next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct: Examining the responses to a finding of serious misconduct and building integrity in public agencies*, agency integrity requires more than establishing systems and processes. Committing to continually developing an integrity culture and speak-up culture is essential. As Commissioner McKechnie told this committee in his own words during the *What happens next?* inquiry —

... most of the reports that I have authored and, I think, [the Acting Commissioner] has authored, the policies and procedures of the organisation look fine. They are great on paper; they have all sorts of checks and balances and so forth. For various reasons, nobody has bothered to enforce them or anything: ...

This committee will oversight how the commission responds to this misconduct during the forty-first Parliament. Accountability and transparency in how an agency responds to misconduct is important, particularly when the agency is the commission.

This investigation and the parliamentary inspector's report also raise questions about the effectiveness of the human source team. For example, in July 2020, the human source registrar expressed concerns that the team produced few tangible outcomes. The investigation was undertaken by the commission in close cooperation with the parliamentary inspector. The parliamentary inspector vetted and approved each committee officer involved in the investigation, attended examinations and was given access to all evidence and oversight of the investigation. The parliamentary inspector had the power to take over the investigation, which he could exercise at any time if he had any concerns about its rigour and impartiality. The investigation was very resource intensive, involving extensive analysis of the data, interviews and compulsory examinations with witnesses about the conduct that occurred over a period of in excess of three years.

At the close of the investigation, the parliamentary inspector formally removed the investigation from the commission to finalise and determine the matter independently of the commission. The committee takes no issue with how this matter was investigated. However, the committee believes that this investigation raises questions about whether the parliamentary inspector should have more resources and options available to his office when deciding how to deal with sensitive and resource-intensive investigations into the commission and its officers.

Finally, the committee recommends the following: that the Western Australia Police Force considers whether to prosecute the former officer of the commission, the subject of the parliamentary inspector's report; that the Attorney General examines whether there is a need to provide the parliamentary inspector with more resources or legal or other options to deal with misconduct on the part of the commission or its officers, particularly for sensitive and resource-intensive matters, and that the Attorney General should discuss the above with the parliamentary inspector; that the Corruption and Crime Commission considers the work of the human source team and whether this service adds value to the commission's investigative work and whether the team should be retained or the service delivered in another way; and that the Corruption and Crime Commission provides the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission a copy of its independent review identifying the circumstances that led to the misconduct of the officer occurring and a report on the commission's plan of action and the action taken to minimise misconduct risks at the commission. The committee requests the above by 30 September 2024.

The committee will report to Parliament. As the committee stated in its recent eleventh report, *What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct*, public agencies should be accountable and transparent in how they respond to misconduct events. The committee intends to apply this standard to the commission.

In closing, the committee thanks the parliamentary inspector for reporting to the committee and therefore to this Parliament on this extremely important matter. I also especially want to thank our hardworking principal research officer, Suzanne Veletta, and her associate, Jovita Hogan, for their work that has enabled the committee to respond to and table the parliamentary inspector's report in a timely fashion. My thanks go to my committee colleagues, Deputy Chair, Hon Dr Steve Thomas, MLC; Hon Mia Davies, MLA; and Hon Klara Andric, MLC, for the great care taken in responding to the parliamentary inspector's report and in framing the committee's recommendations.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Ms M.M. Quirk): I am so speechless I can hardly call the member for Central Wheatbelt.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [10.24 am]: I rise in support of the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission and reiterate that the report that has just been tabled in Parliament, *Going rogue: Serious misconduct by a commission officer: Parliamentary inspector's report*, is a very serious matter. I thank my colleagues, the member for Kalamunda, Hon Dr Steve Thomas and Hon Klara Andric; committee staff, because it has been a significant matter to consider; the Corruption and Crime Commission and its staff; and the Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission. This shows why the committee's role is very important. We are talking about considerable powers that are bestowed upon the CCC. There is no doubt that everyone in this Parliament shares the view that we should be absolutely seeking to create a public system whereby the taxpayers and our community can have confidence in not only our public institutions and entities, but also those that oversight them. There is a significant role for the joint standing committee in this particular matter to make sure that every organisation within government and its aligned institutions are held to the same account.

This report goes to show that we must be vigilant at all times. The chair referenced the committee's report *What happens next? Beyond a finding of serious misconduct: Examining the responses to a finding of serious misconduct and building integrity in public agencies*. That is a considerable body of work that looked at how, within the public sector, we can all strengthen the systems by having more than just policies in place. Members would expect and think that the CCC would have some of the strongest systems and policies in place, but we are all human and therefore fallible. I am sure that people can either think of or have seen many occasions in the past when a colleague's actions may have raised questions, but if there is no culture of speaking up and processes that make people comfortable to do that or simply because it is an element of human nature that people do not like to disclose what happens when someone sitting next to us does something of that nature, we have to be constantly vigilant. On this occasion, something of that nature occurred within the CCC. There are salutary lessons for all our public sector organisations and those who are watching from outside the public service. We must continue to create not only the policies, but also the culture in which it is acceptable to speak up when people feel or consider that something is not right.

I go back to what I said at the beginning: the contents of this report reveal a very serious matter. The chair is quite right. The committee will report back to Parliament on the progress and actions that are taken as a result of this coming to light. I commend the committee's work and look forward to making sure that we have a pathway forward so that the CCC, as the main body for oversighting crime and corruption in our public service, can stand with an exemplary record.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH STANDING COMMITTEE

Sixth Report — A different kind of brilliance: Report of the inquiry into support for autistic children and young people in schools — Tabling

MR C.J. TALLENTIRE (Thornlie) [10.28 am]: I rise to present for tabling the sixth report of the Education and Health Standing Committee titled *A different kind of brilliance: Report of the inquiry into support for autistic children and young people in schools*. I also table a copy of the public submissions received by the committee.

[See papers [2722](#) and [2723](#).]

Mr C.J. TALLENTIRE: The committee's terms of reference covered three broad areas. We looked into the prevalence of autism in Western Australia, the support that is available in the school system and the strategies in place in other jurisdictions. The overwhelming view that came through was the need to change the cultural attitudes towards people who have some form of neurodiversity—some form of autism. The Telethon Kids Institute estimates that one in 39 students—typically, one in each classroom—will have some form of autism. We need to think about this in terms of neurodiversity being as important to our culture and society as biodiversity, and we need to do better.

I will begin by highlighting the sorts of feelings and experiences that youngsters who made submissions to our inquiry have gone through. In quoting from our report, one young autistic student said —

Before I started getting the help I needed, I felt like my school wanted me to work infinitely hard on everything. For example, I was having lots of trouble understanding something and doing it right, and they would just tell me to try harder, when I was already trying really hard and didn't understand ... this made me feel scared and like I could never get things right, and that I just wasn't right. Like there was something wrong with me.

That sort of sentiment was shared by a number of submitters, young students and their families, but we can look at the other side when things do go right. Committee members had the opportunity to visit the specialist learning programs at Alkimos College and Alkimos Primary School and hear some of the observations of parents there. Parents reported that their children made significant progress once they joined the specialist learning program and told us of various positive experiences. One parent noted —

At school, he was nervous, cried and was upset—he was being bullied. The SLP was a safe place for him.

Another comment was —

At primary school he didn't really have any friends. Now he has a massive group of friends in and outside of school—a lot of his friends are part of the SLP ... He is more confident, funny and outgoing since starting the program. He has now exited back to mainstream and is a lot more independent.

Another comment was —

He was previously tagged as a 'naughty kid' but has been in the SLP for two years and is now in mainstream 85 per cent of the time. He loves school now.

A further comment was —

My experience with the SLP has been life-changing, it's not just the SLP—it's across the school, including the culture among mainstream students.

This indicates that a national conversation is going on, triggered by the recent disability royal commission, around the idea of inclusion versus the idea of having specialist learning centres. How do we ensure that all students are included in our school system, while, at the same time, there is a structure that caters for their particular needs? There are ways that this can be done, and I think that is a very worthy subject of the national conversation that I know will take place over the next few years.

Some of the observations that committee members made during the inquiry included the need to offer flexibility in policies, such as staggering start times and lunchtimes and providing sensory breaks. Something that I became aware of during the inquiry was that for some autistic students, the worst and most frightening part of the day can be the lunchbreak, when there is no structure and they are left to their own devices. For well-socialised kids, that means forming groups and having chats and playing games with friends, but for someone who needs more structured activity and perhaps has not quite developed their social interaction skills, that time can be particularly frightening. We can restructure the education system so that schools provide for kids who need more organised and, perhaps, supervised lunchtime activity. We also need to create appropriately supervised quiet spaces for many students. The school environment is noisy and chaotic and is constantly changing, and they feel overstimulated and overwhelmed. Students can benefit from being allowed to wear headphones, to have stimming or sensory products or to perhaps work in pairs rather than in large groups, which can often make them feel overwhelmed. Flexibility could be offered around attendance and dropping non-core subjects and that sort of thing. I know from my own electorate how successful the Big Picture learning program is at Yule Brook College and Thornlie Senior High School. Students in a Big Picture classroom work away, perhaps in a corner of the room, and are very focused on a project that they are particularly passionate about. It might be space or horses or any given topic that has been crafted with and refined by an advisory teacher such that it becomes the core subject for their learning in maths, science and other areas of study. Their presentational ability and their ability to write essays all hangs off that core subject, and it then has great meaning for them and works particularly well. There are ways we can restructure our system. It is not all about providing extra money, but, indeed, we have a number of recommendations for extra funding.

Something else we observed was the need for teachers to be given training to enable them to first and foremost identify students who might be on the spectrum, but also to know what the best teaching approach might be. We gathered information that suggests that, at the moment, university courses for teachers do not include this very

important component. One of our recommendations goes to the Minister for Education taking up this issue with the universities and saying that they need to lift their game in designing the courses for our future teachers. That issue was echoed by a comment from the South West Autism Network, which said —

What we do see is that when accommodations are made in the classroom, they are benefiting the entire classroom. Teachers frequently tell us that when they start using visual schedules and they start writing the instructions on the whiteboard, the entire class benefits. We see that when they put in sensory spaces and when they make adjustments to reduce noise, the entire class benefits.

We know that, with some guidance, our teachers can make the accommodations. Understandably, some parents might be fearful that the accommodations will mean a loss of time for and input into their particular child. I think that we can provide some balance and deliver on the outcomes.

Another issue that we delved into was the level of diagnosis. Part of that is due to increased awareness, but there is a reality that our systems appear to be driving families to diagnosis, especially the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the school system, whereby additional funding becomes available when children are diagnosed. There is another discussion about the need for this all-important diagnosis, when, really, it is important that we treat the need and not necessarily wait for the diagnosis. It was really heartening to realise that in Australia, through La Trobe University's Olga Tennison Autism Research Centre, a very effective early detection system has been developed. It is essentially an app that enables parents and carers who may have an inkling—indeed, that is a play on the name of the program—to have some sort of initial assessment made. It is acknowledged that if that assessment can be made when a child is around two years of age, early interventions can often be beneficial and can go far in helping a student to be ready and better able to cope with a mainstream classroom from their first day at primary school. Professor Andrew Whitehouse was one of our guiding lights throughout the inquiry. He made the comment —

... the education system is seeing more kids with autism diagnoses and perhaps a certain proportion of those kids actually do not meet criteria for autism. They still require support; they just do not meet criteria for autism.

We need to respond to these increasing needs.

I touched on the important issue of socialisation and developing social skills. I guess it is a justification for our current education system that is structured so much around a one-size-fits-all approach. When a child is thrust into a classroom with a bunch of other children just because they all happen to share the same age and were born within a year of one another, it can result in some curious mixes, but that is where they learn these essential socialisation skills. For children who are neurodiverse, this can be a real challenge. Professor Sonya Girdler from the Curtin Autism Research Group and her researchers have developed programs that are evidence-based and really get onto developing these vital socialisation skills.

I have touched on some of the areas that need additional funding. Recommendation 8 goes straight to the need for funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to undertake dedicated, culturally safe professional learning in relation to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander autistic students, particularly in regional areas. We know that much work needs to be done in that area. It also highlights the point that, so often, an autism diagnosis is made in conjunction with a number of other conditions. It is incredibly important that we have the capacity to make the diagnosis.

Another area in which we felt that funding would be especially welcome is for teachers. We have asked the Minister for Education to look at making funding available for teachers to undertake postgraduate study in autism and inclusive education, to build workforce capability and to increase access to expertise in supporting autistic students. That would greatly help many students.

We learnt about the challenge faced by these students as they transition into the workforce at the end of their schooling, their TAFE education or their workplace placements. We know of many well-qualified graduates who have gone through the university system as well, and, in too many cases, years after completing their studies, are still stacking shelves at Coles and Woolies. There is a need for our employers to appreciate the skills, or, as our report says, "a different kind of brilliance", that people with autism can provide. Some sectors are already well ahead of the game. We heard that in the Australian Bureau of Statistics, cybersecurity and other areas of information technology, and in the general science, technology, engineering and mathematics world, there is a recognition that people who are autistic bring a particular skill set, capability and sharp focus to their work that can be especially beneficial and highly advantageous for their employer.

The report was assembled with great diligence by our committee. Our principal research officer, Catie Parsons; our research officer, Sylvia Wolf; and Maddison Evans as well, did absolutely outstanding work that enabled us to cover a lot of ground and put together a report that is highly readable, with some very pertinent recommendations. I thank Catie and Sylvia for their outstanding work. I especially want to thank my fellow committee members: the deputy chair, member for Maylands; the member for Hillarys; the member for Pilbara; and especially the member for Dawesville, who brought her professional expertise to the inquiry and also shared with us much of her family's experience in this area. The report is greatly enriched by her contribution, so I thank her for that. I am very proud to table this report and commend it to the house.

MS L.L. BAKER (Maylands) [10.45 am]: At the start of this inquiry, I was not clear that I might have any lived experience to contribute to *A different kind of brilliance: Report of the inquiry into support for autistic children and young people in school*. By the end of this inquiry, I can tell members that not just me, but probably everyone in this room has lived experience in dealing with friends, relatives or family members who have some type of neurodiversity. People may not identify it as that, indeed many do not, but I now know so much more, and for that alone I am incredibly grateful because it means that I can continue as a much stronger advocate in this field.

At the start of my presentation, I want to put on the record that the member for Dawesville's lived experience was specifically helpful in getting all of us through what was quite a traumatic journey in many respects. I also was not aware that so many people would pass through my electorate office door, wanting to comment about this inquiry that we were undertaking, and begging me to have half an hour to sit down and tell me about their personal experience with their child in school, or, indeed, out of school, as the case may be on many occasions in this subject matter. I suppose it was not possible to be part of this report without an incredible amount of learning and giving my constituents an opportunity to share their journey as well. Not all of them came to give evidence as witnesses in the hearings, but they certainly came to my office and helped my understanding, and I thank them for that.

An increasing number of autistic students have disengaged from education or from being home schooled because of unsuccessful and harmful experiences in their school. This has a negative financial, social and emotional impact for not only their families, but also the community at large. We know that schools are overwhelmed and struggling to support autistic students. Like many of us in this house, I sit on independent public school boards in my electorate and during the course of this inquiry I spent time with the principals of those schools asking what their experience was in helping to support students with autism, and, indeed, students with all forms of neurodiversity. Resoundingly, they gave me a very clear picture that although they worked extremely hard to provide the correct resources, a number of barriers exist to their delivery. Firstly, that many of the children are not actually diagnosed, so they do not get access to some of the support offered by our education system. The reason for that is complex and multifaceted, but one of the things that this report recommends is that we look into how that can be improved, and I will talk a bit about some of the recommendations shortly.

We all know that zero to three years is a critical developmental stage in every single human life. To have to wait for support until a child is seven, eight or nine years of age misses an enormous corridor of opportunity to help that child to adjust and to provide the right solutions so that they can progress through and stay engaged with their schooling. It is my view that as a government, we have an ultimate responsibility to address the educational inequality and poor outcomes that are currently being experienced by autistic people, and failing to act will come at significant personal, social and economic cost. I did not just make that up because I wanted to be sensational; I read that sentence directly from this report. Once we know that something is wrong and we have seen what is happening, it would be morally bereft not to take action, and it is absolutely essential that we as a government look carefully at what this report says we need to provide.

This is not just for education. In my case, I am very pleased that I was able to take some of my learnings to Vicinity Centres, a company that maybe one day will revitalise the Galleria Shopping Centre, but probably not while I am alive. I spoke to Vicinity about the five-year strategic plan it was just starting and asked what it was doing to make its complexes more inclusive. Of course, Vicinity is a massive company that has major developments all over Australia. The delightful officer who I work with locally in this space said, "Do you know, autism is a fantastic opportunity for us to do something groundbreaking." She was going to take this knowledge about what people who might be neurodiverse experience when they go into a shopping centre and look at how Vicinity could support that experience, whether it be through lighting, music, shopping hours, assistance in general, or whatever it might be. That was something I was very pleased to be able to share right up-front as a result of this inquiry.

I will mention some specific recommendations, particularly recommendation 1, because this is addressed to our Premier. The recommendation is —

That the Premier provide funding for a comprehensive epidemiological study into the prevalence of autism or autism likelihood in young children in Western Australia.

It is simply ridiculous to think that we can provide adequate resources when we do not know the extent of the problem. It is not our fault that there are not resources in the system right now; as members have heard, this report covers why we are in a stage of revealing the level of neurodiversity in our community that we never did before. Now is the time for the Western Australian government to step forward into this space and perhaps follow in the steps of Victoria, which has a Victorian Autism Education Strategy. It has put in \$19 million over four years to deliver an autism education strategy, which was launched in 2020. The strategy aims to address all the issues facing autistic students, and there is plenty of information about that strategy in this report.

Why do we not follow South Australia's example? South Australia has an assistant minister and an Office for Autism. I say that I can think of no better person than the member for Dawesville to champion that cause—just a little plug for her! The South Australian government announced the appointment of Hon Emily Bourke, MLC, to the newly created role of Assistant Minister for Autism. The South Australian government is doing amazing things.

We need to step up, step forward and support the children who need this kind of door to be opened for them so that they can make the most of their skills. Members should make no mistake about it: the level of skill is remarkable. We just have to know how to open the door for them. That is what this report is all about—opening the door.

The Minister for Education should not blanch over this; there are quite a few recommendations in here for him! But one thing I can say about Dr Buti, the member for Armadale and the minister, is that he is fully supportive of and recognises the need for a more inclusive school system in Western Australia and is personally very committed to advancing the opportunities for that group in our school system and across the community at large. I look forward to seeing how the Minister for Education will respond to this report. I am very hopeful that he will get behind some of the key recommendations. It is not just about money; it is about an overall strategy at the state level. We heard time and again that federal strategies are fine, but what really counts is what we are doing on the ground at the state level. We have an opportunity here to help the children of our state to achieve amazing things rather than to leave the barriers in place that are currently there, stopping them from achieving and providing disincentives. I think we owe it to the children in this state to put significant resources behind access and support for students of all levels of neurodiversity in our schooling system.

MRS L.A. MUNDAY (Dawesville) [10.55 am]: I rise today with a profound sense of purpose and responsibility to address an issue that strikes close to my heart—the support for autistic children and young people in our schools. As a member of the Education and Health Standing Committee, I have had the privilege of contributing to our inquiry and report titled *A different kind of brilliance: Report of the inquiry into support for autistic children and young people in schools*. I refer to the way we came up with the title. I was talking to a lady at a Curtin Autism Research Group event, and they were showcasing the brilliant artwork of autistic and neurodiverse people. I wish I could remember her name, but I cannot. She said that the thing she likes about autistic people is that they are a different kind of brilliance, and that has always stuck with me. It is wonderful to be able to pay it forward and use it as the name of our inquiry.

I really struggle with the use of the words “disability” and “autistic” in the same sentence. In my opinion, this is part of the issue. Autistic and neurodiverse children, teenagers and adults are not disabled; they just have different strengths and the gift of looking at the world in different ways. We need to harness their strengths and brilliance and create an education system that will help equip our educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support the diverse needs of autistic students effectively. In my opinion, it is not about changing the education curriculum itself; it is about changing how we teach the curriculum. Being autistic or having an autistic child in your class does not mean that they lack intelligence or IQ. It is more about the interaction, social skills and emotions. It does not start and stop with school but pervades our whole society from birth to death. As people, as a government and as a community, we need to engage with this and start doing more before our schools, hospitals and National Disability Insurance Scheme system become overwhelmed with people who are exceptionally bright—a different kind of brilliant—but are left feeling isolated and worthless, and sit at home taking a disability pension with their immeasurable talents going to waste.

Before I delve into my speech—I am not sure how much I will be able to say in eight minutes—I express my sincere gratitude to our chair, the member for Thornlie, Chris Tallentire, for his exemplary leadership throughout this inquiry, and my appreciation for him agreeing to do the inquiry, because he knew it was not only important to me, but also something he was hearing more about in his electorate. I also extend my appreciation to my fellow colleagues, the member for Maylands and Deputy Chair Lisa Baker, especially for her insight and asking great questions in hearings to get to the heart of matters. I loved how she was very pointed and not scared to take it to them. I thank the member for Hillarys, Caitlin Collins, and the member for Pilbara, Kevin Michel, for their unwavering dedication to this inquiry. I also recognise the invaluable contributions of our principal research officer, Catie Parsons, along with research officers Sylvia Wolf and Maddison Evans, whose efforts have shaped our inquiry.

When we travelled interstate for this inquiry to Victoria and South Australia to learn more about how their education systems work in engaging autistic students and the autism community as a whole, we asked: Who are the specialists in this field? Who can we talk to and where can we get more resources from? Inevitably, we would get a list, but two names always on that list were Andrew Whitehouse, who is a professor of autism research at the Telethon Kids Institute and the University of Western Australia, and Professor Sonya Girdler, who is director of the Curtin Autism Research Group. They have made it their life’s work to help the rest of the world realise that people who are autistic are a different kind of brilliant. With a focus on recognising the signs early, getting early intervention and integrating social skills, supporting them to make friendships and showcasing their strengths, we can set them up better to succeed in life.

As a mother of two autistic sons, now young adults, this inquiry holds personal significance for me. I witnessed firsthand the challenges and triumphs that accompany navigating the school system with neurodiverse children. It is a journey marked by moments of resilience but also instances of frustration and isolation. Through this inquiry, we have heard poignant stories from families illuminating both the successes and the struggles experienced by autistic students in our schools. I am sure my boys are used to me talking about them by now, mainly because I am super proud of them, but today I want to highlight a couple of points. Alex quit school in year 11, not because the work was too hard, but because trying to fit in was too exhausting for him and he was becoming more and more

depressed. But, with determination, he did not give up on education; he was far too bright, plus I would not let him! He found a way into university through Murdoch's bridging pathway and went on to complete a double degree in teaching in English and drama. He works part time at Mandurah Primary School with a fantastic principal, Natasha Upcott, who is aware of the challenges that autistic people face and offers Alex a strength-based workplace to go to. He also works part time as a research assistant with the Curtin Autism Research Group—CARG—at Curtin University, writing programs for autistic students.

My younger son, Frazer, has just completed a Masters of Forensic Toxicology and has a degree in biomedical science and laboratory medicine. He has just become an author in a peer-reviewed journal article, but he cannot get any work in the field. I have lost count of the number of interviews he has attended. He would like to work as a laboratory assistant or a research assistant, but he writes in his CV that he is proudly autistic—actually, he uses the word “autastic”—and as I am sure he comes across as awkward and autistic during his interviews, I am sure this is the reason he is not selected. But he will not give up. He is a determined young man to find employment, just like Alex.

Our findings underscore a sobering reality that limited understanding of autism remains a significant barrier to providing adequate support for autistic students in our schools and our workplaces. From failing to recognise autism to ineffective individual education plans and often unintended harmful practices, the repercussions of this lack of understanding are far reaching and very profound. It is imperative that we address this gap comprehensively. We must equip our educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support the diverse needs of autistic students effectively. This entails not only mandatory professional learning but also targeted support for early career teachers and education assistants.

In the 1990s, the prevalence of autism was approximately one in every 2 000 children; current estimated international prevalence rates are one in 100. As we chart a path forward, we must adopt a holistic approach that encompasses the entire educational ecosystem. We must provide communication, collaboration, public reporting and stakeholder consultation processes to ensure that the views of autistic individuals and their families are properly considered, and that the right people within the department are autism aware.

Professor Whitehouse described the development of the national guideline for the assessment and diagnosis of autism in Australia as a major success and our biggest weapon in getting consistent high-quality practice across Australia. They were developed to ensure that practitioners providing support to autistic children and their families do so in ways that are safe, effective and desirable to children and their families. Professor Whitehouse stated in the committee hearing —

These guidelines say this is the clear evidence we all agree on; here we are. The key challenge now is to make sure these are implemented across Australia.

It is important for our government to commit to a unified effort in supporting autistic children and young people in our schools. By prioritising evidence-based practices, fostering inclusive school cultures, adequately resourcing our schools and promoting transparency and collaboration, we can ensure that every autistic student receives the support they need to succeed. For example, the Curtin Autism Research Group very recently received from the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation \$2.1 million to deliver the KONTAKT program to 18 schools across both primary and high schools over the next three years. KONTAKT is a group-based social skills program for children, teens and young adults on the autism spectrum. It is an evidenced-based program developed by clinical researchers to target school aged children who are autistic. It has been subject to many random controlled trials across Europe and has exceeded all expectations. Prof Girdler and her team have adapted the program for delivery in Australia.

[Interruption.]

Mrs L.A. MUNDAY: Someone is ringing me; it is probably the media!

I will be talking to the Minister for Education about the KONTAKT program going forward.

One issue that we heard in the inquiry is that different autistic programs have been rolled out in different schools across WA. Some have been found to be good, but others have not hit the mark and, rightly or wrongly, it has come to rest on the heads of principals. School leaders need support in developing a deeper understanding of evidence-based practices in order to lead the way to create an effective implementation within the complex dynamics of the school environment. This is outlined in our recommendations; namely —

Recommendation 11

That the Minister for Education ensures that a program of ongoing professional learning in relation to evidence-based practices to support autistic students is available and targeted towards school principals.

Recommendation 12

That the Minister for Education invest in professional learning programs for educators that build both sound theoretical knowledge of evidence-based practices to support autistic children, as well as practical skills in implementing these practices.

Can I just be clear here? Principals have one of the hardest jobs I know in trying to help and support a diverse range of students in their schools. My comments are more about what support systems and education we can put in place to have our school leaders at the forefront of the best evidence-based practices so they can be aware of the resources their teachers need to be effective in the classroom. I note that Victoria, as part of its autism education strategy, established a diverse learner hub, which is a centre of excellence that provides evidence-based advice, resources and coaching, and supports the delivery of all six of the Victorian strategy's areas of focus. The strategy informed part of Victoria's nearly \$1.6 billion investment into broader disability inclusion reforms. I know in WA we have great teachers and leaders working in the specialist learning program area, which we heard was a godsend to students who were selected to be part of this program. However, at this time, we found it could only meet some of the demand for autistic students with strong academic capacity but high-level behavioural needs.

With the establishment of the Office for Autism within the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet, I realise that the Assistant Minister for Autism in SA has exemplified that state's commitment to driving positive change for autism, not just in education but across all portfolios.

In closing, I am not one who just sits and points when something needs some work to be done. I am prepared to roll my sleeves up and help. I respectfully and humbly offer my services to the Premier to be considered as WA's first assistant minister for autism and neurodiversity.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

Referral to Community Development and Justice Standing Committee — Motion

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [11.05 am] — without notice: I move —

That the Firearms Bill 2024 be referred to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee for consideration and report to the house by 20 June 2024.

I move the motion under standing order 171, which, for the enlightenment of those members in the house who may not be familiar with it, reads —

- (1) At any time after the second reading and before the third reading stage has been moved, a motion without notice "That this bill be referred to a standing (or select) committee" may be moved or the bill may be referred without notice to a legislation committee.
- (2) No motion referring a bill to a committee may be moved after a motion for the third reading of a bill has been moved.

Relating to the portfolios of the latest standing committees, standing orders state —

- (2) The functions of each committee are to review and report to the Assembly on —
 - (a) the outcomes and administration of the departments within the committee's portfolio responsibilities;
 - (b) annual reports of government departments laid on the Table of the House;
 - (c) the adequacy of legislation and regulations within its jurisdiction; and
 - (d) any matters referred to it by the Assembly including a bill, motion, petition, vote or expenditure, other financial matter, report or paper.

Quite clearly, standing orders provide the ability to refer a bill to one of the standing committees of the Parliament. The Parliament's website indicates that the Speaker on 5 May 2021 tabled a schedule showing portfolio responsibilities for each of the standing committees appointed by the Legislative Assembly at the commencement of the forty-first Parliament. The departments that fall within the portfolio responsibilities of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee include, amongst many others, police. Therefore, it is the appropriate committee to examine the Firearms Bill 2024.

The committee system exists and we should use it. At the commencement of discussion of this bill, the government refused to accept the need to allow or to support it going to the Standing Committee on Legislation in the other place. In refusing that request, the Minister for Police in his remarks displayed a little of the old jealousies that exist in Parliament between the two houses, with comments such as —

... Hon Mia Davies would suggest that ... the only organisation, the only part of this Parliament capable of making amendments to or reviewing the legislation is some committee set up in the upper house.

Clearly, the role of that upper house committee is to review complex legislation. In previous Parliaments, that committee reviewed many pieces of legislation. Very large and complex bills such as the Firearms Bill 2024 are ideal bills to be referred to that committee. In my view, the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill 2021 should have gone to that committee for review. Instead, only a very slender bill has been sent to that committee, and only after public outrage over the fact that the committee had been sitting there with resources and doing no work for the

entirety of the Parliament. Much to the surprise of the government, it reported that the little slender bill had been introduced into the wrong house. That was a trip-up and an own goal on the part of the government. I digress. I will go back to the point of this committee.

The minister has a chance to allow a committee whose terms of reference under the standing orders of the house include the ability to look into matters affecting the police portfolio, including any matters referred to it by the Assembly, including a bill, to review this legislation.

We have gone through consideration in detail. In my view, serious questions remain around policy and trying to balance the objective of the bill—public safety—with many of the other sections of the bill that impinge on Western Australians and create new responsibilities and imposts, and to ensure that they are measured and correct. We have a disagreement between many sectors of the committee and members of Parliament around those measures. During consideration in detail, we found that although figures are often advanced, such as the number of firearms that might be collected, there is no modelling or statistical analysis that supports any of it; it is just an estimate made by someone. It is almost presented as evidence of a need. I think that committee could look at those matters, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to ensure that we have the mix right.

Members should bear in mind that we support a rewrite of the firearms legislation. We support most of what is in the proposed firearms legislation but are opposed to elements within the legislation. We had divisions on certain elements and we also flagged intentions to propose amendments on key areas of the legislation in the other place when time allows for proper drafting through parliamentary counsel. But questions remain around the legislation that has been advanced. An interrogation by that committee would be valuable in order to gain a better understanding of the objectives and whether the objectives are being reached and at what cost. These are the things that could be considered.

I know that the Leader of the Liberal Party would like to speak on this motion. I think she has some other business that might call her away for a little while. She is supportive of this proposal but because of urgent business needs and other commitments, I put on the record that she will not be present for the remainder of the debate.

I will go through some of the other matters that raised concern, which I am sure other members might want to go through or highlight in their third reading contributions. Either way, this is an opportunity to add impetus to the move to refer this legislation to a committee.

One thing that was quite obvious when we went through the bill was that there is a massive reliance on regulations that are not yet known and a large amount of arbitrary discretion with very little outline of how that discretion will be used by the Commissioner of Police or the commissioner's delegates. Let us face it, these decisions will not be made by the commissioner. We were told that most of these decisions will be made by an inspector level delegate, with some analysis by people at the sergeant level. It is some comfort that experienced officers will be used but nonetheless, they will all have a different opinion. If we use discretion and it is that person's discretion, there needs to be an understanding of the methodology behind the examination and the use of that discretion, otherwise different types of decisions will be made by different people. That is one of the fundamental things we are trying to get away from. We are trying to add certainty to the decisions that are made around the ownership and use of firearms and other matters related to their storage, sale, and places where they can be used. Those matters need to be clarified, which this bill does not do.

We know that the regulations are going through a massive rewrite. The old regulations will be repealed and new regulations will be introduced. Here is the twist: the new regulations will be gazetted in December, after Parliament rises, and they will come into operation in March, before Parliament will have an opportunity to move any disallowance measures against those regulations. I have looked at the bill and tried to find the section that outlines that disallowance matter, but it does not. A whole set of regulations that are critical to the operation of this bill will be gazetted in December, after Parliament rises, and will come into operation in March, presumably before Parliament sits after the 2025 election. Effectively, there will be no opportunity for Parliament to disallow the regulations. Once the legislation comes into operation, it would be irresponsible to disallow them because firearms could not be regulated. No-one would want that outcome. I do not think the government has even thought of that matter. Maybe it is so used to overriding the thoughts of Parliament, it does not even consider those matters anymore. That might be the nub of it. It has not even thought that the timing of the introduction of the regulations and the beginning of their operation will occur throughout the election period. There will be no ability to disallow or examine those matters. Presumably after 2025, the composition of both houses will change. To what level that change determines whether a disallowance will be successful, we do not know, but there should be an opportunity for Parliament to have a meaningful look at the regulations that surround the legislation and decide whether they should be disallowed. That will not be allowed.

I turn to what has been achieved by this legislation. A lot of the matters that we discussed have their foundation in the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's report that was commenced in 2014 and completed in 2016. Recommendation 2 states —

The Firearms Legislation should be redrafted from the ground up and be re-enacted.

That is a check; that has happened. Paragraph 2.2 states —

Any new firearms legislation should be restructured in order to improve clarity of parts such as the administration and licensing process, law enforcement, police powers and offences, and taking into account other structural recommendations in the Report.

From what I have seen and what I have just outlined, I do not think that is obvious; I do not think that clarity is there. So much is filtered out of regulations that the Parliament will not have an opportunity to examine or disallow. The final part of recommendation 2, paragraph 2.3, states —

Provisions in any new firearms legislation should be worded to provide greater clarity than is provided under the current Firearms Act 1973 ... and Firearms Regulations 1974 ...

That is contestable. The very foundation of what we were trying to get at may not be achieved. I believe that a committee of this house should be looking at these matters to try to get an understanding of that.

We highlighted many other matters throughout the debate about which we might have differences with the government. I will not suggest that they all form the basis of what I am calling for here. I am trying to ensure that there are no unintended consequences and that a parliamentary committee looks at this legislation carefully. It needs a second set of eyes. I do not wish to throw any sort of cloud over the people who have drawn up the legislation but, surely, given such a complex piece of legislation like this, the very limited opportunity we were offered to scrutinise it and the government's refusal to send it to the Standing Committee on Legislation, it should send it to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee.

I presume it probably will not want to send it to that committee because it does not like transparency. We know that it does not like its legislation to be scrutinised, yet it does not seem to learn from its mistakes. It had not learnt from what happened with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act, which caused a furore. The government had to withdraw that legislation and repeal it, yet we still saw tens of millions of dollars in the Treasurer's advance authorisation bill to pay for the mess that had to be cleaned up.

It is in everyone's interests to get this right and to ensure that the timing of the regulations will allow for Parliament, this Parliament or the next, to properly scrutinise those regulations and, if required, exercise its right of disallowance. That has not been addressed. It is not provided for in the bill. It should be.

I will sit down now and allow others to have a say. But I urge all members of this house to support this motion. We have nothing to fear. Government members are in fierce majority in that committee. The government's own members will go through this legislation to ensure that it is making the changes that are appropriate and that there are no unintended consequences. But importantly, please look at the timing matter around the regulations and the introduction of the bill.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [11.20 am]: I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate on the Firearms Bill 2024. I will be paired very shortly, so I rise to support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition, which is to refer this legislation for consideration by the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. The Liberal opposition has raised a number of concerns about this bill. I have also flagged that our shadow Minister for Police will move a number of amendments to this bill in the Legislative Council. As I have stated in this house, we are not opposed to the bill or the general objectives of the bill, but it is important to ensure that this legislation is as good as it can be and there are no unintended consequences for lawful licensed firearm owners. That is our position.

We certainly support further scrutiny to ensure, as I have stated, the legislation does not have any unintended consequences. Mental health checks were a recommendation of the Law Reform Commission and have merit at the outset, but a number of concerns have been raised about the implications for the general mental health of lawful firearm owners. We certainly support the objective of what the mental health checks are about in terms of the ensuring that people are of good health when they utilise firearms, but we also want to ensure that such checks are accessible and that these reforms in no way will dissuade somebody from seeking mental health support. That is just one example. A number of issues have been raised about the workings of this legislation.

I know that the government has worked with some of the farmers groups in relation to some amendments that have been made, and even made on the floor in relation to the primary producer licence and a range of other matters. The Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia, and the Western Australian Farmers Federation in particular have been quite engaged with the government in relation to this legislation, which is also why we support this motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I also understand that our shadow for police in the other place is not only flagging a number of different amendments to this legislation but also a motion to refer this bill to the Standing Committee on Legislation in the Legislative Council. That committee can look beyond just the scope of the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review and, more broadly, the policy and how it will work to ensure that this legislation can be as good as it can be.

I will leave my comments there and leave it to others to provide additional support.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [11.24 am]: I also rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in his motion —

That the Firearms Bill 2024 be referred to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee for consideration and report to the house by 20 June 2024.

I think it is an appropriate motion because, as has been pointed out many a time, for some reason this government does not want to use these legislation committees to scrutinise its legislation. We had a perfect example. The Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2024 is the one and only bill that this government, in three years, has sent to the Standing Committee on Legislation and, lo and behold, what happened? I will just read the first few lines of the second reading speech of Minister Templeman in the draft *Hansard* —

It gives me great pleasure to introduce the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2024. In doing so, I acknowledge the work of the Standing Committee on Legislation in the other place for its inquiry into the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023, and I thank the committee for its work. The committee considered the bill and found that none of its clauses unjustly offend against fundamental legislative principles. It noted, however, that for constitutional reasons, the bill ought to have been introduced in the Legislative Assembly. This is due to clause 56 ... I thank the committee for bringing this oversight to my attention and now rectify it.

There is the example. That is the one bill that this government has referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation and the committee found that it was introduced into the wrong house.

The Firearms Bill 2024 has 492 clauses and 237 pages, and this government refuses to let it go across to legislation committee. I think it would be appropriate if today the government and members of this chamber took the opportunity to look at their conscience and say this bill —

Ms C.M. Rowe interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, member. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Government members should look at their conscience and take the opportunity to send this bill across to the Standing Committee on Legislation. I have already done my piece on the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill, but here I am. We will be back here again discussing that bill once more because it was referred to the Standing Committee on Legislation. That opportunity was taken up and it was found that this government was lacking and we have to go through the whole package again. From my perspective, this is an opportunity.

Certainly, elements of the bill concern me. As I have said, it has 492 clauses. We have been on it all week. Some of the issues that concern me include the lack of communication and transparency. Obviously, we have spoken about that at length. More than 12 000, nearly 13 000, people signed the petition and wanted a lengthier consultation period. There is also a lack of clarity with the regulations that will be appearing down the track. We saw this scenario play out with the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill. When the regulations came in, we found that they were inappropriate in many forms and, eventually, the government withdrew that legislation. The challenge for us is trying to scrutinise this legislation with regulations that are down the track and on which we cannot get clarity. Some of the elements that are concerning include storage—we are still waiting for regulations on that—and the mental health assessments in relation to capacity.

I spoke of my concerns about the commissioner's ability to make decisions about a person's views or integrity. The commissioner will be able to assess a person's views and opinions. With regard to freedom of speech, the commissioner will be able to assess what people may have said on Facebook or other social media platforms. The commissioner will have the ability to cancel someone's licence on the basis of a person's views and the commissioner's assessment of that person's integrity. We have spoken about the mental health assessments and the potential of the commissioner or the minister to bring in 1 500 people a month to self-report to have a mental health assessment. Those assessments will be merged into the mental health system and the health system despite their lack of capacity under the stewardship of this government. We have question marks about the number of firearms and the lack of clarity for landholders about hunting. How many property letters can they provide, and how many per hectare? We did not get any clarity on that from the minister because, once again, it will be in the regulations.

We have some concerns over trade licences. I spoke to small businesses in regional areas, including those hardware businesses and the like that may have a small section for the sale of firearms and ammunition. My overriding concern, of course, is about the resources of the police department and the challenges that it will have because it is spread-eagled far and wide throughout the state. As I said in my contribution to the second reading debate, the firearms register will move to a digital platform. It asks people to update their details. I rang three times and there was no answer, and I left a message and there was no call back.

They are the concerns that I have and they are the types of things that the Standing Committee on Legislation could look at. We may find, as we did with the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill, that there is a problem. I think it was very appropriate for the Leader of the Opposition to speak about the timetable for the legislation, which will be gazetted in December. There will be no ability prior to the March 2025 election to work through a disallowance motion or the like. They are the challenges that we are putting up. I think this motion is very appropriate.

On the positive side, I agree with the minister about a couple of elements of the bill that I think are important, such as the transportation of firearms. I think that is a real improvement. I also agree that the property letter system was getting out of hand because of the trading of property letters and the like. That is not appropriate. I agree with some elements of the bill. However, I think the Leader of the Opposition was spot-on that the government's timetable does not allow any scrutiny of the regulations or an ability to disallow them. Now is the opportunity for government members in this place to stand up and be counted and support this motion in light of the fact that the one and only bill that this government has sent to the legislation committee in three years has to start again. It is not good enough.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [11.34 am]: I say at the outset that we will oppose the motion to refer the bill to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, and I will seek to amend it shortly. In reference to the justifications put by the opposition on this motion, the Firearms Bill 2024 is progressing through this place and the other place in the normal course. In fact, it has been afforded a very large amount of time in the chamber. We have been talking about it for four days, including in this place this week until past 1.00 in the morning and eight o'clock in the evening last night. At no time has there been any effort by the government to restrict the opposition's opportunity to respond or make amendments to it. I point out that despite the National Party and, on occasions, the Liberal Party voting against individual clauses throughout the bill, not once did they move an amendment. If members opposite had concerns about the legislation, they could have moved an amendment. If they believed that the limits being proposed were too onerous, they could have proposed an alternative, but they did not. If they believed that the concept of a health check with a mental health component was not right, they could have moved an amendment, but they did not. If they believed that the property letter reform was not appropriate, they could have moved an amendment, but they did not. I also make the observation that we will forward this legislation to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review for three months.

Mr R.S. Love: No, for five days.

Mr P. PAPALIA: It will be for the normal amount of time for that process in the other place. We are not constraining it in any way. It will go there and be afforded all the normal practices and processes of that place, and it will be debated in that place. Both houses of Parliament, as is the normal practice, will debate the bill. Normally, the bill would pass and the regulations would be developed, but we have brought that forward. We are trying to draft the regulations in advance of that process so that the stakeholders, individuals and interested parties can contribute to the shaping of the regulations and ensure that they meet their requirements when possible. That is what is happening. As I said throughout the debate, I encourage all interested parties, stakeholder groups and peak bodies to make a contribution. Get in touch with the police and talk about the specific elements of the regulation that will affect them and that they are interested in.

I will reflect a little bit on the justification that the Leader of the Opposition gave for delaying this entire process and his claim that somehow the regulations would not be subject to a disallowance motion and that at some future point the new Parliament might seek to disallow the regulations and we have to consider that that might leave the firearms legislation without any regulations. That is not true. As was indicated last night, a transitional licence and approvals process will be in place from the passage of the bill until the new regulations are in effect. That means there will be a regulatory process in place. Essentially, that means that the 1973 regulations will be extant until the new regulations come into effect.

Mr R.S. Love: But they come into effect in March. That is what you said last night.

Mr P. PAPALIA: The member knows that there will be a transition process. Different elements of the bill will come into effect at different times. The opposition's proposal is intended to delay the process. I understand that. Let us get on with the process. Let us let the other place go through its analysis of the bill in the same way as this place has. I indicated that I would ask the police to assess one of the opposition's areas of concern and consider whether there might be an alternative to amend that part of the bill. Beyond that, as I said, the Leader of the Opposition did not move any amendments. All he did was oppose things.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you —

Mr P. PAPALIA: It is undeniable that there has been adequate time for debate.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister. Just one moment. Members, please respect the word and direction of the chair. All members here will be heard in a sensible and positive environment.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Thank you, Acting Speaker. That is fine; I am wrapping up.

No, we do not accept the Leader of the Opposition's proposal. I want the bill to go on in the normal course and be debated in the other place and for us to move forward with reforming the legislation.

Finally, I will say one other thing. The Leader of the Opposition read part of recommendation 2 in the Law Reform Commission report, which we are complying with entirely. This bill will bring clarity to the legislation. The other thing it will do, which I note the Leader of the Opposition omitted to make any reference to, is implement recommendation 3, which will have a far more profound effect on the legislation and the regulation of firearms in Western Australia.

That recommendation says —

The *Firearms Act 1973* (WA) should contain a statement as to the purpose of the Firearms Legislation that confirms:

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

It is noteworthy that the Leader of the Opposition did not even bother to refer to that part of the Law Reform Commission recommendations.

Point of Order

Mr R.S. LOVE: I have a point of order.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I want to now move an amendment.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr P. Lilburne): Minister, can you please resume your seat. There is a point of order and the point of order will be heard in silence. Thank you for resuming your seat.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I believe the minister is misleading the house. I clearly said that the purpose of the referral was to balance the stated objective with the imposition that will be imposed on the community. That is the whole point of the referral.

Mr P. PAPALIA: Noting that that was not, and never could have been, a point of order —

The ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you, minister. Just one moment. In relation to the point of order raised by the Leader of the Opposition, there is no point of order. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to please allow the minister to continue providing his response in good faith. Minister for Police, please continue.

Amendment to Motion

Mr P. PAPALIA: I move —

That all words after “That the” be deleted and the following be inserted —

house notes the government’s existing commitment to refer the Firearms Bill 2024 to the Legislative Council’s Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [11.42 am]: I want to speak very briefly on the amendment. The minister is seeking to make an amendment that will essentially mean that the bill will not be referred to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee of this house, which is directly contrary to the motion, and, furthermore, will be referred to the Standing Committee on Uniform Legislation and Statutes Review of the other place. It is my understanding that that is an automatic referral. I think it is a misleading amendment because the bill will already be referred because of its relationship to the National Firearms Agreement. We note that that referral has a narrower nature and the committee will not look at the policy objectives so much as the effect of having a piece of legislation that is required to reflect the National Firearms Agreement. I point out that the amendment is fundamentally flawed and should be rejected.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I have been informed that the minister does not have a right of reply on the amendment. The question is that the words to be deleted be deleted.

Division

Amendment (deletion of words) put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mr P. Lilburne) casting his vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (41)

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

Noes (6)

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

Amendment thus passed.

Amendment (insertion of words) put and passed.

Motion, as Amended

Question put and passed.

Third Reading

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [11.51 am]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [11.51 am]: I would like to make a contribution to the third reading debate on the Firearms Bill 2024, and, in doing so, reflect a little on the discussions that we have had over the last days in consideration in detail. The minister advisers are not here, but I would like to thank them for their attendance at Parliament quite late on Tuesday—it was Wednesday morning by the time we finished—and for another evening contribution on Wednesday. I thank them for their service and attendance here and the advice that they have provided to the Parliament. It is always important to note the work of the ministerial advisers and the knowledge that they bring to this place.

I want to run through some of the issues that we considered. First, I will refer to those matters where it is clear there is a difference of opinion and an understanding needs to be brought to the situation. The National Party has a different view as opposed to the Liberal Party on the bill, and we will oppose the bill at its various stages. Of course, if our concerns had been addressed, that would not be the case. As we pointed out throughout many of the clauses that we went through, there is support for those changes. In fact, numbers of my colleagues agitated for a review of the legislation by the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, because the existing legislation is clunky and very old-fashioned and needs to be reviewed in many areas. Some of those areas that have manifested over the years include concerns over the time required to go through some of the processes; the cost of the processes; and existing arrangements making it very hard for the transport of firearms, ammunition and parts, which has led to dealers across the state not having reasonable access to those things. It has been pleasing to see that some consideration has been given to that last matter in the legislation and that a transporter will no longer need to be authorised to be in possession of a firearm, a part or ammunition, as was the case before. No doubt that led to Australia Post being very reluctant to be involved in the transportation of firearms around the state, which made it very difficult for members of the public and dealers. This is something that we had been seeking to have addressed for some time, so it is good to see, but with other matters there were clear differences.

There was a division on clause 29, “Firearm to which Individual Licence applies”. We felt that consideration should have been given to an amendment so that a situation would not arise in which a person would require two firearms licences to use a gun for two different purposes, but, rather, they could use the one firearm for two purposes. We divided on that clause because we were not satisfied with the explanations.

There was also disagreement and a division on clause 30, “Limit on number of firearms under Individual Licence”. We have always taken the view that the Law Reform Commission’s position was that the way to limit the number of firearms was to establish the genuine need criteria, and, through that, a person would be able to have the appropriate number of firearms.

We also divided on clause 32, “Minimum activity requirements for Individual Licence”, and will be seeking to amend it in the other place. We have not moved amendments here because, unlike the government, we do not want to bring in ill-considered amendments and have to make more amendments on the floor of the chamber. We would like parliamentary counsel to look at the amendments and write them formally so that they are effective and do what we would like them to do. With regard to the requirements for individual licences, the minister made it quite clear that will be no intention for the minimum activity requirement to relate to hunting licences, and he refused to consider removing the term “individual licence” and replace it with “competition licence”, because that is actually the licence that will be monitored for the minimum activity test. The concern is that if we have a hunting activity test, how will that be done; and will that become an unnecessary burden on the property owners who gave the hunting authority in the first place to those who are accessing their land? We divided on that clause and we will seek to amend it in the other house.

The Nationals also opposed and divided on clause 40, “Suitability of land for hunting using firearm”, because of those concerns around clause 32, as much as anything else, albeit there were a few other concerns.

Finally, clause 90, “Licence must be for genuine business”, requires that a dealer, trader or repairer must establish that they are a genuine business. We expressed the concern that there is a disparity in the scale and operation between smaller regional operators and larger specialist metropolitan operators. In many towns, communities and areas, someone will be capable of providing a valuable service in the area. They can provide the serviceability certificates for firearms and the storage capacity for people. If people are going away or going to hospital or whatever, and need to put a firearm into storage somewhere, they can utilise that facility in a nearby community. Ammunition can

be bought from those dealers. Perhaps firearms can be bought; sometimes the dealer may not directly sell them. Perhaps that will be somewhere people can go to get their firearms repaired. As we know, a firearm owner who holds a hunting, competition, primary producer or any other licence will not really have the ability to do any repairs themselves. As we learnt in the consideration in detail stage, the limitations around what will be considered a repair and what will just be maintenance are still a bit grey, but the legislation is very restrictive on repairs or maintenance and what is actually manufacturing. We learnt that, for instance, a firearm owner will not be able to screw anything into the stock of a rifle that might enable them to carry it with a strap. To me, it seems a bit of an overreach that they cannot go to Bunnings, get a couple of screws and put them in the stock of the gun to make it easier to carry, but that is the case. That means it is important that we have these local businesses where a firearm owner can easily go to do things legally, because everyone wants to do the right thing by the law. We do not know how the minimum trade tests will be formed. We are told that our concerns will be listened to, but we seek to amend the legislation so that there will be no disadvantage for regional communities due to the imposition of this provision.

A lot of other discussion took place. As I said, I think that the people providing the advice provided answers as best they could, but it is very clear that there is a lot to come in this space with the regulations and also the discretion of the police. I asked in consideration in detail for there to be some sort of list provided on how the delegations would work within the department, how many people would be making these decisions and at what level. I got an answer from the minister that certain decisions would be made at inspector level, I think some decisions will be made at commander level, and other matters would be handled by sergeants et cetera. But when we have many people acting under delegation who are all decision-makers exercising their own discretion and there is not a clear outline of how that discretion needs to be considered, we get decisions that are unpredictable and not always consistent. That is one thing we are trying to get away from and one of the reasons I felt it appropriate to refer this to be looked at by the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. I believe that there is still a high degree of uncertainty and an application's eventual outcome will be based upon who assesses the application.

We saw that earlier. If we go back to when we were assessing whether a person could come through the borders when the police had hundreds of people assessing all those matters during the COVID pandemic, many members of this place know that frequently people who were ruled out resubmitted the same application two or three times and were eventually accepted. There was no difference in the information; it was just a different person assessing the application. I know that happened on several occasions that I am personally aware of. We will always have unpredictable outcomes when various people are making decisions. That is why we need more clarity and direction around what is being assessed and the criteria for the assessment. Through this process, we have not had the opportunity to do that, and many issues are then left unanswered.

I return to the discussion on the regulations. In making the now failed referral to the standing committee, I pointed out that last night, the minister revealed at the very end of the consideration that the regulations were expected to be gazetted in December. I point out that Parliament rises in November, so there will be no sitting days of Parliament between the regulations being gazetted and the legislation coming in in March. At that time, there will have been a repeal of the old regulations. I do not know whether there will be an opportunity for Parliament to repeal a matter that is already in operation. Typically, Parliament does not sit until about April, which will be a good month after the commencement of all the changes, and the other place will not change over until May. The only realistic opportunity for a disallowance would be if the government realised that there was a mess, as happened with the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation. If the numbers in the Legislative Council change significantly, I think it is 14 days of sitting—I am not sure of the Council's standing orders—before a disallowance would be possible. Also, the other place may not have an opportunity to meet before that deadline occurs. Realistically, there will not be a chance for Parliament to look at the regulations. I think that really needs to be addressed. It can be addressed in the bill. I am told by people who know more about these things than I do that it is possible for a bill to have a disallowance procedure within it, but, also, if the government were to reconsider the timing of the commencement and make it maybe April or May, there would be an opportunity for the new Parliament and new members to come together and discuss it. The old Parliament will not have an opportunity as in the ordinary operation of things it will not sit during that period. I put on the record that I think there is justification for a re-examination of those commencement and disallowance procedures.

I am sure that many other members want to make contributions and go through the various matters that are of concern, but, broadly, we know that this mandatory health assessment document was tabled during discussions yesterday. It formed part of the discussion because it was raised and tabled by the minister during the discussion, so it is fair enough to look at that. People have been informed of some issues in this document. I take the view that the minister said that this is a working document. It was true at a certain time; maybe the figures have moved on. But we know that the document has a number of options for the transition requirements and the physical and mental health assessments that will need to be done. Options 1 and 2 were considered to be the best scenarios to prevent the health system from being overwhelmed upon proclamation. Within the department's own document, there is concern about the effect of this measure on the health system and the ability of the general health system to provide those 90 000 assessments in a timely manner. That is something we have been at pains to point out, especially in regional areas, where there are already severe shortages of medical practitioners. This measure will add hugely to the burden

in those areas. Option 1 is a one-to-five-year implementation of the requirement. That would mean approximately 1 500 people a month going through the process. Option 3 is that upon proclamation, all licence holders would be required to undertake a health assessment immediately upon renewal of their licence. That would mean approximately 7 000 to 8 000 health assessments a month, because all existing licence holders would need to renew their licence within 12 months. We know that will be a huge burden on the medical system. The Minister for Police, or the police, have apparently chosen to have the five-year transition in the legislation.

In the general information, the medical practitioner is not the decision-maker about a person's suitability. The medical practitioners will not make the decision; the police will make the decision, based on the evidence that the medical practitioner provides. How will the police make that decision, given the delegations and somewhat subjective nature of the matters? That is a concern and is something that needs further examination.

There is an example of a Western Australia police health assessment form, as part of the document, and a checklist of things to go through. It goes through a person's medical history, including: high blood pressure, physical injuries, diabetes—those are only some of the things—hearing loss, any mental health issue, sleep apnoea et cetera. People have a range of medical fitness. The minister has advanced that the tests are well-known, because we have them for driving heavy vehicles or flying an aircraft. However, this is a different matter.

If someone wants to go to the Morawa gun club and shoot a shotgun—I could think of an example that I used in my second reading contribution—however, they may have a heart condition; they may have some of the other matters; they may have diabetes or they may have hearing loss. They may have. I am not sure that that should necessarily rule them out from having a firearm licence. They can drive a car out there—they can drive two tonnes, or if it is a Dodge Ram ute, it might be three tonnes of lethal weapon—the weapon that claims nearly 200 lives every year on Western Australian roads. They can take one of those out there and apparently they are not a threat; however, if they walk over to the standing point and shoot at clay pigeons, apparently there is an amazing risk that we all face if this person has diabetes or hearing loss.

The matters of concern in that are: who is the decision-maker; what are the requirements and how far into a person's medical records can the commissioner or delegates go? We know that they can now seek information and by virtue of the fact that someone wants a firearm licence, they have to give up their right to any privacy if they have medical records. That is a significant impost on people that needs to be considered. I get the whole thing about elevated public safety, but there are other principles in civil society around protections of privacy and rights that people have to their privacy. The minister said that, for instance, there is no right to freedom of expression in Australia. That is not necessarily the case, because we are signatories to many international agreements, which carry that requirement; therefore, yes, there may not be a bill of rights that says that, but there are plenty of implied or expressed freedoms of speech, which are carried out throughout those agreements as well as the implied rights under the High Court's rulings over the years.

We know there is worry about opinions people have had at some point in their life. We do not know how long that will affect them. Many people say silly things over their life and in this day and age, of course, because of social media and the internet, things are there forever. There is concern about how much time will be spent trying to find what a person's opinion might be. Obviously, there will be signals that someone might be a risk and that procedure has always been there. If someone is an obvious risk because of their associations and the like—yes, there are opportunities. We do not believe that that has been adequately explained and, of course, we know through the discussions we have had over the past couple of days that there are a number of other issues that other members have expressed concern about.

I am conscious of the time and I know there are other members who would like to speak on this third reading; therefore, I will conclude my contribution and allow others to rise with their specific concerns or views following the consideration in detail.

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt) [12.15 pm]: I will not take too much of the house's time; however, I do want to rise and speak to the third reading. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has been very consistent and detailed in the analysis that has occurred through consideration in detail. I add my thanks to the Minister for Police and his staff. There were a couple of late evenings required to get through what is a significant piece of legislation.

I do not want to add to what the Leader of the Opposition has said about the matters that the National Party has raised about its concerns with the current legislation. I want to raise a matter that the minister spoke to as part of the referral debate and the unwillingness of the government to consider referring the bill to a Legislative Assembly committee or to the Standing Committee on Legislation, which we have heard from other members has only had one piece of legislation in this term of Parliament. Using the minister's argument, committees are superfluous. We should only use the consideration in detail process through Parliament, and there is no need for our committees to look at the detail, the policy, and to be able to call experts to provide advice. That is the purpose of the committee system. This government has a number of committees, which it has members assigned to them—many more members of the government, and I suggest that the work that the member for Willagee, Hon Peter Tinley, is doing on domestic gas policy is something that is of great interest and is very useful. However, according to the Minister for Police,

there is no purpose in using any of the committees that are designed to look at particular issues related to justice, or seeing whether the legislation delivers as it is intended and written. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Legislation, which I raised in my second reading contribution. There is merit in having one committee go through the process outside consideration in detail. It speaks volumes about this government's commitment to transparency and willingness to deviate from its position. It is very disappointing. It is disappointing for the thousands of people who have contacted us or tried to participate in this process and who did not feel that their views had been adequately heard during consultation. I think there have been enough issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition, other members and me during consideration in detail that show it is not a perfect piece of legislation; yet, when we come to the management of this, the Western Australia police and those who will be required to interpret it, we need to have it as clear as possible.

I return to one of the matters that I raised concerns about, which was the very subjective and, I think, ill-defined process in which someone is determined to be a fit and proper person. There is no question that someone should be, but it is how we arrive at whether someone is a fit and proper person. When we have words like, "views, opinions and attitudes", or a "person's way of living or domestic circumstances"—there may be a particular interpretation of that, but that could be interpreted differently by subsequent commissioners or those who were not involved in the writing of the legislation. In relation to the physical and mental health checks, again, concerns have been raised about potential unintended consequences. They are real. No-one is saying that there is not some desire to make sure that people who hold a licence are mentally and physically well but there are many permutations of what that may look like and how the legislation will be applied. As I said before, that determination is largely subjective if we look at it on face value—in black and white—in the legislation. I think a number of people in the community will be concerned, and probably the police at some stage, because a broad interpretation factor will still come into play.

The minister continues to say that this is a binary argument, and if members do not support the legislation, they are essentially promoting a culture in which everyone can have an unlimited number of guns. I absolutely reject that. At present, someone requires a genuine reason to hold a firearms licence. Clearly, some people have managed to get around that under the current licensing laws.

Although we are creating new legislation, we should be mindful of the fact that even though the Law Reform Commission did not recommend setting limits, it was very clear about the fact that people should have a genuine reason to seek and hold a firearms licence. We agree that it is a privilege, not a right. I disagree with the characterisation of those who are questioning the number, the limits and the process and that it necessarily follows that we think everyone should have unlimited access to firearms. We do not, I have not, I never have and I do not want the community to think that. That would probably put me at odds with some people in the community but I think a vast majority of people think that we need some robustness in the approach given to licences. We have never had a gun culture like the one we have seen in the United States. That is not something that we would support.

The last thing I wanted to touch on is the discussion that the Leader of the Opposition and members of the Nationals WA raised around regulations. There are unknowns. Sadly, we have been burnt on this front with the experiences we have had with this government over other legislation. We have already heard lines such as "Just trust us", "We're working through it", "We're talking" and "We're consulting" from this government. I am afraid that the horse has bolted in terms of our trust in that circumstance. The committee and the committee process would have given us some comfort that others would delve into this bill in depth, not just this Parliament. This Parliament has a role. We have done our job. We have sat through consideration in detail. Committees have a process and a purpose. This government chooses to use them when it suits and chooses to ignore them or diminish their responsibilities and value when it suits, and I think that is very disappointing.

With that, I will sit and allow others to make their contribution. I simply say that I think the Leader of the Opposition and members of the Nationals WA have done their very best, along with our colleagues, to interrogate the legislation before us. I stand with our colleagues in the National Party in saying that I cannot support the legislation in its current form.

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [12.23 pm]: I also rise to contribute to the third reading debate on the Firearms Bill 2024. From the outset, as many members would be aware, we have raised a number of issues on this bill. As I have also stated, our shadow Minister for Police in the upper house intends to move a number of amendments to this bill.

During this debate, we urged the government to refer this piece of legislation to a number of committees to ensure that it does not have unintended consequences and that it is the best piece of legislation it can be. We know that there is a need to reform the gun laws in Western Australia. Apart from the amendments to legislation that were made following the tragic incident in Port Arthur, it has been some time since firearms laws were upgraded. It is certainly important that we consider reforms on a number of different matters, in particular, the property letter system, which I know had the support of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, the Western Australian Farmers Federation, the Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association, vegetablesWA and Wines of Western Australia. We also need a number of other reforms that have the objective of ensuring that we have sensible, accessible and safe policy on the management of firearms in this state.

We have flagged that the shadow Minister for Police in the other place will move an amendment relating to the scope of the committee that we hope the legislation will be referred to in order to ensure that it not only looks beyond uniform legislation, but also at the policy and intent of the legislation to ensure that there are no unintended consequences. We also support the move to refer this legislation to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. We support the intent of the legislation, which is to reduce the stockpiling of firearms but, as I stated in my second reading contribution, if that is the intention, I would again question why there has not been a move to strengthen the genuine need test and the approach the government has taken on limits. As I have stated, an amendment relating to that will be moved.

In relation to a fit and proper person and mental health checks, although we support the recommendation of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia that those who have firearms are of sound mind and not a danger to themselves and others, which has obvious merit, it is vitally important that there are no unintended consequences and that it has no negative impact on the mental health of lawful firearm owners in this state and the accessibility of mental health support. We certainly would not like to see people dissuaded from seeking the support that they require.

As I stated in my second reading contribution, the long-term view of the PGA and WAFF is that any changes to existing firearms legislation should include a separate category for primary producers. We are pleased that that is supported by the government. We intend to ensure that this legislation does not have unintended consequences for lawful firearm owners in this state.

As I stated, this legislation will now go through a process in the Legislative Council where our shadow Minister for Police, who has engaged with the lawful firearm community, including many stakeholder groups, will move a number of amendments.

I will leave my comments there as I understand other members would like to speak.

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [12.28 pm]: I rise to speak on the Firearms Bill 2024. I want to say from the outset that I understand and recognise the enormous amount of work that everyone has undertaken to update the bill and implement necessary changes. I also want to point out that I understand the importance of this legislation—it is incredibly important—and the need to update it. I also understand that public safety should be paramount. However, given the importance of this bill and the significant changes that it poses, coupled with calls from thousands of people who have suggested they need more time to consider it, I do not think that is unwarranted.

There are still many unanswered questions. Everyone understands the devil is in the detail and many people in my region are scarred by what happened when the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Bill went through. There has been a strong call from my constituents who are nervous about what this bill will mean and its interpretation. I understand the minister has acknowledged that he has spoken with many different groups. I am not sure whether it is because of the remoteness of my area, but many people are only just finding out about the buyback scheme and the bill. They are quite removed from what happens in Parliament and they are concerned by that.

I also want to make the point that the intention of the bill is good and everyone would agree with it. Nobody wants to see firearms running rampant throughout the state. That is not anyone's intention, but it is shrouded in subjectivity. It is clear from debate that improvements to the bill and consultation are still needed. A review by the committee, in my view, can be seen only as a positive. We are here with the same objective, which is to make the bill as robust, watertight and workable as it can be. I think the unintended consequences with some of these issues raised still have not been fully explored. From my interpretation of what we went through at the consideration in detail stage, a lack of historical information has been cited. I understand that we have substandard systems, but I do not think it has allowed for a comparative analysis as to how we have arrived at some of the decisions in this bill.

Some of the things raised in my patch include the reform of the property letter system. That is absolutely necessary. I come from a pastoral background, and I understand that and agree it needs reform. I am a bit concerned about the consequences of that when we do not have the detail on how many letters and how many acres per letter will be involved. I know the Minister for Police said there will be a limit on the number of authorisations a person will be able to give for the purpose of genuine reason for the licence in the first place. Firstly, there needs to be a genuine reason—absolutely. But I think we do not know what the impact will be for some of these properties, such as the million-acre blocks in the north that need a great deal of vermin control. They are often left to do it on their own and dozens of shooters go through properties at any one point in time in a year, and that is the only way they can control vermin. Without being able to get any clarity on what types of properties are able to issue, what kinds of letters and how many, and what impact that will have, it is difficult for people to understand what the devil in the detail will be. We also have the issue I raised in relation to people who shoot on these properties for sustenance versus people who shoot these properties for the eradication of pests. There are two different purposes. That issue with the property letters is raised with me regularly. There is definitely a need for the scrutiny process to happen and I think this is what I am trying to demonstrate in terms of drilling down and the magnitude of what might happen.

I will summarise this issue very quickly because many people have raised this. There are people who seemingly are not aware of the compensation buyback scheme. Not everyone belongs to the groups that have been consulted.

Not everyone is a member of these groups. The adequacy of the compensation also has been raised with me, and whether it is near market value or not at market value is concerning people. The word “voluntary” concerns people because they believe the scheme is not voluntary and they are law-abiding owners of these firearms. The issue of inadequate health services in regional areas to undertake health assessments has also been raised with me. Doctors have contacted me saying they are unsure what it will mean to them and what the ramifications will be. The large number of people, particularly in regional areas, and the lack of healthcare workers is a concern for some people.

The storage requirements issue has been raised with me. I refer also to the impact on trade for rural supply shops and small businesses. Some supply shops are within hardware stores and people are concerned that the standards around the dealerships might disproportionately affect regional and rural shops, particularly through limiting their ability to provide essential services for regional communities. Another issue that has been raised is the licence types and limits. The bill will introduce various types of licences with specific purposes, but people are saying the removal of recreational shooting is not aligned to the National Firearms Agreement. This is the issue that I raised in relation to people shooting for sustenance. Where do they fit in, and will that diminish the number of letters a property owner can give to someone to eradicate their pests? I refer to security and storage and the capacity around that.

I go back to the health assessments. The consensus is that there is an overreach. People who have disabilities are concerned about where they fit within this and what will and will not be allowed and how they might be granted or not granted a licence. The digital licence has been raised with me. It was raised because of not only the lack of Telstra lines and access to the digital space at times in the north, but also security and concerns about where that data might end up. People have cited ending up in *The West Australian* as an example. They are concerned and want confidence that that is not going to be an issue going forward. People want to know what will be in the regulations. The point the Leader of the Opposition made is relevant because there will not be any time to disallow or review the regulations. That is of concern to a lot of people.

I will end there. I want to say thank you again to everyone who has contributed to this bill. It was an arduous task. I believe it needs further scrutiny. I acknowledge that everyone has a differing view on this, but I think everyone in general wants the same outcome, which is public safety. I think that a large number of people are doing the right thing. I would be keen to understand how the illegal guns are being dealt with in terms of sourcing those and reining them in, because there is no data, as the minister said, to find out which offences were committed with illegal guns and which were committed with licensed guns. It is difficult to make that comparison. Also, I am very conscious of unintended consequences, which worry me a lot. That is a reason for it to go to the committee. In good conscience, in this instance, in alignment with my community and their views, I will not be able to support the bill as it stands rights now in its current form.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.37 pm]: I want to make a brief contribution. First, I want to thank the advisers who were here late at night and for several hours this week, so thank you to them. I acknowledge our many primary producers around the state, many of whom are in my electorate of Roe. Many of them have raised some excellent points about this bill. We had the Wagin Woolorama a couple of weeks ago and many people filed into the Nationals WA stand and spoke to us about things concerning them. I acknowledge them along with the many other people—recreational shooters, hunters and others—who have contacted us over the past weeks and months. I acknowledge that.

I will restate the case for what I thought was a lack of consultation. A 62-page document in October proposed significant changes to all aspects of licensing and the regulatory regime for firearm owners and a very brief period of consultation. Of course, as previously stated, nearly 13 000 Western Australians petitioned the government. As we have pointed out, we are very concerned about the scenarios of the health system being overwhelmed upon proclamation and potentially 90 000 health assessments being submitted. The minister has explained how health assessments will be spaced out over time, but we are talking about potentially 1 500 health assessments per month, which will put a lot of stress on our currently undermanned and overworked health system. I, along with the Leader of the Opposition, have question marks over those disorders and some of those health items mentioned such as heart disease, arthritis, diabetes or alcohol intake. According to the Western Australia Police Force, 1 500 mandatory health assessment will be required every month, yet the Minister for Police claims that he does not want to overload the health system. That is a concern to me.

The category on which the Commissioner of Police will have the ability to decide whether someone is fit to have a licence is subjective. The minister may not be aware that Australia is party to seven core international human rights treaties, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression as contained in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Department of the Attorney-General of Australia states —

The right to freedom of opinion is the right to hold opinions without interference, and cannot be subject to any exception or restriction.

That is my concern with these subjective provisions.

The other thing, of course, is the implementation of arbitrary caps on firearm ownership that are contrary to the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission’s 2016 *Review of the WA Firearms Act 1973(WA)* and

WA police. I have concerns that WA police have been well and truly involved in the writing of the legislation and now its enforcement. As was said earlier today, we wanted to refer this legislation—490-odd clauses—to the Standing Committee on Legislation, but this government does not seem to want to go down that path. I think that is a mistake, as we saw with the approach taken with the Sports and Entertainment Trust Bill 2023. I support the Leader of the Opposition, and the Nationals WA certainly oppose this bill.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [12.42 pm] — in reply: I thank members for their contributions. I will address a couple of things. Firstly, the suggestion from the Leader of the Opposition that it is ill considered to make amendments on the floor is a bit contradictory considering there are amendments from the floor that the member commends. The amendment suggested by the members for Collie–Preston and Vasse, and which had been raised just prior to the legislation entering Parliament by the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board, related to allowing more than one primary producer licence to a property. The Leader of the Opposition applauded that. The concept and the suggestion of that amendment was brought to us too late to include in the drafting. Were we to not consider it on the floor of the Parliament, we would be ignoring that opportunity to correct and improve the bill—which we did. The Leader of the Opposition was supportive of that process. There is a purpose to the debate and the consideration of issues raised in this house and the other place. I look forward to that process playing out.

In the course of the debate, the Leader of the Opposition and a range of people identified that the current law prevents competition shooters from utilising their competition firearms for hunting and asked whether they would be able to seek a hunting licence under the new legislation. That is an interesting observation. The reasoning behind the law is that the police do not believe that some competition firearms should be allowed for hunting. At the moment, that is the rule. The regulation is that people cannot use a competition firearm for hunting.

Debate interrupted, pursuant to standing orders.

[Continued on page 1312.]

MOGUMBER — COMMUNITY HUB

Statement by Member for Moore

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [12.45 pm]: I rise today to commend the extraordinary efforts of the Mogumber community. In little more than 18 months, the Mogumber Outback Club has built a dedicated rodeo arena, hosted two sold-out rodeo events, each boasting up to 3 500 attendees, and bought and renovated the local pub that now serves meals seven nights a week and employs a manager and local staff. This small but mighty community bought the 132-year-old tavern in December 2022. Locals built the business case, knowing that the Mogumber Outback Club's New Years Eve Rodeo event would generate ongoing funds for this type of strategic project.

Establishing a subcommittee of the Mogumber Outback Club, the committee renamed the tavern the Mogumber Hub, and locals wholeheartedly embrace it as the hub of their community. Within just 10 days, the club had sourced the funds to purchase the property, via 11 local lenders who are acting as the bank rather than as shareholders. The hub was closed for six months while the serious work of renovating got underway. Mogumber Hub board member, Pauline Bantock said that locals dedicated countless hours to the renovation, with vast sums of materials and time donated. She said that the renovation really gave locals a sense of purpose and ownership. She found many local people who had useful skills they had not previously known about, and 85 per cent of the renovations were carried out by local volunteer labour.

It was a great privilege to attend the Mogumber Hub foundation event last Saturday. That event recognised the 121 donors who had all contributed \$1 000 each to enable the renovation. Other major hub sponsors include local businesses Gilmac and Mogumber Plains. It was also a time to remember Scott Metcalfe, one of the seven Mogumber Hub board members, who tragically passed away this month. With a background in grano work, Scott's input and expertise was invaluable in building the Mogumber rodeo arena and the renovation of the pub. His passion for the historical elements of the renovation enabled the community to restore and repurpose when it was possible. Rest in comfort, Scotty.

VOLUNTEERING — RIVERTON ELECTORATE

Statement by Member for Riverton

DR J. KRISHNAN (Riverton — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.47 pm]: My statement today is to sincerely thank every volunteer in the Riverton community. I am very honoured and privileged to represent the Riverton community because the community is vibrant, harmonious, energetic and contributes in a big way to Western Australia as a whole. Volunteering starts with the school canteen volunteers, members of the parents and citizens associations, the school boards and people who organise quiz nights, of which I was fortunate to witness a few. It takes a lot of effort to contribute to a school. In the sporting community, volunteering starts with the coaches and managers to the people who organise the training sessions and the games to keep the community together. Thank you one and all. Multiple culturally and linguistically diverse community group associations and organisations are completely run by volunteers. I sincerely thank them for their efforts.

I turn now to the Scouts, the Rotary International, Lions Clubs Australia and the RSL. Many associations are entirely managed by volunteers. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone for their efforts. I would like to provide two statistics. First, volunteers contribute 1.3 per cent of the state's gross state product. Second, the return on investment on volunteer spending is \$4.7 for every \$1 invested. That is a 470 per cent return, which is huge. The volunteering community is what it is today because of the tremendous efforts of the volunteers who day in and day out make the community better every time they volunteer. Once again, my sincere thanks to every volunteer in Riverton.

LYMPHOEDEMA ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIA

Statement by Member for Vasse

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [12.49 pm]: I rise to shine a light on the excellent work undertaken by the Lymphoedema Association Australia to help those living with the chronic disease of lymphoedema by providing information, treatment and the support required to live well. March has been designated Shine a Light on Lymphoedema month to raise awareness for those suffering from this condition and to raise funds for a dedicated phone line to provide further support for those living with lymphoedema.

Lymphoedema is a breakdown in the lymphatic system that results in chronic and permanent swelling of one or more body parts. It is more than just a physical condition, as it can be debilitating and disfiguring, affecting people physically, emotionally, psychologically and financially. It is conservatively estimated that around 70 000 people in Australia are living with lymphoedema. This number is only estimated because the condition is often unreported or confused with other conditions in its early stages. This is why Shine a Light on Lymphoedema in March is so important. Landmarks across Western Australia will be lit up in blue in recognition of lymphoedema. People at greatest risk of developing lymphoedema are often already suffering from conditions such as cancer, trauma and cellulitis. Lymphoedema can also be hereditary. Some of the common signs and symptoms are swelling to a part of the body and feelings of heaviness and tension. It is important that lymphoedema is diagnosed professionally to exclude other causes of oedema, or swelling.

I encourage Western Australians to get behind this very important awareness campaign. I also congratulate all those at LAA for the wonderful work that they do on behalf of many others.

LIONS EYE INSTITUTE

Statement by Member for Nedlands

DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands) [12.51 pm]: The Lions Eye Institute has celebrated its fortieth year of providing eye care to Western Australians with a photographic competition and exhibition, *Eye to Eye*, to demonstrate the impact and importance of eye health and care. Last week, I had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the photographic exhibition and award ceremony for the best photos. I would like to congratulate the five winners: Sam Bayes in the children's category and Ross Gudgeon, Mostafa Mozaffari, Beth Baker and Vaibhav Shah.

The exhibition marries the art and science of eye care—storytelling through photos about the impact of vision impairment and loss, the importance of eye care and the role of research—and, with the eyes being the windows to the soul, powerful photos portray how our eyes show our happiness, sadness, joy and vulnerability. The stunning nature photography also demonstrates the importance of eyesight for survival—for monitoring and surveillance and both hunting for, and avoiding being, prey.

The winning pictures included, for example, a close-up view of the eyes of an octopus, a puffer fish and a Broome crocodile. Beth's picture, titled "A blurred world—beach towel hide and seek begins!", captured the impact of vision loss, giving an insight into the daily experience of navigating the world with reduced eyesight. Mostafa's photo, portraying an intense experience of worry, captured how we can know how someone is feeling just through looking at their eyes.

Since its establishment in 1983, the Lions Eye Institute has become a global centre of excellence, combining world-class medical research with high-quality eye-care delivery. The institute has continued to expand its reach geographically, taking its services to some of the communities most impacted by eye health issues, particularly through the Kimberley eye hub in Broome.

This powerful exhibition is on until 3 April at the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research in Nedlands. I encourage people to visit and to learn.

ESPERANCE BAY TURF CLUB

Statement by Member for Roe

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [12.53 pm]: I would like to acknowledge the Esperance Bay Turf Club, whose members and volunteers work tirelessly to present a thrilling season of racing, including the Esperance Cup Day meeting on 3 March. My colleague Colin de Grussa and I were the joint sponsors of the first race on the card, and our congratulations go to the connections of the winner, Profit Rocket. The feature race on the card was the 2 000-metre Freight Lines Group Esperance Cup, won in handsome style by Manavendra.

Congratulations go to those behind the horses who step out onto the track and to those behind the scenes who make the racing season possible. The Esperance Bay Turf Club president, Ken Norton, is one of the committed locals who work hard to ensure the race round's success. Supported by vice-presidents Rob Gilbert and Josh Brown, he leads a committee that includes Kevin Scott, Jo Offen, Chelsi Forder, Greg Hunt, Robyn Hill, Alan Jones, Mick Creedon, Ian Scott, Sheila Oorschot and Sascha Bozanich. Along with the stewards, clerks, clerk of scales, timekeeper, judges, starter, medical and veterinary teams, and volunteers, this team ensures that races continue to be a feature of Esperance's summer season. Racing and Wagering Western Australia's CEO, Ian Edwards, has stated that the goldfields–Esperance area generates \$54.3 million of the \$1.3 billion the racing industry contributes to the state's economy each year. It also underpins 430 full-time jobs, but what it contributes is far more than what is measured in monetary terms.

The Esperance Bay Turf Club members and volunteers are not only working hard to keep an industry afloat, but also playing a vital role in strengthening the social fabric of the Esperance community. The races bring people together and bolster the sense of community that is so essential in the regions. For that, they deserve our thanks and gratitude.

HARMONY WEEK

Statement by Member for Mount Lawley

MR S.A. MILLMAN (Mount Lawley — Parliamentary Secretary) [12.55 pm]: I rise today in the spirit of Harmony Week, which is celebrated this week. It is a time to recognise and celebrate Australia's cultural diversity, and to promote inclusivity, respect and a sense of belonging for all members of our society. I would like to commend the exemplary efforts of Dr Tony Buti, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, and Paul Papalia, Minister for Police. Their unwavering dedication to fostering harmony and inclusivity within our communities in a way that promotes community safety deserves recognition. Alongside the rest of the Cook Labor government, their commendable endeavours in promoting dialogue, understanding and tolerance are particularly noteworthy, especially considering the challenges that we currently confront.

I commend the courage and resilience of the federal member for Perth, Hon Patrick Gorman, and the federal member for Cowan, Hon Dr Anne Aly, who are champions for inclusivity and multiculturalism. They have been victims of harassment and intimidation at community events by those who seek to silence their voices and undermine the democratic process. These appalling acts of harassment and intimidation by individuals in our community are propelled by a sweeping wave of a contemptuous disregard for the principles we celebrate this week, a disregard driven by hate and extremist ideologies. It is unacceptable that our respected leaders are targeted in such a manner and undermines social cohesion. In a time when we should be fostering unity, understanding and inclusivity, we find ourselves wrestling with a tiny minority that sows a cacophony of discord and division. Instead of embracing diversity as our strength, we witness prejudice and discrimination. Rather than nurturing dialogue and empathy, we see polarisation and animosity.

It is incumbent upon all of us to promote and practice harmony and understanding. We must face difficult conversations with respect. We must challenge harmful stereotypes. We must stand in solidarity with those who are marginalised or oppressed. I stand before members today to call for the voice of moderation as we stare down extremists and hate. Let us not allow the dissonance of conflict to drown out the harmony that we strive to create. Together, let us work towards a future in which diversity is celebrated, differences are respected and unity prevails.

HENRY ROBERT (HARRY) MOODY — 100TH BIRTHDAY

Statement by Member for North West Central

MS M. BEARD (North West Central) [12.57 pm]: Today, I acknowledge the amazing life of Mr Henry Robert Moody, known as Harry, who celebrated his 100th birthday on 8 March 2024. He is a truly remarkable individual. Harry has had a life filled with adventure, resilience and unwavering dedication to family and community. Born in Wyndham, New Zealand, Harry's journey began together with five sisters and three brothers. At the age of 18, Harry enlisted in the New Zealand Army during World War II, serving bravely in Egypt and Italy. It was in Italy that he met his first wife, Eilene Gorton, and raised their family of two daughters and five sons. Following the war, Harry embraced a multitude of vocations from supervising at the Nestlé factory to adventurous pursuits like deer culling by helicopter. In 1967, his journey led him to Western Australia, where he carved out a new life as a geologist, caravan park manager and dedicated bus driver for the former Metropolitan Transport Trust. Harry met his second wife, Dorothy, in Kalamunda, and they welcomed a son into their family. His legacy has continued to flourish as he became a cherished patriarch. His extended family now spans to include 17 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren and the anticipation of a great-great-grandchild.

Retiring to Carnarvon in 1992, Harry's spirit of adventure never waned. He embraced new roles for the next 20 years such as a tour guide, captivating visitors with his wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm for the beautiful landscapes of Carnarvon and surrounding region. His passion for capturing moments extended to his role as a video operator for the Carnarvon and Gascoyne Junction Race Clubs, immortalising events like the legendary fish feeding frenzy in 1993 that brought worldwide attention to Western Australia.

As we honour Harry on his centenary year, let us celebrate not only the passage of time, but also the enduring spirit of a man whose life has touched so many. He is a testament to the power of resilience, love and a boundless zest for life. Happy 100th birthday, Harry. Your contributions have been indelibly marked on all who have had the privilege to know you.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Statement by Member for Belmont

MS C.M. ROWE (Belmont) [12.59 pm]: Today, I rise to acknowledge World Autism Awareness Day, which is coming up on 2 April. I, of course, celebrate the beautiful neurodivergent humans who bring their unique perspectives and vast array of talents to our community. That is a day to remind us to each do our bit to create a world in which autistic individuals feel supported, accepted and, indeed, celebrated. Autism is the most invisible and hidden of disabilities. Autistic people are often at increased risk of experiencing both mental and physical health conditions, highlighted by an enormous body of research in this space globally. I wish to shine a light very briefly on some of that research and the issues faced by so many autistic people.

Research shows that 79 per cent of autistic adults meet the criteria for a mental health condition, including depression, anxiety and eating disorders. Approximately 40 per cent of autistic individuals experience depression at some point in their lives, and 84 per cent of young autistic people experience clinically elevated anxiety. Studies show that between 42 and 79 per cent of autistic children and teenagers meet diagnostic criteria for anxiety disorders. Sadly, the anxiety symptoms presented in early childhood intensify over time for autistic people and, in many instances, affect every facet of their daily lives and ability to function. Forty-two per cent of autistic adults experience anxiety for the entirety of their life, including issues of social phobia and obsessive compulsive disorder. Clearly, anxiety in its various forms is a pervasive issue that stays with many autistic individuals for their life. The impact of depression on autistic people is far-reaching, diminishing their quality of life, heightening their risk of suicide and increasing feelings of loneliness and employment difficulties. It has a ripple effect on caregivers who face increased stress and challenges.

In the words of the amazing disability advocate Chloé Hayden, autistic people are different, but absolutely not less. I hope to see more people in our community celebrate the differences of neurodivergent people.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 to 2.00 pm

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY — KIRSTEN ROBINSON

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.00 pm]: Members, it is with regret that I advise that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Kirsten Robinson, has given notice of her resignation. After having worked for over 28 years in the Legislative Assembly and as Clerk since October 2015, she has decided that it is time to step down and pursue other interests and challenges. Kirsten's last working day at Parliament House will be Friday, 28 June 2024, after which she will proceed on leave, with her resignation taking effect in February 2025. Kirsten commenced working in the Legislative Assembly in November 1988 as a parliamentary officer when she was 21 years old. In 1995, she was seconded to the Commission on Government to work as a research officer on parliamentary reform matters. After returning to the Assembly and working on a number of standing and select committees, Kirsten left in 2000 to work as a policy and research officer at the Western Australian Electoral Commission. In 2005, she returned to the Assembly and has been here since then. Kirsten was the Assembly's first female Sergeant-at-Arms, our first female Clerk Assistant, our first female Deputy Clerk and our first female Clerk of the house.

[Applause.]

The SPEAKER: Although her last working day is still some weeks off, I wish to sincerely thank Kirsten, on behalf of all members in the chamber, for her significant contribution to the management and operation of the Legislative Assembly and for her leadership, guidance and advice over all those years. Thank you, Kirsten.

[Applause.]

VISITORS — WHEELS GROUP SHIRE OF DERBY–WEST KIMBERLEY WATER CORPORATION

Statement by Speaker

THE SPEAKER (Mrs M.H. Roberts) [2.02 pm]: On behalf of the member for Kalamunda, I would like to acknowledge Sally Roberts and the visitors from the Wheels group in the Speaker's gallery today. On behalf of the member for Kimberley, I would like to welcome Shire of Derby–West Kimberley representatives who are attending the Western Australian Local Government Association Aboriginal engagement forum. Welcome, Anthony, Kierin, Jasper and Sian. I also understand that we have some Water Corporation staff here, who are becoming familiar with Parliament and its procedures. Welcome to those Water Corporation staff, too.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — WORKPLACE CULTURE

191. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Corrective Services:

Just before I ask my question, I would like to congratulate our Clerk on such a lengthy contribution to the Parliament and wish her all the very best in her next phase, whatever that might be. Thank you, Kirsten.

My question is to the Minister for Corrective Services. Yesterday, the minister dismissed allegations of a toxic culture within the corrective services system as unsubstantiated third-party hearsay. However, today it has been revealed that a Bunbury Regional Prison staff member who reported being sexually harassed at work was handed a “hurt feelings report” to lodge their complaint. This report included derogatory language and dismissive attitudes, such as asking the staff member to, “Tell us in your own sissy words, how your feelings were hurt, as if anyone cared”, and that they would, “make every reasonable effort to provide you with a ‘blankie’, a ‘binky’ and ... a bottle if you so desire”. When will the minister acknowledge the existence of this toxic culture in his department and appropriately intervene?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to correct his assertion. Yesterday, I responded to a question about unit 18 and referred to unsubstantiated third-party hearsay-based allegations that were reported in the media. The incident the Leader of the Opposition is referring to today relates to Bunbury Regional Prison. I can say that neither of the two individuals involved in the allegation or story are in the employ of the agency any longer. However, I also refer the Leader of the Opposition back to the time that we, as a government, appointed Commissioner Brad Royce. The Leader of the Opposition will recall—I am sure that he probably watched it—that I was at pains to say that a significant part of the reasoning behind appointing Commissioner Royce was that he was a known change agent who was capable of addressing the challenges associated with the culture of the corrective services department. I have always acknowledged that. That is not an issue or a question. What I referred to yesterday was a completely different matter in which the Leader of the Opposition had used an unsubstantiated third-party report from the media as a means to ask a question about individuals in unit 18.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — WORKPLACE CULTURE

192. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Corrective Services:

I have a supplementary question. Thank you, minister, but the issues are ongoing. When is the minister going to intervene to ensure that this situation is fixed?

Mr P. PAPALIA replied:

I intervened and appointed Commissioner Brad Royce. He is the Commissioner of Corrective Services. He is an excellent commissioner. He is a change agent. He is addressing the challenges associated with operational matters inside corrective services.

TRAINING AND SKILLS — INVESTMENT

193. Ms C.M. ROWE to the Premier:

I refer to the Cook Labor government’s commitment to delivering a strong economy and creating more employment opportunities for Western Australians.

- (1) Can the Premier update the house on the work underway to ensure that Western Australians have the skills and training needed to support and grow our economy?
- (2) Can the Premier advise the house of this government’s record of driving down unemployment and creating more jobs for West Aussies?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. It is a very important one, because Western Australian jobs are our highest priority as a government. We want to keep our economy moving. We want Western Australia to be the strongest state in Australia. This morning, I was with the Minister for Training and Workforce Development, Simone McGurk, and we visited the Construction Futures Centre in the member for Belmont’s electorate. There we met some of the apprentices who will help build many of the homes we need in Western Australia. Those apprentices—Ava, Marcus and Noah—are all working on residential projects in Perth. In fact, Marcus and Ava were on site this morning and came off to spend some time with us. Each of them is benefiting from the WA Labor government’s group training wage subsidy initiative. This is a really important initiative that subsidises group training organisations to bring more apprentices on, so that they can continue to feed the workforce that we need for our residential construction industry. We introduced this program early last year to help small to medium-sized businesses employ aspiring tradies. This has helped to get 300 apprentices and trainees into a job in the construction sector, where they are

desperately needed. We are talking about in-demand skills here; we are talking about plumbing, carpentry, electrical and gas-fitting skills. Today, we announced an additional 150 building and construction apprentice places. They will be made available immediately. This involves a \$21.5 million expansion to the current program. All up, it will be an \$87.8 million program. Our GTO wage subsidy provides around \$135 000 for a full year apprenticeship, which is the average estimated award wage of apprentices in building and construction. We are doing everything we can to build more houses across WA and we are doing all we can to create quality jobs for Western Australians. We understand that one of the key constraints around the housing construction industry at the moment is the availability of workers. This is an important opportunity to directly inject workers into that industry so that we can get more homes built here in WA.

Our commitment to jobs is second to none. We have had a record investment in infrastructure. We have invested in training and TAFE, providing free TAFE courses for more than 40 000 Western Australians. We have brought local manufacturing back to Western Australia. We are diversifying the economy and investing in the future. The latest job figures again demonstrate our success. I do not know whether members have seen them, but they are off the chart! Data released today shows that Western Australia's unemployment rate fell to 3.6 per cent, below the national average of 3.7 per cent. I remind all members that when we came to government, unemployment was 6.5 per cent, among the highest in the nation. Employment in WA grew by a massive 1.7 per cent last month. That is more than 26 000 jobs in a single month, and it is the best result of all the states. It is our strongest growth in employment in almost three years. I might add that 73 000 jobs have been added to the WA economy since June last year. That is an extraordinary vote of confidence by businesses in Western Australia, people voting with their feet, coming to WA to take up the huge opportunities of a job in Western Australia.

In another record, for the first time WA's total employment exceeded 1.6 million. Our policies are working. We are making the investments that are needed to keep growing Western Australian jobs, providing young people with the skills they need for the jobs of not only today, but also the future. I congratulate the Minister for Training and Workforce Development. She and her team are doing a great job supporting young people getting great Western Australian jobs, which is our government's number one priority.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — MENTAL HEALTH UNIT — REFURBISHMENT

194. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I refer to the Minister for Health's statement this morning that more than half the beds in ward 5A at Perth Children's Hospital would be moved to Hollywood Private Hospital later this year while works are carried out.

- (1) Given it has been more than two years since the alleged rape of a 13-year-old in that ward sparked a number of safety recommendations, why are those improvements happening only now?
- (2) What infrastructure, if any, has been put in place at Hollywood hospital to ensure the special safety needs of those patients will be met?
- (3) How long is this arrangement expected to be in place?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for the question. As the Leader of the Liberal Party and, indeed, all members of Parliament know, we have had a huge explosion in the number of young people who have been impacted by mental health issues. That has put pressure on our inpatient beds across the sector, and, in particular, in the specialist wards at PCH. As the member observed, we have reason to redesign and reconfigure that ward to make it safer; of course, most of all, we want to keep those kids safe.

We have a choice about whether we draw out this process or act deliberately and decisively and make sure that we keep those young people safe while we undertake those works. It is a very sensible decision that the health minister has made to utilise extra capacity beds at Hollywood hospital with the same staff. PCH teams will still do the work, which will make sure that we keep those kids in an appropriate facility while we undertake the works at PCH. I think anyone would see that as a commonsense approach and is appropriate as a way to make sure that we get on with these works as soon as possible.

Obviously, these works will take some time to implement. There was a review in relation to the incident to which the member referred. We have to then take on board the recommendations from that review. We have to redesign the facility and that has to be done in consultation, particularly with the Chief Psychiatrist. We then have to go about the process of procuring and the construction itself. These things take time. We want to make sure that we do it properly and we want to make sure that we continue to provide care for those young people while we get on with that work. Obviously, the opportunity to take up extra beds at Hollywood hospital where our teams will continue to provide that care is an important opportunity and I congratulate the Minister for Health.

PERTH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL — MENTAL HEALTH UNIT — REFURBISHMENT

195. Ms L. METTAM to the Premier:

I have a supplementary question. Does the Premier seriously believe that waiting more than two years to announce a plan to address safety concerns is at all fair and reasonable after that alleged rape?

Mr R.H. COOK replied:

We will do what is needed to make sure that we keep those young people safe, and we will do it properly. This is not a time for political sloganeering; this is a time to make sure that we do the right thing by the young people in that ward. The opportunity to decant 12 of those beds in the short term so that we can undertake this work represents a commonsense, sensible approach to redeveloping that ward. Anyone would think that it is the appropriate response.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY — TRAINING

196. Ms E.L. HAMILTON to the Minister for Training and Workforce Development:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to boost employment in Western Australia's building and construction sector.

- (1) Will the minister outline how this government is delivering TAFE and training initiatives such as the group training organisation wage subsidy to boost our local skilled workforce?
- (2) Will the minister advise how these initiatives are supporting the construction of more houses for WA?

Ms S.F. McGURK replied:

- (1)–(2) As the Premier told us earlier, it was great to be at the Construction Training Fund's Construction Futures Centre today with apprentices and the Housing Industry Association to announce an additional 150 places under the group training organisation wage subsidy program. Most members would be aware that group training organisations are a great initiative and make apprentices accessible for small and medium-sized businesses. It is good for businesses because they might be in a position to take an apprentice for two or maybe three years, but maybe not commit to the whole four years. For apprentices, it gives exposure to a range of different skills because they can work between employers and the group training organisation is the host and, technically, the employer of those apprentices.

In 2022, the government announced the fulfilment of an election commitment to have 300 places for group training organisations for small and medium-sized businesses in building and construction that were working on government contracts. The government decided to expand that using the same 300 places so that those places would be available for residential and commercial construction as well, because we could see that was where the pressure was. Those 300 places were quickly taken up. We expanded them to another 150 places. Within two months those 150 places were taken up. It is a very generous subsidy—about \$136 000 for a full apprenticeship period for the group training organisation. It makes taking on an apprentice accessible for small and medium-sized businesses.

As the Premier said, with this announcement there will be another 150 places. By the time these places are taken up, that will be 600 additional apprentices in construction-related trades out there in the system. It is a great outcome. We were there today with Noah, Ava and Marcus. Noah is a first-year plumbing apprentice and Ava and Marcus are second-year carpentry apprentices. It was great to meet them, and it is great to see the work the Construction Training Fund is doing. The futures centre is a showcase of all things construction. School students and prospective students go through there and get a feel for construction in residential and commercial, and also in the civil and resources sectors as well. We are starting to see the results of our efforts in vocational training in a range of areas, but particularly around construction. As at December last year, there were 10 852 apprentices and trainees in building and construction in our state. It is remarkable. It is going gangbusters!

I am really keen to hammer this message home. Whether it is a young person who has recently finished school looking to get a start in the workforce or a mature-aged person, there are many training pathways to take. Opportunities are available if they want to work in building and construction.

Madam Speaker, I do not know whether I really got the response I was after to "hammering" the message home! It is probably not a great joke when you have to repeat it!

There is lots happening with vocational training and lots happening with building and construction. I am very proud of the work this government is doing.

SCHOOLS — VIOLENCE

197. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the recent spate of violence in schools, and weapons being brought to school by students as young as year 2, along with the profound statement by a teacher that there is no shortage of teachers in WA, rather, there is a shortage of teachers who are willing to work in WA.

- (1) What is the minister doing to support those teachers who are under siege?
- (2) Is the minister's bureaucratic processes on exclusion making it too difficult to move-on violent and disruptive students?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(2) This is an incredibly important issue. Before I answer that, can I wish Kirsten all the best of luck. Thank you for all your service.

In regard to this issue of violence in schools, we have done more than any government in this area. The former Minister for Education and Training introduced policies in this area, and in the last year I enhanced those policies. We made it quite clear to all principals that we will have their backs if they want to exclude students for violent behaviour. We also said we have their backs if they want to seek a prohibition order for a parent entering a school premises if they are engaging in abusive behaviour towards teachers. Exclusion rates have actually gone up, so the process is not too bureaucratic; the process is appropriate. Ideally, we would not want to exclude any student from a WA school, but of course the safety of students and staff is very, very important.

As I said, in July last year, I revised the 10-point action plan that was put in place by the previous minister, called *Standing together against violence*. We made it quite clear, and we received overwhelming support from all the stakeholders who were very appreciative that the state government and Department of Education have made a stance on this. But as the member for Roe would realise, schools are a reflection of society and communities. The member cannot blame the school environment for someone bringing a knife onto the premises. It is a disturbing trend, but I can assure the member that the Minister for Education, the Cook Labor government and the Department of Education are supporting our principals and teachers to ensure that we have a safe work environment for staff and a proper learning environment for students.

SCHOOLS — VIOLENCE

198. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I have a supplementary question. I hear what the minister is saying on the exclusion rates going up, but is the minister still concerned that the exclusion process is making it too difficult to move-on these difficult students?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

No.

JOBS — LOCAL INDUSTRIES — GOLDFIELDS–ESPERANCE

199. Ms A.E. KENT to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's commitment to supporting the creation of local jobs for Western Australians.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how the new Mt Holland lithium mine will provide job and economic opportunities in the goldfields–Esperance region?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how the establishment of this mine has been supported through targeted investment by this government?

Mr D.R. MICHAEL replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question and for her continued advocacy for the resources industry in Western Australia. Obviously, the member asked about Mt Holland as it is not too far away from her electorate boundary, so I thank her for the question.

It was a pleasure to be there on 7 March when I attended, with the Premier and Deputy Premier, the opening of the Mt Holland lithium mine. It is a mine and a concentrator, and it is a joint venture between a Western Australian company we all know, Wesfarmers, and Sociedad Quimica y Minera de Chile—SQM. The mine is known as Covalent Lithium. Mt Holland, which is 110 kilometres south east of Southern Cross in the Shire of Yilgarn, will make a significant contribution to Western Australia through the planned production of 380 000 tonnes of spodumene concentrate each year, which will be refined into 50 000 tonnes of battery-quality lithium hydroxide. That is enough to power one million electric vehicles. We all know that worldwide demand for electric vehicles will continue as the years progress and as the world decarbonises.

In line with the state's battery and critical minerals strategy, which encourages downstream processing in our state, Covalent expects to deliver its first lithium hydroxide in early 2025 from its refinery at the Kwinana industrial area. This new project will further boost Western Australia's battery and critical mineral credentials and emphasises the crucial role our state is playing in global decarbonisation efforts.

It was really good to be at that mine. We had a great tour of its facilities, and we heard some of the history of that mine. We met some of the very professional workers who are doing that responsibly sourced

lithium mining and production. We saw the quality of the technology and innovation on display at another Western Australian mine site. It was my first mine opening in my life, so I was very, very pleased to be there. I have now done two, but I will talk about that when we come back in the next sitting.

I note, and the Premier mentioned before, that today's Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data highlights that over 26 000 jobs, as we have just heard, have been created in Western Australia in the past month alone. That takes it to more than 300 000 jobs since 2017, when this Labor government came to power. To this end, more than 1 000 jobs were created during construction of the Mt Holland lithium project, with 350 jobs expected during operations on the Kalamaia Kalarku Kaprun people's country of Marlinyi and Ghoorlie trees.

I congratulate both Wesfarmers and SQM for committing to this multibillion-dollar investment in Western Australia, which will go for decades. Of course, like all projects in Western Australia, the Cook government played a key role in enabling this project by committing \$60 million to upgrade the Moorine Rock to Mt Holland road, which has improved road safety and freight efficiency, to support the future growth of the mine. Western Australia is of course the largest producer of lithium in the world. Lithium became the state's second most valuable mineral in 2022–23, with sales of \$20 billion and royalties of \$930 million. Western Australia remains a globally significant battery and critical minerals processing hub, and we are working hard to do all we can to further capitalise on this incredible opportunity.

CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSIONER — COMMENTS — PLANNING LAW

200. **Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Planning:**

In an article published in *The Australian Financial Review* on 8 March this year, titled "WA anti-corruption chief cites misconduct risk over new planning laws", the head of the Corruption and Crime Commission, Mr John McKechnie, is quoted as saying that the minister's planning law changes have created new risks for misconduct.

- (1) Has the minister discussed Mr McKechnie's concerns directly with him?
- (2) Does the minister agree with the assessment of Mr McKechnie; and, if not, why not?
- (3) What steps are the minister and government taking to ensure that corruption is not influencing planning decisions?

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for some notice of the question. I actually expected it from the member given that he has peddled wrong information via the *Subiaco Post* to the Western Australian community. I do want to put this on the record because the member said that CEOs of local governments could approve high-density buildings. That is false.

Dr D.J. Honey: Read your own CIDs.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr J.N. CAREY: Would the member like me to answer the question?

Dr D.J. Honey: You're not answering it. You're on another tangent.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr J.N. CAREY: I appreciate the member gets agitated because he is being replaced by the leader of the Property Council of Australia, and he is on his way out, but he has said —

Dr D.J. Honey: That does not agitate me. You're not doing your job.

Mr J.N. CAREY: You are agitated.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Mr J.N. CAREY: We know you are being replaced by the leader of the Property Council of Western Australia, who advocated in the complete opposite direction to yourself, and I appreciate that is embarrassing.

Dr D.J. Honey: Will you answer the question or not?

Mr J.N. CAREY: See the agitation. He is very embarrassed. He is out the door, replaced by the properties sector. He is out the door.

Let us be clear that this member has peddled wrong information that fuelled some fears in the western suburbs community. Let us be very clear about our planning reforms. Our planning reforms do not give me, as the Minister for Planning, powers to make decisions on major projects. I want to be very clear. On major projects, through the development assessment panel system, it is either the Western Australian Planning Commission or a development assessment panel where there are planning experts—or in terms of the DAP system, actual community members. That contrasts with the east coast, where planning ministers have far greater powers and direct intervention in improving major projects. There is a very clear difference on the east coast and west coast. I am very proud of our planning reforms, which are about streamlining approvals to get housing supply delivered in Western Australia.

PLANNING REFORM — CORRUPTION AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

201. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Planning:

I have a supplementary question.

Several members interjected.

Dr D.J. HONEY: No, absolutely not.

The SPEAKER: Thanks to all of you who decided to interject that it was too late. The only person who determines whether it is too late is the Speaker—and it is not too late. Supplementary question.

Dr D.J. HONEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your wise decision!

I asked the minister a very simple question. Does the minister agree with Mr McKechnie's assertion or not?

Mr D.T. Punch interjected.

The SPEAKER: Minister for Fisheries, please do not interject when someone asks a question.

Mr J.N. CAREY replied:

Can I be very clear that I respect the commissioner. The commissioner never raised those concerns with my agency. I understand that there have been no direct concerns directed to me as the minister. Of course, the development assessment panel system has been in place for several years. In fact, former planning minister John Day brought in the DAP system that the opposition regularly criticises and attacks. The state Liberal government brought in the DAP system, which we have improved. We have brought greater transparency and accountability and consolidated the DAP system. I understand that the member for Cottesloe opposes these planning reforms. I understand that he has peddled unnecessary fears and made false claims, and the Liberal Party has thrown him out. It has said that in this current environment in which we face housing as a critical issue, in which we need to streamline housing approvals, which we have done, the member for Cottesloe's own party has judged him for who he is and thrown him out.

Point of Order

Dr D.J. HONEY: The minister is simply not referring to anything I asked in the question.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. The minister is entitled to answer the question largely as he sees fit. I expect he will bring the supplementary answer to a close.

Mr J.N. Carey: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Excellent choice, minister!

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES —
MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY HUBS

Mr Y. MUBARAKAI: Speaker!

The SPEAKER: Member for Jandakot; I am so glad that you called me Speaker, not President.

202. Mr Y. MUBARAKAI to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests:

My apologies for that from yesterday, Speaker!

I refer to the Cook Labor government's support for multicultural communities across Western Australia.

- (1) Can the minister outline to the house how this government's delivery of facility upgrades and multicultural community hubs is building stronger local communities?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house what these facilities mean for culturally and linguistically diverse Western Australians?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

(1)–(2) I thank the member for Jandakot for his question and for being an outstanding parliamentary secretary in my portfolios, including multicultural interests.

Yes, I can inform the house that more than \$5.4 million has been allocated by the community capital works fund to assist grassroots community hubs supporting the growing needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Thirty-one CALD associations and community service organisations will now be able to upgrade, maintain and diversify critical community infrastructure in 35 locations across the state to ensure that these important spaces are available for generations to come. You will be happy to know, Madam Speaker, that I do not want to retain the record for the longest answer so I will not read out the whole list.

The SPEAKER: Excellent. I think there are two in my electorate, so I am happy to hear about them!

Mr R.H. Cook interjected.

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, I do not want to retain or get it back.

Mr R.H. Cook: Give it a crack!

Dr A.D. BUTI: No, I will not do that!

We have the Italian club in Collie, the Macedonian community in Manjimup, the Sikh Gurdwara in Bennett Springs and the Chung Wah Association heritage-listed building in Northbridge. There is funding throughout the regions and metropolitan Western Australia. Before I go on, this does not include the other funding that we have given for the Jewish community centre in Yokine, the Chung Wah centre that is being built in Bentley and the Vietnamese cultural centre that is happening in Girrawheen. We are really, really investing in our various CALD community groups. What is important is that these facilities are run and operated by volunteer groups and provide culturally appropriate services, including for people who have recently come from refugee situations or are newly arrived migrants. The services include family support, enterprise development and housing support. They are incredibly important hubs for various CALD communities. As I said, it is in not just one part of the metropolitan area, but across the metropolitan area and the regions. The Cook Labor government values multiculturalism. It is one of our greatest strengths. This funding demonstrates our commitment to ensuring CALD communities continue to flourish and contribute to our unique social, economic and cultural fabric.

Whenever I walk into our Labor Party caucus room, I see that diversity. I see in front of my eyes the diversity of our members of Parliament. That is quite different from the opposition benches, when I look over that side. At the next election, the Nationals WA will have three —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. BUTI: — white men standing for the three seats they retain at the moment. We are incredibly diverse on our side.

Last week, with the Premier, I had the honour of attending the celebration of the Western Australian Multicultural Awards, which was a terrific night. I was not only there with the Premier; I was there with my parliamentary secretaries and a number of caucus members from CALD backgrounds. It was disappointing that on the biggest night in the multicultural calendar not to have one opposition member of Parliament there.

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr D.J. Honey interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please!

Dr A.D. BUTI: I have to say that it was noticed. But the multicultural communities in Western Australia know that they can always trust and value the Western Australian Labor Party when it is in government to invest in our CALD communities. That is reflected in this latest round of investment to the tune of \$5.4 million.

ELECTRICITY — OUTAGES — QUAIRADING

203. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Energy:

I refer to the ongoing and persistent power failures in the wheatbelt town of Quairading, resulting in interruptions to business, damage to electrical equipment, loss of food and perishable items and at times an inability to contact emergency services.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that the installation of a community battery has been offered as a solution for this community?
- (2) What is the time frame for that solution to be delivered?
- (3) If this is not the solution, what is being considered by government and when will the community be advised?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

- (1)–(3) I thank the member for Central Wheatbelt. We have already had a discussion about this today because the member took a grievance to me, and I thought I responded in quite a fulsome way. But I am happy to discuss this issue. As I said before, there is a challenge across Western Australia when it comes to single-line, end-of-the-line communities where there is no network in existence in terms of the way we know the network exists in major towns and in suburbs of Perth. We have that challenge. Members all too often know about that. As the member pointed out, it is not just in Quairading but a wide range of communities that are at the end of the line.

Western Power has taken action on situations in those communities where there have been outages. I explained this to the member this morning and I will do it again. In the period since there have been outages, Western Power has invested more than \$1 million in strengthening the network that supplies

Quairading in particular, including the replacement of over 50 poles, high-voltage insulators, crossarms and stays, and re-tensioning of six bays of conductors. There is no utility network on the planet that is completely invincible. All networks have weather issues, particularly in communities that have a single line and any break in that single line can result in outages further on. It is frustrating for people who lose power. I know that. It makes them grumpy. It is inconvenient. These days, we have modern conveniences. We rely on electricity to such an extent that when we lose it, it is an inconvenience.

At Quairading, there were 41 outages. This was reported in the newspaper as a large number. Yes, it is a large number. It is important to remember that only 14 of those lasted for more than an hour, so the great majority of them lasted for a period within an hour. It is also important to remember that 16 of them involved multiple customers. In other words, the majority of outages impacted one customer at a time. That explains why we have a high number of outages, but when only one person is impacted, that gives us a better context of what is going on. That is not to say in any way that that outage is not important to the person suffering from it, because it is. It is very inconvenient and we understand the concerns and the issues.

In terms of what we are doing about it, Western Power has responded in the way that I explained. We are always intent on maintaining our network in regional areas. It costs a lot more to maintain the systems in regional areas than it does in metropolitan areas. In further developing the resiliency of the network in regional areas, the Premier has asked me to investigate this in terms of climate change. With the scenario of climate change making extreme weather events more frequent, these issues are going to happen.

In January, we saw a supercell thunderstorm that knocked out transmission towers 50 metres high and reduced them to tinfoil. We have not seen these events in this state for 35 years. In fact, the last time that we saw anything like that was one transmission pole being bent near Merredin. This time in January, we saw five flattened. Climate change is having an impact and we need to be prepared for that. I am currently involved in an investigation through Energy Policy WA to see ways to make the system much more resilient across Western Australia.

As the member pointed out, batteries are part of the solution. No government is investing more in battery technology to bring resilience to the grid and system in Western Australia. Other states look with envy on Western Australia and how far we have progressed. I was in Collie the other day turning the sod on a big battery that is 500 megawatts and 2 000 megawatt hours. When it is completed, it will be the biggest in the country, and certainly one of the biggest in the world.

Mr P.J. Rundle interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: That will, member for Roe, assist the entire south west interconnected system network. In terms of battery technologies, we are rolling out standalone —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: You asked the question! I am answering it.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: I am answering the question.

In terms of other battery technology, there are the localised standalone power systems that we are also rolling out—both Horizon Power and Western Power—which are wonderful solutions to this issue. We have farmers down in Esperance who swear by it. They lived for years and years on the end of a very long line and now they have solar power backed by battery. They swear by it, and other farmers are putting up their hands to say “Can I have one of those too?” We will investigate a whole range —

Mr R.S. Love: They can't keep the lights on.

Mr R.R. WHITBY: We are rolling it out, member.

This is a big change. This is a huge change not just in Western Australia, but for the entire world. This government is doing more and investing more to bring on this change and bring the advantages of renewable energy and battery technology.

ELECTRICITY — OUTAGES — QUAIRADING

204. **Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Energy:**

I have a supplementary question. Will the minister confirm that a time frame of five years has been advised by the installation of the community battery for Quairading? Yes, or no?

Mr R.R. WHITBY replied:

As I said, we are currently investigating how we can better build resilience in the Quairading area. It is not just Quairading; it is right across Western Australia. This is a big state. This is a huge stage. It is a huge effort to provide reliable electricity across it. We are doing an excellent job and will continue to do so.

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

206. Ms M.J. HAMMAT to the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence:

I refer to the Cook Labor government's ongoing commitment to support victim-survivors of family and domestic violence.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on the delivery of this government's recent \$72.6 million investment to help stop family and domestic violence?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house how this important investment will support women who are escaping violence to find a safe refuge?

Ms S.E. WINTON replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for her question and ongoing advocacy in her electorate, particularly for vulnerable women and children escaping domestic violence. Family and domestic violence is a scourge right around the nation. It exists in every town, suburb and neighbourhood. It is a nationwide problem. But we know that the Cook Labor government, since 2017, has been absolutely committed to addressing family and domestic violence, whether it is through creating a portfolio and Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence or our record investment of over \$300 million since 2017. It sees a focus on key supports in terms of crisis support for women and children fleeing violence. It is an important investment around holding perpetrators to account. It importantly also funds primary prevention and working towards stopping violence before it begins.

In November last year, as part of the 16 Days in WA campaign, the Premier announced \$72.6 million of important investments into the sector. A really important part of that announcement was a significant investment into crisis support. What I am referring to in particular today, and want to explain to the house, is the \$22.6 million investment to the Stirling refuge that will see us replace and expand that important refuge. Many members would know that that refuge has been around for many years. In fact, I think it was the first actual dedicated refuge in the state. It is an ageing facility. This important investment will see us not only expand the refuge, but also modernise it so that it is actually fitting for victims who come and need that service.

Importantly, it comes about as the result of a really important partnership with the City of Stirling. I want to put on the record in this place that the City of Stirling, as a local government authority, has always prioritised the prevention of family and domestic violence and supporting victim-survivors. It does an important job in partnering with not only government, but also various local service providers. I want to commend it for its work.

As I said, at the moment the refuge is funded to accommodate women and their dependent children who are escaping violence. The redevelopment will increase the capacity and, importantly, also provide more independent units. The expansion will see the tripling of the size of the refuge from five rooms, where women currently have to share bathrooms and other amenities, to something that will be modern and provide 16 independent units comprising a mix of two to three bedrooms. The architects have been appointed to develop the concept design in partnership with the council. I am happy to say that the City of Stirling Mayor Mark Irwin described the council as being thrilled with the investment after having worked closely with the department to develop a business case on this proposal. It is a really good example of local governments working with state governments together with local partners on important infrastructure projects needed throughout the state.

Of course, the government also announced last year an important funding extension to Naala Djookan Healing Centre, which is one of the four one-stop hubs that we have invested over \$60 million in. There is one in Armadale, Mirrabooka, Kalgoorlie and one is coming soon to Broome. The City of Stirling has always been a great champion and we are happy to work in partnership with it.

I look forward to updating the house as we roll out the \$72.6 million worth of investment. But it is really important to emphasise that rolling out investment requires one to work in partnership with not only ministerial colleagues, but also constructively with local governments. We need to be able to partner and have great working relationships with stakeholders. That is something the other side needs to learn how to do.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE PAYMENT

207. Ms M. BEARD to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the WA student assistance payment and the Premier's comments on 19 March that during term 2 parents will receive direct payments of \$250 for secondary students and \$150 for primary school and kindergarten students.

- (1) Will foster carers, family carers, special guardian carers and grandparent carers receiving the \$500 cost-of-living co-payment for foster carers also be eligible for the student assistance payment?

- (2) Will the student assistance payment be affected by a student's school attendance, factoring in high truancy rates in regional Western Australia?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

- (1)–(2) If they are a registered or primary carer, they will receive the WA student assistance payment. As long as they have attendance registration at the school, they are eligible students, registered. It is not based on how many days they attend, but obviously if they are excluded and are not registered as attending a school in Western Australia, either public or private, they will not pass the eligibility requirements. To pass the eligibility requirements, they have to be attending a school in Western Australia. With regard to who can apply, it is primary carers or, as the member said, a foster carer, or a grandparent, if the grandparent is a primary carer.

The SPEAKER: That concludes question time.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES — WORKPLACE CULTURE

Standing Orders Suspension — Motion

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [2.51 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 calls upon the Premier to acknowledge the disgraceful culture within the corrective services system in Western Australia. Despite the minister's oversight, months have passed with allegations and chaos persisting within numerous facilities across the state.

Standing Orders Suspension — Amendment to Motion

On motion by **Dr A.D. Buti (Minister for Education)**, 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: Members, as this is a motion without notice to suspend standing orders, it will need the support of an absolute majority for it to proceed. If I hear a dissentient voice, I will be required to divide the Assembly.

Question put and passed with an absolute majority.

Motion

MS L. METTAM (Vasse — Leader of the Liberal Party) [2.53 pm]: I move the motion. The opposition had a number of options this morning for the suspension motion that we could have called on the government. There is the Minister for Health overseeing significant issues at ward 5A and the government's failure to address those matters, some two years on; the minister is not here. There is also the sports rofts issue, but the Minister for Sport and Recreation is not here either. Of course, there are also the matters relating to the Corruption and Crime Commission report that was tabled today, and we do not have the Attorney General here.

These issues are very concerning. They go to the heart of the honesty and integrity —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, please, members!

Ms L. METTAM: The issues that have been exposed today are not isolated incidents. It goes to the heart of the honesty and integrity of the government when it comes to such an important portfolio. It reflects what has been described as pervasive toxicity that plagues the department of corrective services in Western Australia. The fact that a staff member had to resort to seeking help from the media after experiencing continuing sexual harassment in the workplace is an indication of the failure of the government and the minister to provide a safe and respectful work environment for the department's employees.

The initial response to this incident is also deeply concerning. The fact that a “hurt feelings report” was given to the staff member, instead of immediate and appropriate action being taken to address the harassment, speaks volumes about the lack of empathy and support provided by this government. The fact that workplace bullying is so prevalent under a Labor government is alarming in itself. This is a party that purports to be a champion of the workers. That is illustrative of some unacceptable behaviour within the department. It also points to the government's absolute failure in this area.

How would anyone in this chamber feel about having a document handed to them —

Several members interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, there is a fairly high level of background noise out there. If you could keep the conversations down, it would be appreciated.

Ms L. METTAM: In the face of serious concerns, the employee was handed a document relating to so-called “whiner’s” details. The employee was also asked, according to my notes, the “name of the person who hurt your pansy ass feelings” and to “tell us in your own sissy words how your feelings were hurt, as if anyone cared”.

It gets better, though, members. Another part of the document advised that the department took complaints seriously, so it was going to organise a hug. It states, according to my notes —

In the event, a hugger cannot be found, an EMS Team will be dispatched to soak your socks in coal oil to prevent ants from crawling up your leg and eating their way up your candy ass. If you are in need of supplemental support, upon written request, we will make every reasonable effort to provide you with a ‘blankie’ ...

It goes on. It is not surprising that this report has sparked outrage and calls for accountability.

Unfortunately, it is not an isolated incident. Regulatory bodies such as WorkSafe have issued improvement notices, with limited change and no compliance or adherence to the positive duty obligations. The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services has recognised and documented what has been described as a decline in morale and staff-on-staff abuse. We have seen repeated breaches of the Public Sector Management Act, all of which has resulted in a severe issue with understaffing at the department, causing a ripple effect and a number of significant issues in corrective services across a number of different sites. There is poor staff satisfaction, associated safety breaches, and risks to prisoners and employees. There is also a significant cost to the taxpayer.

This is not just an issue of honesty and integrity. It is also an issue of basic human rights and dignity. The department of corrective services, under this government’s leadership, must take immediate and concrete steps to address a toxic culture that has been allowed to fester for too long. We again heard the minister today dismissing these very real and distressing concerns that have been raised. I will leave my contribution there and let the Leader of the Opposition make a contribution.

MR R.S. LOVE (Moore — Leader of the Opposition) [2.59 pm]: We have had seven years of denial from this government. We have had seven years of pretending to see no issue and Premiers who refused to take responsibility for the problems. We have waited seven years to see some sort of arrest in the culture of the department of corrective services.

Today, the minister again denied that he had a problem to address. Yesterday, we saw the same response from the minister when asked questions by me and the member for Central Wheatbelt about incidents in the prison system. In private members’ business yesterday, the Minister for Corrective Services again claimed that anybody who had made allegations about ghost noises made by an officer in Cleveland Dodd’s unit 18 cell or some of the other allegations could not be believed because they were people who had been put into unit 18 and had done some pretty bad stuff, and their character, words, activities and issues bring the claims into question. Maybe they do, but it does not mean that there is not a continual pattern here, as demonstrated today by the shocking language revealed by the member for Vasse’s contribution. I referred to it earlier today in a question to the minister, and he denied that there was an issue.

It has taken seven years for the government to take any action. We heard from the minister that the leadership at the department of corrective services has changed, but what happened in the seven years when they refused to take any notice of the chaos that was going on? The words from the minister yesterday afternoon were reminiscent of the views of the former Premier who said, “All the problems are caused by the inmates.” The system is supposed to be there to regulate, moderate, incarcerate and turn those people away from crime. It is not there to make it worse. We will not make a young criminal going into the system turn away from crime if the people in charge are writing those things to the people who are making complaints to them about the behaviour they are experiencing in the organisation. What sort of an organisation would have a system in which a person making a complaint about an officer has to make the complaint to that officer? Apparently, that was the situation. This is the sort of mismanagement that we have seen for years.

The former Minister for Corrective Services, the member for Cannington, denied that there was anything wrong with the system. He completely denied it, despite the fact that prisons and youth correction centres were burning down around him. There is a denial of a problem within the department.

The member for Central Wheatbelt spoke about a fire in Hakea Prison and its unfortunate, terrible ramifications. The minister said, “These things happen all the time.” Sexual harassment happens all the time, so perhaps we should not do anything about it and just accept it, too! That is the culture that the government is accepting. The values the government seems to espouse here are blaming victims instead of taking action to ensure that the department turns itself around and becomes a place where workers feel safe and supported when they go to work.

What is the government doing to ensure that the workforce is safe and supported and that attitudes change?

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Corrective Services) [3.03 pm]: I will address this motion on behalf of the government. I advised the Premier not to bother with this motion because it is ridiculous.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members!

Mr P. PAPALIA: I wonder, Leader of the Opposition, how many prisons have you been into?

Mr R.S. Love: Me? I have been to a couple of prisons.

Mr P. PAPALIA: I have been to every prison and every corrective services facility in the state many times.

I make these observations about the issue in Bunbury, the story on which the entire motion is based. Firstly, it is years old. Secondly, neither individual involved made a complaint at that time. Thirdly, as I indicated during question time, neither individual involved is an employee of the department any longer. It is a story about people who did not make a complaint at the time and are no longer employed by the department, and a claim that nothing has been done about the culture. Somehow, I am refusing to acknowledge that there is a cultural issue within corrective services. By the way, it is the Department of Justice, not the department of corrective services; it is the corrective services part of the Department of Justice.

As I said in question time, when we appointed Brad Royce—an exceptional former police officer and known change agent—as Commissioner of Corrective Services, I acknowledged that there were cultural challenges within the agency that I looked forward to him addressing. I have to say that I hope members opposite have met with Commissioner Royce. They are willing to throw around criticisms of the agency he heads and criticisms of that agency's procedures to deal with matters of this nature. I hope that they have sought him out for advice since he has been appointed because he is an exceptional commissioner, and he knows what is going on inside his agency. He also knows that he confronts a significant challenge.

If they want to garner some insight into how significant the challenge is, I urge members of the opposition to google “Minister Joe Francis” and “corrective services culture” and see what their former colleague had to say about the culture within corrective services when he was the minister. A serious challenge is confronted. It is a long-term and serious matter that needs to be addressed. That is why we have appointed such an excellent leader as Commissioner Royce to get the task done.

I can guarantee that Commissioner Royce takes allegations of this nature seriously. A robust system is in place to ensure that complaints of this nature are taken seriously, although the matter to which members refer was never formally reported. Neither party ever complained. The prison officer accused of sending the appalling document referred to had no managerial role. They were not the complainant's supervisor and, as I said earlier, no longer work for the department. Formal complaints of this nature are received and assessed by the people, culture and standards division, and they are taken seriously. If a complaint were made, it would have been taken seriously. It will be taken seriously now. If a complaint were made by somebody at this time, it would be investigated. That is the situation for the matter on which the opposition has based its entire motion.

The Leader of the Opposition has made some general, unsubstantiated and baseless claims about unit 18. He has also expanded his criticism and suggested that the juvenile detention system is in chaos. In response to the Leader of the Opposition's baseless claims, I want to bring to the house's attention information about what is happening in Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. It is true that juvenile detention is a tough place, a tough gig and a hard task. I can tell members in the chamber that in recent times an incredible improvement in conditions has been achieved inside Banksia Hill Detention Centre and unit 18. I have regularly reported that, for months now, Banksia Hill Detention Centre has been experiencing average out-of-cell hours well above eight hours. In the last week of February, the average out-of-cell hours at Banksia Hill Detention Centre was between eight and 10 hours. At unit 18, the average out-of-cell hours was five hours and 20 minutes. It is a complex task. Obviously, within those numbers, some get fewer hours out of their cell, but the vast majority at Banksia Hill get more, now that the more robust management regime has been applied under which the most challenging, most difficult and often most dangerous individuals are housed at unit 18. They are now managed in a three-cohort system at unit 18, in which the most challenging are in one wing of the building and have their own team. If there is an incident, it does not necessarily impact the others, so we do not get mass, blanket lockdowns as frequently as they used to happen. A mid-range cohort is housed in another wing. Under a process of reward for effort and encouragement, they can progress to a third wing that has far less supervision and much more self-supervision. Ultimately, that is a stepping stone back to Banksia Hill if they remain in detention or to outside.

Detainees on both those sites are receiving education and intervention in the form of counselling and professional services. There is in-reach program from Mental Health Commission specialists. The detainees at Banksia Hill are going to school. They are getting an education. They are playing sport. They are getting other interventions. An elders visitor scheme is now in place to give direct support to both juveniles and staff. There are programs in unit 18 to enhance the capability of staff to deal with juveniles who are suffering from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. NOFASD Australia, an excellent organisation, has run a series of training regimes. That is continuing. That group

provides the skill set to the youth custodial officers and other staff in that facility to address the management of that challenging cohort, who often have comorbidities but who certainly, in many cases, suffer from FASD. There is a range of other interventions. External providers are going in there. Aboriginal organisations are providing mentoring and visits. We have an Aboriginal services unit in unit 18 and Banksia Hill led by Will Hayward, who is a great guy; he is an excellent man. Will and his team provide mentoring and support to the detainees. We are looking for more opportunities all the time. I can tell the member for Vasse that there have been some very promising offers from private enterprise to get involved and assist in building the skill sets of juveniles in detention and offering them work on the outside as they transition out. The Minister for Education has stepped up and is looking to assist us with the transition from the very good support they get at the education centre at Banksia Hill to when they go outside that facility.

It is not the chaos and destruction that the member has claimed and continues to suggest. It is wrong for her to do that. What is most galling about it all is some of her criticism of the good people who are committed to doing this hard work. They have to go on and do that work whilst she is out there in the world being very critical of their characters and motivations. That is shocking.

Division

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

Ayes (6)

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

Noes (36)

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

Question thus negatived.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Returned

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

FIREARMS BILL 2024

Third Reading

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR P. PAPALIA (Warnbro — Minister for Police) [3.18 pm] — in reply: I will continue my comments, but I will keep them short. Otherwise, the member for Perth will get upset!

Just before the debate was interrupted, I was referring to the fact that we had amended the bill to accommodate some suggestions from the Primary Producers Firearms Advisory Board and also the members for Collie–Preston and Vasse. That is a good thing. That means that farmers and other primary producers will be able to have more than one primary producer licence per property. That is a good change.

I recognise that the Leader of the Opposition commended the government for the good move in the commercial transport of firearms. Those changes have been long sought. I also make the observation that in our discussions around the potential use of competition firearms for hunting, the Leader of the Opposition pointed out the fact that primary producers and hunters could potentially take their firearms to a range, yet competition shooters would not be able to take their firearms hunting. I gave the commitment that I would ask police to look at that and whether that might be addressed in some way. They will do that because there are implications. There are some firearms from competition shooting that we do not want going hunting, but it is worth considering.

I will address some of the other observations by members. The member for Vasse asked why the bill could not, for a genuine reason, do the job to enhance safety as opposed to limits. We are going to do a lot of things. Almost every element of the bill is focused on elevating public safety to a primacy and achieving greater safety, and limiting the number of firearms in the community is one of the initiatives.

With regard to the fit and proper consideration, or the determination by the Commissioner of Police, a number of members raised that. The truth is that the commissioner has that power right now. I know there are issues underway

right now. If the commissioner wants to ask someone to see a specialist and provide advice from that specialist on the fit and proper status of a person, the commissioner can do that right now. We are embedding that in the legislation and providing in more detail the certainty that people requested about that decision-making process. It is still appealable.

The member for North West Central's concerns with regard to large properties are unfounded. As I indicated during the debate, significant numbers of authorisations will be available for large properties. Some of the properties the member spoke about of a million acres or so that are a business do not have limits on the number of firearms they can license. Opportunities will be available for them to authorise people to shoot on their property in the same way as they currently do. That is not necessarily a matter of concern. I think the member might be concerned about something that will not emerge as an issue.

Finally, I refer to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, who spent a little time discussing concerns around the trade licence in regional areas. I was at pains during the debate to address this. I said that there is a clause that affords the commissioner the opportunity to hear a reasonable excuse for why one might not have achieved a minimum trading requirement. That means that anyone who is in a remote area and is providing a service—I acknowledge that—may not have the demand for the task that other regional areas or the city might have and, therefore, are unlikely to meet minimum levels of trade. Nevertheless, they will have a reasonable excuse to put to the commissioner to ensure that service delivery is afforded across the state.

I thank everybody for their consideration and their long hours. This is important legislation. It is the first time it has been rewritten in 50 years. It is the first complete rewrite since the Port Arthur massacre and the National Firearms Agreement. Importantly, it will place at the forefront the key principle of the National Firearms Agreement that —

... firearms possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety, and that public safety is improved by the safe and responsible possession, carriage, use, registration, storage and transfer of firearms.

That is the primary consideration. Because we are spending a lot of money and are building a new system, it will afford licensed firearm owners a much more operationally friendly system. It will bring it into the modern era. It will be contemporary. It will enable much greater ease of management of our system and a safer community. It is a good thing. I look forward to the passage of the bill from here to the other place and ultimately becoming law at the end of the year.

Division

Question put and a division taken, the Acting Speaker (Mrs M.R. Marshall) casting her vote with the ayes, with the following result —

Ayes (35)

Mr G. Baker	Mr M. Hughes	Mr D.R. Michael	Ms J.J. Shaw
Ms H.M. Beazley	Mr W.J. Johnston	Mr S.A. Millman	Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski
Dr A.D. Buti	Mr H.T. Jones	Mr Y. Mubarakai	Dr K. Stratton
Mr J.N. Carey	Mr D.J. Kelly	Ms L.A. Munday	Mr C.J. Tallentire
Ms C.M. Collins	Dr J. Krishnan	Mrs L.M. O'Malley	Ms C.M. Tonkin
Mr R.H. Cook	Mr P. Lilburne	Mr P. Papalia	Mr R.R. Whitby
Mr M.J. Folkard	Mrs M.R. Marshall	Mr S.J. Price	Ms S.E. Winton
Ms E.L. Hamilton	Ms S.F. McGurk	Mr D.T. Punch	Ms C.M. Rowe (<i>Teller</i>)
Ms M.J. Hammat	Ms L. Mettam	Ms M.M. Quirk	

Noes (4)

Ms M. Beard	Mr R.S. Love	Mr P.J. Rundle	Ms M.J. Davies (<i>Teller</i>)
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Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

SCHOOL EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 2023

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by **Dr A.D. Buti (Minister for Education)**, and read a first time.

Explanatory memorandum presented by the minister.

Second Reading

DR A.D. BUTI (Armadale — Minister for Education) [3.30 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a second time.

The safety and wellbeing of students is paramount across our public school system. There is a strong link between positive wellbeing and positive life and learning outcomes. This government is committed to ensure

that all our students feel safe at school and seeks to put in place arrangements that accord with the *Final report: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* released in December 2017. The commission's report made recommendations about children with harmful sexual behaviours and the need to have procedures to deal with complaints about these children. A recommendation was also made that government agencies should ensure that the needs of victims and survivors are recognised.

Currently, the authority to suspend and commence an exclusion process for a student resides with the principal of the student's school, under section 91 of the School Education Act 1999. The principal is required to determine that the student has committed a breach of school discipline or has disrupted the educational instruction of other students. The process for exclusion is school-centric and in some circumstances the principal is unable to determine, or is unsure, whether the requirements of section 91 apply. A student could offend in the school holidays anywhere in the community and the principal would have limited, if any, knowledge of the offence. In these circumstances, the principal is unlikely to have sufficient information to commence an exclusion process.

The details of a charge or conviction, particularly of a sexual offence committed by a minor, may not be known to the school. A student who has been sexually assaulted by another student could raise the matter with the principal, but it is obviously a difficult and sensitive matter for that student. The knowledge of an alleged sexual offence and the need for sufficient certainty to commence an exclusion process can create a difficult tension to reconcile at the school level. The Department of Education has arrangements in place that allow access to information that is not available at the school level. The department has protocols for information sharing about sexual offences committed by a student.

The Children's Court Amendment Regulations 2022 provides that the director general of Education and the deputy director general Schools are the prescribed persons who may request information from the Children's Court about criminal proceedings before the court. However, the director general of Education currently has no authority to commence an exclusion process based on information available to her. The authority to exclude that will be provided to the director general by the amendment will allow, when the required circumstances exist, to, firstly, direct the principal to suspend the student and, secondly, commence an exclusion process. The process initiated by the director general recognises the need to consider the safety and welfare of the student subjected to the sexual offence.

If the director general directs suspension and commences an exclusion, a principal cannot deal with the matter. The process for exclusion and the basis for such will be treated with confidentiality. A risk management plan will be put in place at the new school that the excluded student attends. The student remaining at the school will be offered support and, if requested, the opportunity to modify their education program. If the student does not wish to remain at the school, arrangements will be made to accommodate the student. Any change of school will be treated in a confidential and sensitive manner.

These amendments will provide the director general of Education with the authority to exclude a student who has been charged with, or convicted of, a sexual offence against another student at the same public school.

I commend the bill to the house.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Madam Acting Speaker (Mrs M.R. Marshall), congratulations on your new term as acting speaker.

Debate adjourned, on motion by **Mr P.J. Rundle (Deputy Leader of the Opposition)**.

SHORT-TERM RENTAL ACCOMMODATION BILL 2024

Second Reading

Resumed from 12 March.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [3.35 pm]: I have been looking forward to finally getting the opportunity to speak on the Short-Term Rental Accommodation Bill 2024. Firstly, I point out that the opposition supports the bill. I will briefly go back through a bit of history. I used to share an office with Hon Terry Redman, in the last term of Parliament, and I remember when he had in his office some Margaret River hotel providers and the like from his electorate of Warren-Blackwood. They were very concerned about the proliferation of short-term rental accommodation places, such as Airbnb and the like. He was part of a parliamentary inquiry into short-stay accommodation in September 2019. That was just a little bit of history of how some of this originated. Not only does the opposition support the bill, but I support it as well. It is important that whichever government is in the mix on the day needs to have a handle on where those short-term rental accommodation places are and how many there are in each town or local government area.

The minister has spoken many times on housing shortages and on what seems to have transpired over the past few years, since COVID and so forth, whereby the housing shortage has been exacerbated. One thing that seems to have developed is that people who used to rent out their house for, let us say, \$400 or \$500 a week have started stepping aside since the likes of Airbnb and Stayz and others came on board saying that they will rent out their house for \$350 or \$400 on a Saturday night, down in the south west. They take that house off the market, but it was originally providing a weekly rental for another family or occupant. I think that has developed to some extent.

The definition of “short-term rental accommodation” means —

residential premises provided, on a commercial basis, for occupation under a short-term rental arrangement;

Key changes to Western Australia’s planning framework will include: statewide planning exemptions for hosted STRA—we call it “STRA”, which is short-term rental accommodation—new planning exemptions for un-hosted STRA within the Perth metropolitan area; the implementation of planning rules for regional local governments, including Peel, to suit the needs of their communities; and the introduction of new and revised definitions into all local government planning schemes that deal with STRA and tourism land uses. For the metro area, an exemption from the requirement to obtain development approval will be in place if an un-hosted STRA does not intend to rent out the property for more than 90 nights within a 12-month period. Proposals in which the property is intended to be rented out for more than 90 nights will require the relevant approval from the local government prior to registration and operation. Each regional local government authority will determine planning approval requirements based on local conditions and needs.

I turn to the time lines that have been put out there by the government. Local governments have until mid-2024 to make amendments and update their local planning schemes. Registration will become mandatory in January 2025. Property owners must demonstrate compliance with local planning requirements by January 2026 or risk deregistration.

I turn to some key issues associated with this legislation. Local government authorities will bear the brunt of the workload to enforce these changes. It is a concern for me that the current government has the propensity to bring in legislation, saying it needs this and that, but then loads up local governments with the administration of it. We saw that, for argument’s sake, with the puppy farming legislation. The state government put that legislation through and then loaded up all the local governments with the administration of it. I am curious whether the minister has any plans to help those local governments enforce and administer the system. A commissioner will be responsible for short-term rental accommodation registration, leaving local governments with the management.

Development approval conditions in this bill will apply to only metropolitan areas, leaving regional local government authorities to determine, define and update planning rules for STRA, which the minister confirmed a minute ago. Until this bill’s introduction, local governments had already managed STRA in their areas, setting their own requirements for compliance and rental conditions. However, there are concerns that this bill will put even more onus on local governments to determine criteria for development approvals, enforcement, checking properties, and handling inquiries and complaints. All LGAs will have to update all town planning schemes. A question to the minister might be whether they have been given adequate time. The suggested time frame is 2024. Is there a cut-off point, or will they be given an extension beyond that? I imagine they will be.

As I said, we support the legislation. Some of the positives will be that the data gathered through the mandatory registration of STRA will help state and local governments to get a clearer picture of the sector in WA, which will help guide future decision-making and regulations. More information will be available to the community and consumers about what STRA exist in an area, helping decision-making for property buyers and neighbours. On the upside, if regional LGAs do not want or do not have the capacity to implement building or development approvals for STRA, they do not have to. It appears that the legislation will not affect worker accommodation, for instance, on farms. Flexibility also remains for casual accommodation, as long as there is no commercial benefit to the owner—for example, letting a mate or family members stay for a few weeks. There might be a beach house in the south west or wherever, and people let their friends and family stay for a few weeks. I assume this legislation will not affect that in any way.

I turn to other jurisdictions very briefly. New South Wales has a mandatory code of conduct for the short-term rental accommodation industry. That started on 18 December 2020. It is regulated through a mandatory code of conduct, a statewide planning framework, a mandatory short-term rental accommodation premises register and strata scheme by-laws that restrict certain types of short-term rentals. In Victoria, changes to the Owners Corporations Act 2006 were introduced in February 2019 to help prevent short-term accommodation apartment buildings being used to host unruly parties. From 2025, the Victorian government will charge a 7.5 per cent levy on revenue collected by short-stay accommodation providers such as Airbnb and Stayz. Queensland local governments and councils can regulate short-term accommodation under local planning laws. South Australia introduced the Short Term Holiday Rental Accommodation Bill 2021, which is a bill to provide oversight of the short-term holiday rental property market to provide protection for neighbouring residents and other purposes.

As I said, in general terms, we support the bill. I might just have a few brief questions in consideration in detail. There is one thing I would not mind the minister expanding on. The minister announced the short-term rental accommodation incentive scheme on 9 November 2023, offering a \$10 000 financial incentive to owners of existing un-hosted short-term rental accommodation properties in WA to transfer their properties to the long-term rental market for at least 12 months to support people seeking rental homes. The last time the minister mentioned this, I thought there had been something in the order of 150 applications and around 100 had been processed. The minister might like to enlighten us about how successful that is, how it is going and how many applications there have been.

I will leave my contribution there. As I said, I personally support the bill because I believe it will give the state government, people in the neighbourhood and our local governments a better understanding of what is happening in the area, as well as hotel and motel accommodation providers who do everything right, and follow the health regulations and guidelines. These other forms of accommodation have obviously popped up. We understand this is something that has developed right around the world over the last 10 years, but it is good to have a bit of a handle on it. I will leave it at that. I thank the minister.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Planning) [3.47 pm] — in reply: I thank the opposition for its important contribution to the second reading debate on the Short-Term Rental Accommodation Bill 2024. As everyone is aware, and as I have said repeatedly, COVID radically reshaped our housing market. Every state is facing the same pressures. The government is doing everything it can to boost housing supply across the continuum. I think it is fair to say that history will show that this government has taken unprecedented measures and made reforms from every angle because we understand that there is no silver bullet or one solution. It is a multifaceted approach. This reform to short-term rental accommodation is critical. It is also in line with the national cabinet's plan by introducing a new STRA registration scheme and complements our existing STRA incentives.

On that note, the incentive scheme, which offers a \$10 000 payment to property owners, is already having success. As of 18 March 2024, there had been a total of 183 applications, and I understand that 79 grants have been paid, which means that 79 additional homes have gone into a long-term lease agreement. That is wonderful. We never overstated the scheme and said it would bring thousands in, but our view is that any home re-entering the housing market is welcome, particularly in the regions. That is welcome news.

These reforms also respond to the parliamentary inquiry into short-stay accommodation, which recommended a statewide registration scheme and greater guidance to the sector. It will provide greater clarity for property owners on what is required to operate a short-term rental property.

The bill will establish a statewide register for all short-term rental properties. Property owners will be required to register all STRA properties in WA before being able to advertise and take bookings, including on online booking platforms. The register will be operated by the wonderful team at the Consumer Protection division, and the registrations are expected to open mid-2024. All STRA properties must be registered by 1 January 2025. As an incentive, the initial registration fee will be waived for three months to encourage early participation, and they will not have to pay that fee until they renew their registration in 2025.

I have talked about the incentive scheme. There was significant consultation. We took this very seriously. I just want to put it on the record. We did significant consultation with the key booking platforms, the Australian and New Zealand Short Term Rental Association, the Western Australian Local Government Association, the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, the Australian Hotels Association, the Tourism Council, relevant state and local government agencies and authorities, and a range of government agencies.

The member asked a few questions. The first was: will the bill increase the workload for local governments? No. The simple reason is that it does not place any additional obligations on them. In fact, it will have the opposite effect; it will make it easier because, as the member identified, we will have for the first time a clear register with clear data for all stakeholders, including local governments. The member must remember that local governments already had to do amendments for planning schemes. They already have the responsibility to manage these sorts of issues. When a ratepayer makes an official complaint, a local government will investigate it. We are saying that it will be up to regional local governments to decide how far they want to go in terms of regulation. As the member knows, many regional local governments want to take a very strong approach because that is what their local communities want.

More assistance is being provided to local governments. As we know, Consumer Protection has engaged with the consulted LGAs. It is proposing a roadshow to assist local governments with navigating the web-based register, and it met with specific LGAs with existing local registration laws that will become inoperative under the new scheme. Local laws will continue to operate until registration under the statewide scheme becomes compulsory on 1 January 2025. This will permit an orderly transition.

I have to say that these are great notes from Hon Sue Ellery's adviser and her team. They are brilliant notes—great adviser! The member raised issues in his speech relating to the planning scheme. I need to be very clear because I suspect that there will be questions about it during consideration in detail. I am happy for my office to provide the member further detail into the future as they arise.

There are two components. Under the Minister for Commerce—I am introducing and speaking to this bill on behalf of the Minister for Commerce—is the STRA register, which we all understand. To be on the STRA register, there may need to be planning approval. In the regions, we are saying that that is up to regional councils. In the metro area, we are saying that they will have to seek planning approval beyond 90 nights for an un-hosted accommodation. We will be providing guidance about how that will look in schemes, but I want to be very clear that that is not in this bill. Those questions about planning can be handled in the existing scheme. I know that the member will want to ask questions today, but he needs to remember that this is just about the register. One requirement is that under

certain circumstances, councils in the metro area will need to demonstrate planning authority; they always need to demonstrate planning authority. I just want to be clear again that I suspect many questions will relate to the planning changes as opposed to the STRA.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

[Leave denied to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 to 3 put and passed.

Clause 4: Short-term rental arrangements —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I firstly thank our advisers for probably having been here most of the day waiting for a bit of activity. My first question on clause 4 is: am I correct in saying that if the STRA exceeds the 90-day accommodation, it would automatically trigger the registration system to alert LGAs and the commissioner that a developmental approval is required?

Mr J.N. CAREY: The answer is yes.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: If accommodation is offered to the same person for more than one 90-day period within the 12 months, will that also trigger the registration system?

Mr J.N. CAREY: I will seek clarity. Is the member saying that if two people both have 90-day periods, that would exceed the 90-day target and would need to go through the formal development process?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes. I want to ask about penalties as well, but I see that they are sort of listed out from clauses 9 to 11 and so forth. Can the minister give his guidance on whether he would prefer me to ask about penalties at those clauses?

Mr J.N. Carey: If we could.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Yes, okay. Will this clause require the premises to get a development approval if there is a breach of the 90-day period and permission has not been sought or it has not been registered?

Mr J.N. CAREY: We are talking about two different things, metro versus regions. As the member knows, regions will be determined according to local government, but if they go beyond the 90 days, then yes, they will have to seek a development approval. I understand the scenario that the member is pointing at: if someone says, “I’m only going to do two months a year”, and those circumstances change. Then, yes; in the metro area they would have to seek a development approval. If they are in an apartment building with by-laws that require approval from the strata, they will also need to seek approval from their strata.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Further to that, can the minister clarify an issue with strata by-laws: what is the interplay in relation to this legislation? Will this override any strata by-laws, or will they work in conjunction?

Mr J.N. CAREY: To be clear, this legislation is complementary. It will not override strata by-laws. As the local member for Perth, I think I probably have more strata properties than any other member; there are different buildings and it can vary from time to time. I suspect that the building operators that do not have by-laws will look to the register, perhaps find out that they may have a number of Airbnbs operating and then seek to change their by-laws to address that matter—remembering that, if it is over 90 days, they will still have to seek development approval from, say, the City of Perth.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: As the minister knows, a lot of strata companies have fairly old by-laws and we have seen short-term rental accommodation popping up over the last 10 or so years. Does the minister think this will trigger a lot of scenarios in which residents might say, “My neighbour over here has this strata arrangement”? Does the minister think that will force a lot of changes in strata by-laws?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Because more data will become readily available, I can say that, yes, there could be a scenario in which strata councils may become aware of properties operating and they may seek to change their by-laws. I would have to get data for the member about how many strata councils have by-laws of this nature, but I think there will be an initial flurry because there will be more data available on the state of play. Of course, we want that.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to the last part of clause 4(1), which states —

... includes an arrangement under which the accommodation provider or an agent of the provider also resides on the premises.

Can the minister provide some clarity on that, or an explanation of it?

Mr J.N. CAREY: This covers a scenario in which a property may be in one person’s name—say, a partner’s name—but another person is living in the home.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 8 put and passed.**Clause 9: Short-term rental accommodation must be registered —**

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Clauses 9 to 16 all refer to a fine of \$20 000. Is there a minimum fine, or do we go straight to \$20 000? Is there any warning system in place?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, that is the maximum. The advice is that, as we transition, we understand that people will be working through the register. That is why, even with no fee, we are trying to guide people to this new system. There will also be an infringement system with lower penalties, and that will be set by regulation. It is \$20 000 for individuals and a maximum of \$100 000 for corporations. We need these penalties so that people will take the register and the information provided seriously.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Is there no real guidance at this stage on how many strikes there will be before it is ramped up to \$20 000? I imagine that, over time, there will be people who will push that boundary. Will it be at the commissioner's discretion in that case?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Ultimately, the level of the fine will be determined by the magistrate. The infringement system will be determined by the commissioner.

Clause put and passed.**Clauses 10 to 13 put and passed.****Clause 14: Removal of prohibited advertisements from booking platforms —**

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Clause 14(1) states —

The Commissioner may, by written notice given to a booking platform provider, or an agent of the provider, require the provider, within the period specified in the notice, to ensure that a prohibited advertisement ceases to be available ...

What will be the specified period? Is there any indication at this stage?

Mr J.N. CAREY: I am advised that that date has not yet been specified. It will be in regulations, and we will be consulting stakeholders.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister explain what he envisages with the registration number? Obviously, the number will be on the booking platforms. Will the registration number have to be advertised in any other place, such as at the local government or wherever?

Mr J.N. CAREY: The number must be visible on any form of advertising, so it would include, for example, notice boards—which we have talked about before—flyers, any online advertising or anywhere where they are promoting their short-stay accommodation.

Clause put and passed.**Clauses 15 to 17 put and passed.****Clause 18: Applications —**

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Clause 18(4) states —

An application for registration of residential premises cannot be made within 3 years after registration of the premises is cancelled under this Act.

I guess the question is: will this apply to someone who is wilfully misleading and has been fined and the like? What if someone has made a bit of an error, run over the 90 days and forgotten to register or whatever it might have been, will they be treated in the same way?

Mr J.N. CAREY: I think it is implied, but it will be the last resort. If it is fixable, their registration would likely be suspended.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: At this point in time, does the minister envisage that he will not come down too hard? If someone has made an error—or even if they have not and have stretched boundaries a bit—three years is a long period for which they will not be able to re-register.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, there will be a reasonable approach by the commissioner. As I have indicated, I think it is demonstrated in our transition period. We could have just brought a register in like that. There will be a transition period, and there will be no fees. The government is trying to guide, and the agency will work with people because we want people to register. It is all about a transitional process and working with people. I suspect that we all understand that, when something new is brought in, people have to get used to change. We are using that approach.

Clause put and passed.**Clauses 19 to 23 put and passed.**

Clause 24: Suspension or cancellation generally —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to clause 24(d) —

an owner who made the application for registration is no longer the owner of the premises;

Will the three-year cancellation rule that we just spoke about in clause 18(4) apply in this case as well?

Mr J.N. CAREY: No, it will not.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to paragraph (f). What if there is a new tenant as well? How will that apply?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Whether it is a new owner or tenant, they will have to re-register, but I am advised that the three-year cancellation will not apply.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 25 to 30 put and passed.

Clause 31: Register of premises —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I refer to clause 31(3)(f). Will there be any circumstances in which the commissioner would release the contact details of the owner who does not reside at the short-term rental premises?

Mr J.N. CAREY: None of the details will be released publicly. They would only be released, for example, to the local government.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I assume that the local government and the commissioner will have the register. Will there be any other way for a member of the public to search or find out who in their locality or local government area has these premises or the registration?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Just to be clear, we will not be giving the name or phone number et cetera. The information that will be public is the registered address.

I just wish to readdress that. How the system will work—I am jumping the gun—is that people will enter the address and it will identify whether it is registered or not. The point I am making is that it will only be the address.

Mr P.J. Rundle: Not the owner.

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 32: Disclosure of Register information —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: This, I guess, is a flow-on effect from my last question. Clause 32(1) states —

The Commissioner must provide information as to whether or not residential premises are registered premises free of charge to the public in the manner determined by the Commissioner.

What information will the commissioner be providing? Will it be just the address? Will it be the owner? The clause says that it must be provided free of charge to the public.

Mr J.N. CAREY: The key aim is to provide clear data. As I have said, members of the public will be able to search the street address of a property to determine whether it is registered as short-term rental accommodation. They will also be able to enter a registration number. The system will then confirm whether the number entered is associated with a STRA property. A heat map will also show the concentration of STRA across a local government area, but it will not show individual properties.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: That information will be available to any member of the public. If I wanted to purchase a property in Jurien Bay in the member for Moore's electorate, could I go to either the commissioner or the local government to obtain that information?

Mr J.N. CAREY: No, it will be available only through the online register. The power of the reform is that we are creating a consistent system with one source of truth and information. Of course, if someone puts in a fake registration number, it will not pull up an address.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 33 and 34 put and passed.

Clause 35: Disclosure of information by Commissioner relating to certain actions —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I would not mind a bit more explanation about this clause, which states —

The Commissioner may disclose information obtained in connection with the administration or execution of this Act for the purpose of making the public aware of ...

- (a) investigations or inquiries being conducted under this Act into the conduct of a person ...
- (b) disciplinary action ...

What is the motivation behind this clause and why has it been included?

Mr J.N. CAREY: I think the member is familiar with this. The commissioner already does this under the Fair Trading Act. It is to give, say, a public warning. I will give an example. In other industries, someone might be going around targeting seniors and trying to replace roofs and gates very expensively. The commissioner will name the company. This will potentially operate in a similar way.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I hear what the minister is saying, but are processes in place to protect against defamatory or malicious actions that may not be proven during such inquiries? As the minister can imagine, long-term damage could be done to the reputation of a person or STRA provider if the details turned out to be incorrect.

Mr J.N. CAREY: The agency has an internal policy and, of course, legal advice will be sought.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 36 to 46 put and passed.

Clause 47: Relationship of Act to local laws —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Local governments are being given until mid-2024 to update their town planning schemes. Is that adequate time?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Where did the member get that information from?

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I believe it was somewhere in the second reading speech or it may have been in the briefing.

Mr J.N. CAREY: To be clear, that relates to the planning scheme and not to this bill. I am happy to provide the member with information afterwards, but that is not correct.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: Can the minister explain the methodology behind the regional and metropolitan differentiation?

Mr J.N. CAREY: I am going to disappoint the member, but that is not in this bill; that is in the planning scheme. However, I will say very quickly that metropolitan Perth is one market, but regional markets can be very different, as the member knows. Accordingly, from engaging with regional local governments, we thought it appropriate to allow each regional local council to look at their own market and make a determination about their scheme and how to regulate it, whereas Bayswater and Vincent are not that far apart so it is the same rental market.

Mr R.S. LOVE: I spoke to the member for Cottesloe about this because I thought he might know the answer. In the metropolitan area, will development approval of current buildings need to be gained before registration?

Mr J.N. CAREY: As the member knows, we are transitioning. If there is a current requirement, yes, it will.

Mr R.S. LOVE: If all metropolitan planning districts will have their schemes amended to include a requirement, will that requirement apply to any building, even if it is already being used as an Airbnb? In other words, will all existing Airbnbs have to go through a DA?

Mr J.N. CAREY: In the metropolitan area, development approval will be needed only if it hits 90 days-plus. That is a separate equation, so I am happy to brief the Leader of the Opposition on the planning. There will be guidance to local governments about the process and a template in relation to planning approvals for the metropolitan area.

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a final further question on that. Will all current or future Airbnbs have to be registered if they are between one and 89 days, or just if they are 90 days-plus?

Mr J.N. CAREY: Yes, they will still have to be registered. Every Airbnb will have to be registered, whether or not it hits the 90 days, because that will be critical to data collection.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 48 and 49 put and passed.

Clause 50: Regulations —

Mr P.J. RUNDLE: I have a simple question. Regulations are always a challenge for the opposition. Can the minister foresee the timetable for the regulations to be completed and so forth?

Mr J.N. CAREY: The regulations are being drafted now and they will be ready when the register comes into effect on 1 July this year.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 51 to 55 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

[Leave granted to proceed forthwith to third reading.]

Third Reading

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Planning) [4.30 pm]: I move —

That the bill be now read a third time.

MR P.J. RUNDLE (Roe — Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [4.30 pm]: I will not procrastinate. I want to thank the advisers who were here for a large part of the day. As I said previously, the opposition supports this bill. We need some clarity. Going back to the days of Hon Terry Redman, I clearly remember him talking in 2019 about this as an issue for accommodation providers in his electorate and, of course, it affects many others. We need accurate information, especially given the housing crisis and the challenges the housing minister has in front of him, to maximise every piece of accommodation in Western Australia. This should be a valuable tool for the government and for local governments. I did not mention out-of-control parties and all the other things that can sometimes happen, but I assume that it would give some assistance to local governments as well when these types of issues come up. I will leave my contribution at that and confirm that the opposition supports the bill.

MR J.N. CAREY (Perth — Minister for Planning) [4.32 pm] — in reply: I thank the opposition for its support. It is great to see members opposite supporting one of our reforms to boost housing supply. That is something we should note. Put that on the public record! I thank all the agency staff for their work. For the record, I said that one of the staff members was from the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage; however, they were all from the Department of Commerce, so I correct that. Some of the questions that were raised today relate to the planning scheme. I again put on the record that two portfolios are involved: Commerce is dealing with the operation of the register and the planning process for metropolitan Perth requires local governments to review their schemes, which is logical, given that it is one rental market. Some of the questions that were asked today are heavily interrelated because, obviously, the register prescribes that development approval by the local government is required when an un-hosted property is rented for 90 days or more.

This is a critical matter. It will provide clear data but, most importantly, it will result in more Airbnbs. Now that there will be greater regulation, more properties will potentially move across to the private rental market and, of course, that is why we brought in the incentive scheme.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**LAND TAX ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT
(RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION EXEMPTIONS) BILL 2023**

Returned

Bill returned from the Council without amendment.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE

Special

On motion without notice by **Dr A.D. Buti (Minister for Education)**, resolved —

That the house at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 16 April 2024, at 1.00 pm.

House adjourned at 4.35 pm

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Questions and answers are as supplied to Hansard.

METRONET — ADVERTISEMENTS

981. Mr R.S. Love to the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the METRONET fortnightly ‘updates’ appearing in The West Australian, and I ask:

- (a) What is the cost of these fortnightly advertisements in The West Australian;
- (b) Are there any other METRONET advertisements appearing in other newspapers:
 - (i) If yes, please list the other newspapers; and
 - (ii) If yes, please provide the cost of the advertisements appearing in these other newspapers; and
- (c) What is the total amount spent on METRONET advertising since 1 July 2023?

Ms R. Saffioti replied:

Project communications, particularly for major projects under delivery such as METRONET, are important in keeping the public up to date with milestones and disruptions.

- (a) \$4,503
- (b) Yes.
 - (i) PerthNow.
 - (ii) \$5,000 per fortnight.
- (c) \$82,315 has been spent on newspaper advertising from 1 July 2023 to 1 March 2024.

ELECTORAL AFFAIRS — POLLING AND RESEARCH

982. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:

Is this Government funding any external polling or research at West Australian taxpayers expense:

- (a) If yes, please detail the rationale for conducting such polling or research; and
- (b) If yes, please provide the total cost amount for conducting such polling or research?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

- (a)–(b) Expenditure incurred for market research or polling in 2023–24, if any, will be reported in the annual report of each agency as required by the *Electoral Act 1907*.

PREMIER — ROYAL INVITATION

983. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:

Has the Premier officially invited their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla to visit Western Australia, if not why not?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

Yes.

COOK GOVERNMENT — FUNCTION PROTOCOLS

984. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:

With reference to the Government’s protocol for functions including award ceremonies and official openings:

- (a) Are local MPs normally invited to these functions when it relates to their electorate;
- (b) In what circumstances are local MPs not invited to these functions; and
- (c) Are MPs political affiliations taken into account when issuing invitations?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

- (a) Members of Parliament of all political affiliations attend award ceremonies and official openings. There is no whole of Government policy or guidance on how invites are issued.

HOUSING — RENT POLICY

985. Mr R.S. Love to the parliamentary secretary representing the Minister for Commerce:

Can the Government categorically rule out the introduction of rent freezes in future housing policy?

Dr J. Krishnan replied:

There are no plans to introduce rent freezes.

TRANSPORT — LEARNER'S PERMIT FEE

986. Mr R.S. Love to the Minister assisting the Minister for Transport:

I refer to the \$138.70 Learner's permit application fee, and I ask:

- (a) When was this fee amount last changed;
- (b) Are there any plans to change this fee amount in the next two financial years:
 - (i) If yes, what are the proposed changes; and
- (c) What was the total amount paid to the State in the last financial year in Learner's permit application fees?

Mr D.R. Michael replied:

- (a) 1 July 2023.
- (b) Any change to the fee will be considered through the usual budget process.
- (c) \$6,865,375

COOK MINISTRY — CONSTITUTION

987. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:

Noting now two of your Cabinet Ministers, Hon. Sue Ellery and Hon. John Quigley, have made public their retirement at the next election, will you be announcing a Cabinet reshuffle ahead of the 2025 March Election?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

The Premier has indicated previously that both Minister Ellery and the Attorney General will continue in their roles until the 2025 State Election.

MINISTERIAL OFFICES — INTERNAL BUDGETS

988. Mr R.S. Love to the Premier:

Since your appointment as Premier on 8 June 2023 and concerning the Premier's ministerial office:

- (a) How much has been spent on professional print services;
- (b) How much has been spent on stationery;
- (c) How much has been spent on newspaper subscriptions;
- (d) How much has been spent on journal or publication subscriptions;
- (e) How much has been spent on media monitoring;
- (f) How much has been spent on alcohol;
- (g) How much has been spent on office plants;
- (h) How much has been spent on coffee machines, coffee or coffee pods;
- (i) How much has been spent on paintings, posters, artwork or decorations; and
- (j) For (a)–(i) can you provide a breakdown for this expenditure by description, type, and quantity? If not, why not?

Mr R.H. Cook replied:

- (a)–(j) The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the administration office-related expenditure for Ministerial offices, the Leader of the Opposition's office and the Leader of the Second Opposition office.

From 1 July 2023 – 29 February 2024, \$9,139 has been expended on stationery, subscriptions and publications in relation to the Office of the Premier. The remaining detailed information is not readily available and collecting this information would divert staff away from their normal duties and is not considered to be a reasonable or appropriate use of government resources.

